



Niger Delta Development Commission and Sustainable Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: The Case of Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study is on Niger Delta Development Commission and sustainable development of Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the case of Rivers State. The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of the activities of Niger Delta Development Commission on sustainable development of Rivers State in particular, and Niger Delta region at large. The study used secondary data such as books, journals, newspapers, government gazette, and Niger Delta Development Commission reports on their activities in the region. We considered the conceptual and theoretical issues on sustainable development. Our findings established that Niger Delta Development Commission activities for sustainable development of Niger Delta region are good, but not adequate to achieve the desired development in the region. We therefore recommend modalities the Niger Delta Development Commission should adopt to improve their number and quality of activities in order to achieve the needed development in the region.

Keywords : Sustainable development, Niger Delta Region, Programmes , Projects, activities, Commission.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of oil economy in Nigeria in 1950s resulted to high oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The region accounts for the 100% oil and gas production in Nigeria, over 90% Nigerian export and foreign earnings, and over 70% of Nigerian

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

total revenue (Ekuerhare, 2002). Unfortunately, the exploration activities exposed the region to a lot of environmental challenges – unending gas flaring, frequent oil spillage, discharge of toxic waste etc, resulting to destruction of agricultural lands, environmental resources, unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment in the region (HRW, 2004, and Idumange, 2007).

Ozo-Eson (2002) adds that the prevalent issue of inability of Nigerian government to manage the linkage between the population, environment and development of the region accounts for the poverty and underdevelopment of the region. He further attributes it to lack of political will by previous governments to re-invest the resources generated from the region back to the region for socio economic development of the region. Poverty and underdevelopment are deepening through the continuous ecological degradation by the activities of the oil multinationals. It is disheartening that despite the huge oil and gas resources generated from the region, the region is still associated with high indices of poverty and underdevelopment. Most worrisome is the fact that most of the communities where these resources are generated from are without good roads, electricity, pipe borne water, basic health care facility, basic educational facility, and inadequately empowered.

The absence of basic infrastructure in the region, accounts for the constant agitation for resource control by citizens of the region as a medium to address their socio-economic development demand in the region. It climaxed to youth restiveness, hostage taking, militancy and violence as the last option to drive home their demand for socio-economic development of the region. However, the agitation and activities of the people were viewed as threat to the peace and security of Nigerian State. As a result of this menace and the reality of poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region, Federal Government under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo in December, 2000 established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) through NDDC (Establishment Act) 2000, No. 6 Law of Federal Republic of Nigeria to ensure socio-economic development of the region (FGN, 2000). As a strategic intervention agency, NDDC is charged with a clear mandate to conceive, plan and implement ... projects and programmes for socio-economic development of the Niger Delta region, to undertake infrastructural development in the region, and transform the region into an economically viable, socially stable, ecologically regenerative, and politically peaceful area. (ANEEJ, 2004:22). Similarly, Alaibe (2007) holds that Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, which is NDDC working plan, is capable of resolving the poverty and underdevelopment problems of the region...if NDDC is given the adequate opportunities.

Notably is the fact that since establishment of the NDDC, it has made several attempts to achieve socio-economic development of the region, through their community base programmes and projects, which include construction of community roads, bore holes, free medical care, electricity, cottage hospitals, schools etc. These programmes and projects are aimed at stimulating socio-economic development of the region. However, it appears

the NDDC programmes and projects are inadequate in the region or that the NDDC programmes and projects are not yielding its objective for the socio-economic development of the region, as the indices of poverty and underdevelopment area still at increase in the region. In view of the above, it is the interest of the study to critically examine the impact of NDDC activities on sustainable development of Rivers State in particular, and Niger Delta region at large. Secondary data on NDDC activities in the region will be used for the study, while content analysis will be used to analysis the data.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORITICAL ISSUES

Sustainable development has become a key issue in socio-economic development and environmental resources management. The need for sustainable development has attracted both local and global attention as a framework of development for nations, due to the continuous economic growth demands, which requires a concrete resource base, structural protection and upgrading environmental quality. Adeyemo (2003) states that the first wave of massive environmental concern in the 1970s was due to the negative effects and social cost of environmental pollution, and natural resources depletion (energy resource, minerals and fisheries) connected with the industrial structure of our economy. This warrants the need for sustainability of environmental resources for development of man and the environment.

Brookfield (1991:43) adds that modern emphasis on sustainable utilization of natural resources was traced by O'Riordan (1988) to a series of African base conferences in the 1960s, and the discussions on the World Environment Conference in Stockholm in 1972. Although, it was the World Conservative strategy that first brought the concept - sustainable development into focus (IUCN, 1980). The contention was on development and growth, and effects of environmental resources degradation on intergenerational equity.

The attendant effects on the socio-economic sector and the environment arising from the excessive use of the environmental resources by man for development warranted the United Nations to investigate the use of natural resources by man for the socio-economic and the environmental development of nations. To that affect, the Secretary General of United Nations in 1983 constituted the World Commission on Environment and Development under the Chairmanship of then Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland to carry out the assignment. Basically, the Commission was mandated to:

1. "Propose long term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond;

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

2. Recommend ways the environment may be translated into greater cooperation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development, and can lead to the achievement of common and humanity supportive objectives that take account of the interrelationship between people, resources environment, and development;
3. Consider ways and means by which the international community can deal more effectively with environmental concerns; and
4. Help define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long-term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspiration for the community”.

The commission identified principally that development activities in many Nations, especially in developing nations were leaving growing number of poor and vulnerable people in the society, while at the same time degrading the environment. (United Nations,1987). This implies that most of the development activities by man are detrimental to man and the environment. The Commission then identified that both the man and the environment needs to be sustained , while on the path of achieving development for today and in future (United Nations, 1987).

The Commission focused on population, food security, loss of species and generic resources energy, industry, and human settlement as areas of major concern. The Commission further noted that these sectors are vital to human life and must be addressed for national development (Adeyini, 1999). The Commission finally submitted her report in 1987 on issues of sustainable development. The report, titled *Our Common Future* was popularly known as the “*Brundtland Report*”. The report was the first to popularize sustainable development and gave a clear definition of the concept. According to *Brundtland Report* (1987:46) Sustainable development is defined as that “development that seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future ... It is a process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhances both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.”

The report explained sustainable development in terms of economic and social activities to guarantee an adequate quality of life for present societies without compromising the capacity of the future generations to meet their own demands. The report brought into focus, three interconnected and interdependent factors; environmental resources, development, man, and states that the non-sustainable use of one factor affect the quality of the other. The *Brundtland Report* (1987) identified vital issues in sustainable development. Firstly, that nation must redirect their development strategies, to meet their respective human and societal needs. Secondly, that consumption pattern of the present generation on natural resources must not be detrimental on future generation, to enable the future generation meet their own natural resources needs. Chinsman (1999:329) states that the *Brundtland*

Report succeeded in raising alarm on the need to rationalize natural resources consumption due to the interrelation and interdependence of the environmental resources and economic development. It became clear that development and environment are complementary, and therefore without adequate environmental protection, development will not be achieved, and without development, environmental protection will not be possible. Above all, man remains the centre stage of every action.

To achieve the objective of this study, the study adopts sustainable development approach as the theoretical framework of analysis. The emergence of sustainable development as an approach in social sciences dates back to the period of the work of Malthus on population growth in the late 1700s. The approach gained prominence in global politics in 1970s, following the numerous researches and publications on activities of man leading to over exploitation of the environment, and examining the relationship, between environment and development. Such publications include; Schumacher (1974), Meadows et al. (1972), Ehrlich (1971), Ecologist (1972), Ward and Dubos (1972) etc.

The choice of sustainable development as a theoretical framework of analysis is due to its relevance in the analysis of issues of environmental resources , poverty, ecological disaster, lack of infrastructure, underdevelopment etc in the region. The wide spread poverty and high indices of underdevelopment in Niger Delta region amidst the numerous resources is quite ironical and calls for drastic attention, hence the establishment of Niger Delta Development Commission as an intervention agency with its basic objective of achieving socio-economic development in Niger Delta. The Niger Delta Development Commission is aimed at using the resources from the area to develop the area and improve the well-being of the people. The approach is used to assess the contributions of Niger Delta Development Commission to the socio economic development of Niger Delta, particularly on issues of rural development, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and economic empowerment without compromising the future needs in the region.

THE IMPACT OF NDDC ACTIVITIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RIVERS STATE, NIGER DELTA REGION

According to Nwankwo (2009:350) “one way of measuring the success or failure of government in modern societies is to access how successful such governments are in developing the conditions for satisfying the basic needs of the people they govern. These needs include basic infrastructure, social services, public services and helping to create an efficient and productive economy”. This implies that the importance of any government or governmental agency in socio-economic development of the society is determined by the ability of such government or agency to effectively

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

mobilize resources and use same to provide the basic needs of the people they govern for their socio-economic development.

As part of the study findings, NDDC has undertaken several programmes and projects aimed at resolving the developmental challenges in the region. These activities include physical infrastructure projects, and programmes. The table 1 below shows the number of NDDC physical infrastructure in Rivers State between 2001-2008.

Table 1 : NDDC Physical Projects in Rivers State (2001-2008).

S/N	PROJECTS	NUMBER
1	Education / Health	86
2	Water	32
3	Electrification	12
4	Jetties	6
5	Road/Bridges	37
6	Canalisation	1
7	Shore protection	2
	TOTAL	176

Source : NDDC (2009)

The above table shows that Rivers State has benefited 176 physical projects from the NDDC for socio-economic development of the state. However, NDDC (2008) has it that out of the 176 projects, only 33 were completed and commissioned for use, while 143 projects are ongoing. The above table proves that socio – economic development is taking place in different parts of the State through the efforts of NDDC. For the purpose of this study, NDDC activities will be grouped and discussed under the following sub-heads:-

1. RURAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

(A) Roads and bridges construction

The study identified that NDDC has within 2001 – 2005 completed the construction of thirteen (13) roads and bridges with many other ongoing roads and bridges projects in different communities in Rivers State. The completed NDDC roads and bridges are:

- (i) Eleme ring road in Eleme Local Government Area
- (ii) Ibaa bridge / drainage in Emohua Local Government Area
- (iii) Elelenwo – Akpajo road in Obio-Akpor, and Eleme Local Government Areas
- (iv) Rumuorlumini – Ogbogoro road / bridge in Obio- Akpor Local Government Area
- (v) Bomu – Gioo – Nweol road in Gokana Local Government Area
- (vi) Ula – Ahoada – Odioku – Odieke road in Ahead East Local Government Area

Wilson, Goddey

- (vii) Oginigba – Woji - Elemenwo road in Obio – Akpor Local Government Area
- (viii) Elele – Rumuekpe road in Emohua Local Government Area
- (ix) Okogbe – Ogbologbo – Ochiba road in Ahoada – West Local Government Area
- (x) Elele – Egbeda – Ubimini – Ikiri – Omoku road / bridge (phase 1) in Emohua, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Areas
- (xi) Oil Mill/Elemo road Junction – Igbo – Ozuzu – Isu road in Obio – Akpor, and Etche Local Government Areas.
- (xii) Eastern bye-pass road in Port Harcourt Local Government Area
- (xiii) Nonwa – Bunu Tai – Afam Uku Afam Nta road in Tai and Oyigbo Local Government Areas.

In course of our visit to some of the communities where these projects were sited, and our interview with the residents of the said communities on the importance of the roads and bridges to the development of the communities, it was clearly revealed that the roads and bridges were of great economic importance to the people, and as such its contribution to social and economic development of the community can not be over emphasized. In his reaction to our interview, Chief Mike Amadi of Ogbogoro Community stated that the NDDC road and bridge has created a faster mobility and access from Ogbogoro to Rumuorlumini and other parts of the state. The road has also encouraged development such as building of new houses along the road, sitting of the new slaughter market along the road by the bridge. This market is not only yielding revenue to the community, but has created opportunity for more economic activities in the area.

The importance of Ibaa bridge / drainage system can not be over – emphasized, as the Ibaa community was before the construction of the bridge cut – off from Rumuji community, which serves as access to the East – West road in Rivers State. The bridge brought a possible link and access between the Rumuji and Ibaa communities and gave Ibaa people the opportunity of distributing their farm products to other parts of the State. Also, the drainage system reduced flooding in the community when it rains. Although, in course of our interview with the community people, they appreciated the NDDC contribution to the development of their community, but complained that the master plan of the drainage system was not fully implemented and hope that NDDC will in future complete the project.

The Nonwa – Bomu Tai- Afam Uku Afam Nta road is not left out of this development. The people of Afam in Oyigbo and Bomu in Tai Local Government Areas are predominantly farmers, who depends on the sales of their farm products for their daily living. The completion of the road by NDDC brought more opportunity for the people of the area to transport their farm products to urban markets for better sales and income earning.

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Our visit to most of the communities where NDDC roads and bridges were constructed, proved that the roads and bridges projects have eased transport difficulties experienced before now in those communities and encouraged more access and a better road net-work in the areas. These have also encouraged more economic activities in the areas. In totality, the NDDC roads and bridges have contributed to the socio-economic mobility of the benefiting communities. Indeed, NDDC has performed better than other Federal Government intervention Agencies in the State on roads and bridges construction as a medium for development of the rural areas in the state.

The study further noted that the NDDC's approach on socio economic development of Rivers State through the use of roads and bridges construction for effective mobility is good, but the numbers of such projects are not adequate considering the intensive demand of accessible roads and bridges in Rivers State. The study observed that among the NDDC uncompleted roads and bridges are also some long abandoned projects due to poor funding as complained by some of the contractors. These abandoned roads and bridges are creating transport difficulties in the affected areas of the state.

(B) Jetty and shore protection

In course of our study, we realized that NDDC has constructed some jetties, and shore protection projects in some of the core-riverine communities in the state. According to NDDC (2005:12) "Jetties serve as the commercial nerve center of many riverine communities in Rivers State. The jetties are also very useful for social, economic and cultural interactions among the people". Jetty is very important for the riverine communities as it serves as both the landing and departure point for boats. Some of the jetties and shore protection projects executed by NDDC are the concrete landing Jetty at Ozeri waterside, Usuoku, Degema Local Government Area, concrete landing Jetty at Ataba town waterside, Andoni Local Government Area, Kaa concrete landing jetty at Kaa, Khana Local Government Area, Kalabiyama shore protection at Kalabiyama, Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area etc. From our study, we realized that the Ataba Town Jetty, Kaa jetty and Ozeri Jetty have not only encouraged social and economic activities in the areas, but have reduced the rate of boat capsizing, resulting to save of lives and properties in the areas. Before the construction of the concrete jetties, the people of the areas suffer a lot of losses due to no proper landing jetty. Today, the people are happy due to the NDDC concrete landing jetties, which are saving lives and properties in the areas. This is a community developmental project from the NDDC. The Kalaibiama community in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area is today rejoicing because of shore protection project of NDDC in the area. They are no longer threatened by the over-flowing of the sea and fear of their community being sub-merged by flood. The relief of the fear that the community may be taken-over by the flood has motivated small-scale investment at least by the indigenes of Kalaibiama. Today, there are functional provision shores and other forms of business in the community.

Above all, the people now have confidence in building houses at Kalabiama even at the waterfront.

(C) Electrification projects

As part of our findings, we realized that NDDC has completed some electrification projects, and many are ongoing in the State. Among the completed, and put into use are the Okehi – Oberi electrification project, donation and installation of transformers to several communities (Evorlu in Mbuoba, Runuorlumini, Agip Housing Estate, Rumuodumaya, Echue street, Owo street etc.), Ula-Ehuda – Odioku – Odieroke project etc. NDDC has assisted to beef-up the power supply through donation and installation of functional transformers. The people of Echue street in mile two, Diobu, Port Harcourt, Owo street in Diobu, Port Harcourt to mention but a few were in darkness within the period of February, 2003 to April, 2004 until NDDC came to their aid, by donating and installing new transformers in the areas. Within the period of no NEPA light, business activities like hair salon, welding workshop, cool-room etc suffered a lot of set back, as the operators were spending more money on maintaining private generators. Fortunately, in April 2004, NDDC installed new transformers in the areas, and economic activities picked-up again. The story was the same in Okehi, Ula, Ehuda, Odioku, Odieroke communities etc were NDDC completed their electrification projects. In those communities, the presence of electricity is necessary and obvious for economic and social activities.

(D) Water scheme projects

The study noted that due to the oil exploitation and exploration activities in Rivers State, most of the riverine communities suffer the problem of no good water for drinking, as their river which is the only source of drinking water supply is often polluted by the activities of the oil companies, leaving the host communities with hardship of no good drinking water. To that effect, NDDC attempts to solve the ironical scarcity of good water in Rivers State amidst the many rivers. The study identified that NDDC established water projects in many communities. Such projects include the Rumukpoku water project, Kalio Ama – George Ama water project, Okirika, Betem water scheme, Queen’s Town water project, Bakania water project, Nonwa water project , etc. Today, the few benefiting communities are no longer on the list of no good drinking water communities in Rivers State, as NDDC has made it possible for them to have good water for daily use. The availability of good drinking has also reduced the epidemic associated with bad water in such communities. This is instrumental to good living. However, our study also shows that the water projects are still inadequate in Rivers State, as the demand for good and drinking water is still high in the State.

2. MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

NDDC sees investment on human capital development and economic empowerment as a tool to achieve capacity – building in Rivers State. The intention is that when capacity building is achieved, it becomes a faster drive for socio-economic development in the State. According to Ibeanu (2008:58) the goal of capacity building in Niger Delta is “to increase the capacity of individuals and local communities to participate effectively in the development and implementation of a comprehensive framework for social change and environmental protection and remediation in the Niger Delta”. This calls for the development of the manpower in the area, and institutionalization of new model of social orientation among the citizenry for development to be achieved. To achieve this, it requires the encouragement of skills and creates development leading to self – employment and increase of technical knowledge. To achieve the capacity building in Rivers State, NDDC instituted the following programmes in the state:-

(A) Computer training programmes

Our finding shows that NDDC instituted computer training programme for the Niger Delta youths as a medium for youth empowerment, and granting them opportunity to gain a better employment opportunities in other establishments. The programme started in May 2003 with a total of 5,000 Niger Delta youths. Out of the number, one thousand four hundred and fifty (1,450) youths benefited from Rivers State (NDDC, 2005). The programme was specialized in Office management, Auto card, PC support Engineering, Internet Website Design, Corel Draw and Graphics. It is clear that most of the Rivers State youths that participated in the programme have also graduated, and are either self employed through establishing a personal business, or have used the acquired skill to gain employment in an establishment. By so doing, the benefited youths are now relatively economic independent and that have reduced the number of unemployed Rivers State youths.

(B) NDDC – assisted mass transit scheme

As part of our findings, we realized that NDDC within the first phase of her assisted mass transit scheme, which started in April, 2004 distributed 800 buses on hire purchase bases without any collateral to cooperative societies that have a minimum number of ten (10) members in the region. Rivers State youths benefited 143 buses. This implies that 143 cooperative societies benefited, and means an empowerment to 143 groups of minimum of ten persons each. The study discovered that the transport scheme created employment to some unemployed youths, and eased transport difficulty in the State. The scheme resulted to creation of NDDC Motor Park at the fly-over area of Mile one, Diobu, Port Harcourt, NDDC motor parks at Omoku, Ahoada, Abua, and Bori. These motor parks boasted economic activities

within the areas and assisted in transport mobility in the areas. However, the study identified that the 143 buses allocated to Rivers State was inadequate, considering the road transport challenges in the State. Also, the marine transport (boats) was not provided, thereby neglecting the riverine parts of Rivers State with their transport difficulties.

(C) NDDC skill acquisition programme

As part of NDDC manpower development programme in Niger Delta Region, NDDC introduced vocational skill training for the Niger Delta youths in various trades – fitting, welding, automobile and river craft repairs, electrical / electronics, GSM repairs, upholstery, mechanical business skill etc. A total of six thousand and seventy (6,070) Niger Delta youths benefited from the manpower training programme in different trades. The study noted that one thousand and twenty six (1,026) Rivers State youths participated and were trained by NDDC on different trades. Most of the beneficiaries of the scheme are either self employed, or have used the skill to gain employment in both private and public sectors. It is of truth that the NDDC skill acquisition programme is one of the significant programmes of NDDC that created employment for Rivers State youths, although at a low rate due to the small number that benefited from the programme.

(D) NDDC – globacom self employment business scheme

The study observed that out of the four thousand (4,000) handsets / lines and accessories distributed by the NDDC to the youths of the nine (9) Niger Delta states, Rivers State youths benefited four hundred forty seven (447) lines and handsets. This implies that since it was distributed on basis of one person one handset / line, 447 youths benefited from the scheme. Our investigation proves that the scheme has created employment for the beneficiaries, as they now own personal call centers. However, the study noted that the problem associated with the scheme was that the number of beneficiaries was insignificant considering the teeming youth that desire the scheme in the State. Also, some of the beneficiaries diverted the handsets and lines to private use as against commercial use. While most of those who actually directed theirs to commercial use had the problem of poor management, thereby making the scheme fruitless to them.

3. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

As part of NDDC capacity building for the development of Rivers State, NDDC provided physical infrastructure for some schools in Rivers State. Such infrastructural development includes construction of new classrooms, hostels, staff quarters, and rehabilitation of dilapidating classrooms, and provided furniture and science equipment for some schools in the state. Such projects include the completed 6 class room block in Degema, Degema Local

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Government Area, completed 6 class room block at St. Mary's Primary School, Omoku, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, completed and furnished 6 class room block at Bodo City, Gokana Local Government, completed 6 class room block at Nonwa, Tai Local Government Areas, completed 6 class room block with office , store and toilet facility, and furnished same at Eleto, Eleme Local Government Area etc. In course of our interview with the indigenes and residents of the areas, they clearly stated that the NDDC class rooms are manifestation of Federal Government presence in the area and government willingness to develop the long neglected areas of the state. They further indicated that the NDDC constructed class rooms have made it possible for their children and wards to attend public schools, as the private schools in Rivers State are not within the reach of the poor. The NDDC has made it possible for their children and relatives to have access to basic education. The study further observed that NDDC has initiated 15 educational development projects in different schools and communities in Rivers State. Although some have been completed and put into use, while others are yet to be completed. Indeed, the NDDC educational development projects have contributed to educational development of the hosting and neighbouring communities of such projects in Rivers State.

However, the study observed that the number of NDDC educational projects in the Rivers State is inadequate, considering the great demand of the facility in Rivers State. Also the available educational projects are not evenly spread among Local Government Areas in the State. The study noted that some Local Government Areas are hosting more than one educational project from NDDC, while others are not having even one.

4. HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SERVICES/PROJECTS

Our study observed that NDDC viewed the decay in the health sector (medical infrastructure and services) in Rivers State as one of the issues of poverty and under development in the state. In an attempt to change the trend, the NDDC considered investment in the health care sector for proper health care delivery as an important aspect of development in the State. To that effect, NDDC provided physical infrastructure, and sponsored free medical services in some communities in Rivers State. Among such physical infrastructures are the Eneka Comprehensive Health Center, Oyigbo Comprehensive Health center, Kula Health Center with Doctors /workers quarters, Ode – Ugbo Health Center, Obete Health Center etc. These health centers are today providing health services to the people of the host and neighboring communities. Also our study noted that NDDC within the period carried out several free medical services to some communities in Rivers State. The communities are Ahoada, Omoku, Buguma, Omuna, Ataba, Isiokpo, Okirika, Okwuzi, Bonny, Okomoko, Bori, Gokana, Eleme, Abonema etc.

Wilson, Goddey

Our study further gathered that during the NDDC free medical services in Rivers State, the NDDC medical team treated 25,817 medical and paediatric out patients, 4,922 ophthalmic patients, distributed 3,656 eye glasses to eye patients, 300 ophthalmic surgeries, 2,783 dental out patients / surgeries, 910 general and gynaecological surgeries etc. The exercise shows that the people were treated free, and that many poor people who could not have afforded medical bill had opportunity to medical services. By this event, NDDC has contributed to the increase in the life span and good health of many Rivers State people. Then, if life is wealth, NDDC has saved and created more wealth for Rivers State.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL PROGRAMME

In line with the NDDC mandate to carry out projects and programmes that will enhance the protection of Niger Delta environment, and Rivers State in particular, the NDDC distributed twenty two (22) waste disposal trucks, and 132 bins to Rivers State youths through cooperative societies. The scheme has two major objectives namely – to create gainful employment for the youths through the use of the trucks for waste disposal, and to keep Rivers State clean. The study observed that the two objectives were achieved, as the beneficiaries of the scheme used the trucks to make living and also to dispose the waste, and the solid waste disposal programme has contributed to the cleanliness of Rivers State.

Finally, it is pertinent to state that based on the available data, NDDC activities have contributed to the socio-economic development of Rivers State within the period under review. The NDDC programmes and projects are good for the socio economic development of Rivers State, but the programmes and projects are not adequate to achieve the desired development in the state in the particular, and Niger Delta region at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study exposed the disposition of the Niger Delta people over their marginalization and underdevelopment issues arising from the oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities in the region, and neglect by previous governments. The poverty and underdevelopment in the region accounts for the emerging militancy and crisis that have attracted both local and international attentions. The crisis and violence prompted the Federal Government to establish the NDDC as an intervention agency to attend to the development challenges of the region. In a bid to achieve its development objective for the region, the Commission carried out several development

Development of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

programmes and projects in the region. The programmes and projects are good for the development of the region, but are not adequate to achieve the desired development. The study therefore recommends that NDDC should increase the number of their development programmes and projects, particularly in such areas as physical infrastructural development, school and capacity building, economic empowerment employment, and environmental protection. When these are applied, NDDC will achieve the desired sustainable development of Rivers State in particular, and Niger Delta region at large.

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Wilson, Goddey

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