

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Niger Delta University and the socio-economic life of Amassoma**

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The paper seeks to evaluate the impact of the establishment of Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State on the socio-economic life of Amassoma City, with emphasis on the growth in population of the area in relationship to the availability of basic social amenities. To achieve this objective, descriptive statistics was employed in analysing the primary data collected. Our findings reveals that there is insufficiency or neglect or total absence of basic necessities; this have put excessive pressure on these needs which has resulted in galloping inflation thus leading to adverse socio-economic effects of the inhabitants of Amassoma and its environs. The study also reveals that the cost of land has increased ten fold while buildings sprang up sporadically and haphazardly. Rent is exorbitant and the demand for basic infrastructure is on the increase but they are hardly found or totally absent in Amassoma. Crime has become the order of the day, as Amassoma and its environs is gradually becoming a nightmare to the inhabitants and visitors alike. The paper therefore recommend that the Rural, Local and State Government should intervene immediately to put an order in the development of the area in the provision of houses and other social amenities including crime prevention while the university authorities should come up with a plan for more student hostels on campus so that the university remains a place to be as the highest citadel of learning.

**Key words:** Socio-economic, university, house, population, necessity, students.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Amassoma is the headquarters' of Ogboin clan as well as Ogboin-North Rural Development Authority in the Southern-Ijaw Local Government area of Bayelsa State and the host community to the temporary site of Niger Delta University (NDU), Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. NDU was established in the year 2000 with its temporary site located at former Government Secondary School, Amassoma and since then, the university has witnessed a tremendous and steady growth rate in students' enrolment and staff population. The same applies to petty traders and businessmen, etc who flood the community to earn a living. This has resulted in an increase in the demand for facilities in Amassoma and thereby producing some socio-economic problems to the inhabitants.

Amassoma is located about 40 km to the South of Yenagoa the State capital with an altitude of 512 m

above sea level. It is bounded to the North by River Nun, West by Otuan and Wilberforce Island, East by Toru-Ebeni and the South by Ogobiri. Amassoma has a diameter of about 6 km East to West and approximately 2 km North to South. The population is heterogeneous, consisting of the native Ogboins, students, petty traders and businessmen from other parts of the State and country. It also hosts other institutions of learning which ranges from nursery, primary, junior and senior secondary schools.

In a bid to raise the educational standard of the State as well as to delist the State from the list of educationally disadvantaged State, the first civilian Executive Governor of the State, Chief Diepreye S. P. Alamiyeseigha Ph.D. (JP) launched major reforms of the State's educational system which culminated in the establishment of four tertiary institutions in different parts of the State, namely School of Nursing, Tombia-Ekpetiama, School of Public Health Technology, Otuogidi, Bayelsa State School of Arts and Science, Agudama-Epie and the famous Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island. All these were aimed

at increasing the literacy level and tertiary education enrolment status (figure) of the State where her indigenes seeking for higher education exceeds 85,000 students. Therefore, the establishment of these tertiary institutions was a move in the right direction as it ensures equitable and easy access to higher education to Bayelsans. While these higher education reforms especially NDU served as a relief to the entire population of Bayelsans, it marked the beginning of urban vices (problems) for the population of Amassoma.

However, despite the numerous challenges facing the new State that was created on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1996 by late General Sani Abacha of blessed memory the then Nigeria Military Head of State, Bayelsa State was faced with acute shortage of human, material and financial resources. Despite these huge challenges, the university still took off with twelve faculties in the 2001/2002 academic session with about 1000 students with 210 academic and 300 supportive staff. The university was conceived in the British tradition which seeks to foster the unity of the system while situating itself within the larger multilingual and multicultural context of Nigeria because its teaching and research programmes emphasizes relevance, encourages tolerance and promote creative, critical and independent thinking (Ekpang, 2008; Fan et al., 2008).

This study is justified on the premise that the existing literature which empirically assesses the socio-economic effects of the establishment of Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island on its environment is non-existent. This probably explains why currently, concrete efforts cannot be proposed by the university and other administrative authorities on issues relating to security, developmental projects as well as the provision of social amenities to the inhabitants of Amassoma. This study is therefore meant to bridge the gap and in this regard, it is structured to provide answers to these questions:

1. What are the problems associated with the increasing population of Amassoma community?
2. What are the level of demand and supply of housing, land and the effects of these on rent?
3. What is the population trend and dynamics within Amassoma and the demand and supply of portable water, electricity, transportation, and food?

### **The objective of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to assess the impact of the establishment of the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State on the socio-economic life of Amassoma. The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate the present socio-economic impact of these changes on the population and make projections of potential effects in the future.

2. To find out the rate of increase in staff population and student enrolment in the university.
3. To examine the demand and cost of housing and land in Amassoma and its environs.
4. To assess the trend in the demand for basic social amenities (that is, portable water, transportation-motorcycle, buses and taxis, electricity and recreational facility, etc in Amassoma).

### **Literature review**

A university is the expression of the needs of the community, a society or a nation, devoted to the fashioning of the intellect. It is dedicated to the pursuit and propagation of knowledge, to the study and clarification of values and to the advancement of the interests of the society and the nation at large. As a product of societal decision, the university acknowledges and advances the claims of the society on it. The claims of the society or the nation on the university are numerous. These include the academic, intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, economic, material, occupational, artistic, physical dimension of a social society as well as the discovery and advancing of these dimensions of the society is a critical function of the university. Therefore, the growth and development of a nation is determined by the extent to which her non-human resources are mobilized and utilized by the available human resources to accomplish set goals (Ekpo, 2007; Uzurumba et al., 2006; Dasgupta, 2000).

Furthermore, in most commonwealth countries, there is a close association between housing and town planning which acts in attempt to control over growth of the cities and the planning environment. This is not the situation in Amassoma, where there is no respected housing plan. Streets are very few or non-existence. The access to most buildings are difficult and therefore there is congestion which constitute health hazard since there is total absence of refuse disposal and recreational facilities in such a densely populated area hence the social impact of this to the students and the natives are unimaginable (Ekong, 2003; Luke and Watkins, 2002). Therefore, the demand for land, modern housing and other basic social amenities cannot be overemphasized as it is a necessity for the university community and it environs even though they attract rent. A recent survey by (WHO, 2009; Ndiyo, 2008; Dasgupta, 2000) estimates that about 56% of the world's urban dwellers are renters. In Amassoma, even after the developer has collected enough rents to cover the original amount invested for building the house, they still continue to increase the rents at the demerit of tenants, thereby putting socio-economic stress on the tenants. Then what is rent? Rent for an apartment is a price for services (that is, space or facility) that allows the owner to meet his obligations for the mortgage, insurance, tax and maintenance, etc of a building.

Therefore, the cost of construction determines the rent that must be charged if the rental revenues received are to be sufficient to indemnify the owner. It is therefore observed that one must give greater attention to the interrelationship between house price, costs and rents because the scarcity of living housing pushes up rental cost to an exorbitant height as exemplified in Abuja the capital of Nigeria (The Sun, 2010, UNCHS-Habitat, 2002; Dasgupta, 2000).

Given the terrain of the community as well as the failure of the indigenes to sell their land to outsiders have led to scarcity of land and where they exist, the price is very high. These have led to exorbitant price hike in the construction of houses. A large population of people living in a small area have put a tremendous pressure on refuse disposal, pipe borne water, electricity, social and recreational facilities. Government regulations on the price of land or government acquisition of land for resale to potential builders/developers in Bayelsa State is non-existent while the indigenes withhold their land and fail to develop them according to the trend for the demand for houses in Amassoma. This notwithstanding, Carter (1994) observed that it is self evident that towns grow outward from the centre or nucleus but as they do so the varied user of land become separated one from the other hence generating a standard pattern. Therefore, concerns over environmental quality must be balanced with housing availability and affordability. If one is bidding for land there is the option of bidding for a greater amount of cheaper land and since people do not want to be crowded, they can chose to live further outward and have more land. Furthermore, the analysis of housing in the community reveals that over 80% of the houses in the city were built between 1999 and 2006. Housing is therefore a major problem because of dissatisfaction with existing conditions. Housing problems are continuously created due to the population explosion of students and staff alike; therefore, industrial change, developmental efficiency, emotional security and social status are likely to influence the housing conditions.

## METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

### Source of data

To collect the primary data, a carefully structured questionnaire was designed and administered by trained and experienced research assistants. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to as many students, business operators, landlords, staff of the university, national union of road transports workers (NURTW), Amassoma branch and government officials as possible and collected the responses from the respondents through research assistants.

The measuring instrument used by the researcher for this study is a four-point Likert-type questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section "A" had to do with the respondent's personal information, Section "B" has fifteen (15) items four-point Likert-type while Section "C" has ten (10) questionnaire items to measure the socio-economic impact of the establishment of the Niger Delta University on Amassoma City. The

instrument was developed by firstly, making a list of phrases and words that are possible indicators of each of the variables involved in the study. Each response was given a degree of scores

### Data analysis

The data for this study was collected between December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010. Data analysis was undertaken using qualitative as well as quantitative techniques. It is expected that a major segment of the information to be collected during the survey will be qualitative and may not be easily quantified. Quantitative techniques will be used to measure ethnographic characteristic of sample. Descriptive statistics (tables, frequencies, percentages, histogram, graphs, standard deviation, means, proportion, etc) are employed in most analysis in summarizing trends, changes and comparisons across certain characteristics (Ndiyo et al., 2005). In this study, the data collected would be analyzed with relevant statistical tools to test for the socio-economic impact of the establishment of Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. Ndiyo et al. (2005) recommended the use of simple percentage and chi-square among others in statistical analysis of descriptive studies although this is not a rigid rule.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The proportion of students enrolled increased from about 1,000 in 2001 to 3,482 in 2010 and that of academic staff increased from 210 to 649 while that of supportive (non-academic) staff increased from 300 to 3,512 (Junior 3,112 and senior 401) within the same period. Male students have increased from about 500 in 2001 to 1,380 in 2010 while female students went from 700 to 2,102. But the student hotels on campus have provision for only 360 female students. These figures show that the population of staff from 2001 to 2010 has increased more than ten folds while that of students has increased more than three times (Table 1). According to Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Yenagoa, Southern-Ijaw Local Government Council and the Ogboin-North Rural Development Area, the overall population of Amassoma, which was estimated at 25,000 in 1990, is now more than 100,000.

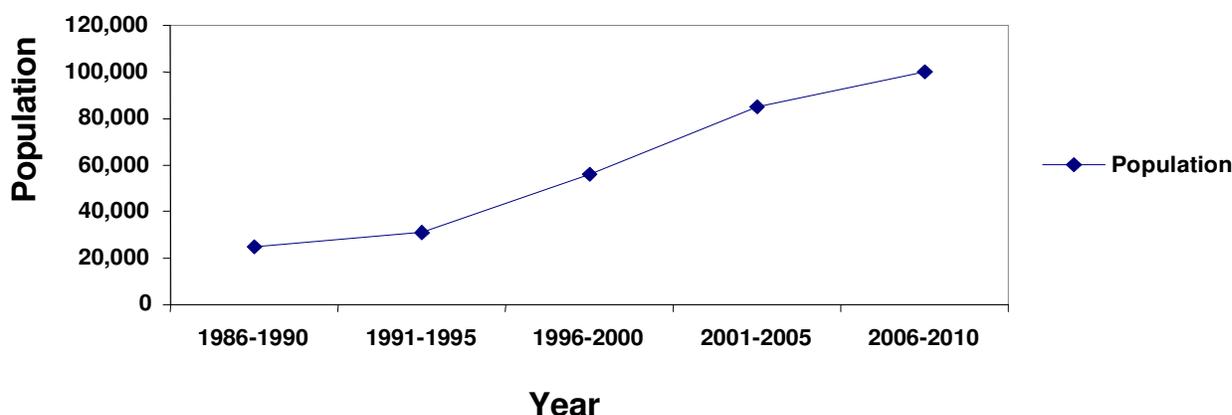
The growth in population of the inhabitant of Amassoma and its environs has been phenomenal since the establishment of Niger Delta University as shown in Figure 1 thus posing stress on available social amenities such as housing etc and other basic necessities as well as an increase in social vices such as rape and armed robbery as well as other crimes in the area.

The yearly or annual registered students' enrolment in Niger Delta University (NDU), Wilberforce Island since its inception in 2001 as represented in Table 1, reveals an undulating trend while the nine years' cumulative enrolment trend in the twelve faculties of the university is represented in a pie chart with their percentage distribution as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2 indicates that the admission trend of the institution (NDU) is prone towards the Management Sciences and the Engineering based courses.

**Table 1.** Statistics of registered students from 2001 to 2010 session in NDU.

Faculty	Session								
	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Agricultural technology	NA	NA	27	38	132	148	122	189	308
Arts	NA	NA	124	286	254	244	401	316	461
Education	NA	NA	279	436	345	244	310	397	510
Engineering	NA	NA	382	436	294	366	377	473	514
Law	NA	NA	181	181	129	**	**	162	64
Management Scs.	NA	NA	542	605	292	395	406	409	287
Medical laboratory science	NA	NA	5	35	45	**	**	**	88
Medicine	NA	NA	177	87	117	**	**	125	59
Nursing	NA	NA	38	52	68	73	61	91	73
Pharmacy	NA	NA	82	66	78	77	80	108	78
Sciences	NA	NA	166	256	305	276	446	474	667
Social sciences	NA	NA	337	390	251	287	374	362	373
Total	NA	NA	2340	2868	2310	2110	2577	3106	3482

NA: Not available; \*\*: no admission. Source: Admission Office, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island.

**Figure 1.** Population growth in Amassoma. Source: Field Survey, 2010.

The analysis of the cost of land from 2001 to 2009 and related properties as shown in Figure 3 reveals a growing trend that is increasing in an alarming rate.

The cost of a standard plot measuring 15 by 30 m has increased over twenty fold over this period and this has been accompanied by an equivalent increase in rents within the same period a situation that is causing a socio-economic stress on both the students and other inhabitants living in Amassoma and its environs as shown in Figure 2 and Table 2. Prior to 2001, the rents for a single room was about N800 per month but increased to N1,500 in 2001, N2,500 in 2005 and N3,500 in 2009. While the variation in rents apartments for self contains, one, two and three bedroom flats for the same periods are presented in Table 2. The table reveals that the rate of increase in rents in Amassoma and its environs does not depends on costs associated with maintenance,

tax payment, etc as exemplified in the literature review.

### The demand for house in Amasoma and its environs

Economic charges always lead to social changes too but the demand for housing is more proportionate to supply of houses. Hence, the demand for houses in Amassoma and its surroundings has been on the increase since the establishment of the university but the supply of building has not matched this demand as shown in Table 2. Figure 3 shows a graph of the demand and supply of self contains in Amassoma and its environs since the inception of the university to date.

Figure 3 reveals that the demand for self contain is far above its supply. This situation exist because the indigenes are not willing to sell their land to would be

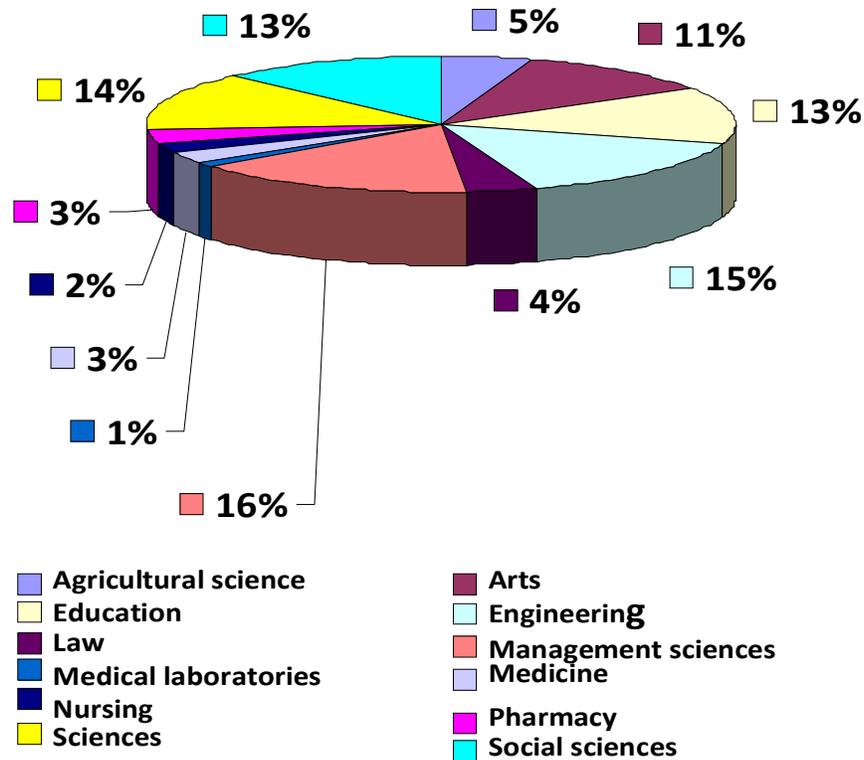


Figure 2. Nine years' cumulative faculty student's enrolment trend. Source: Field Survey, 2010.

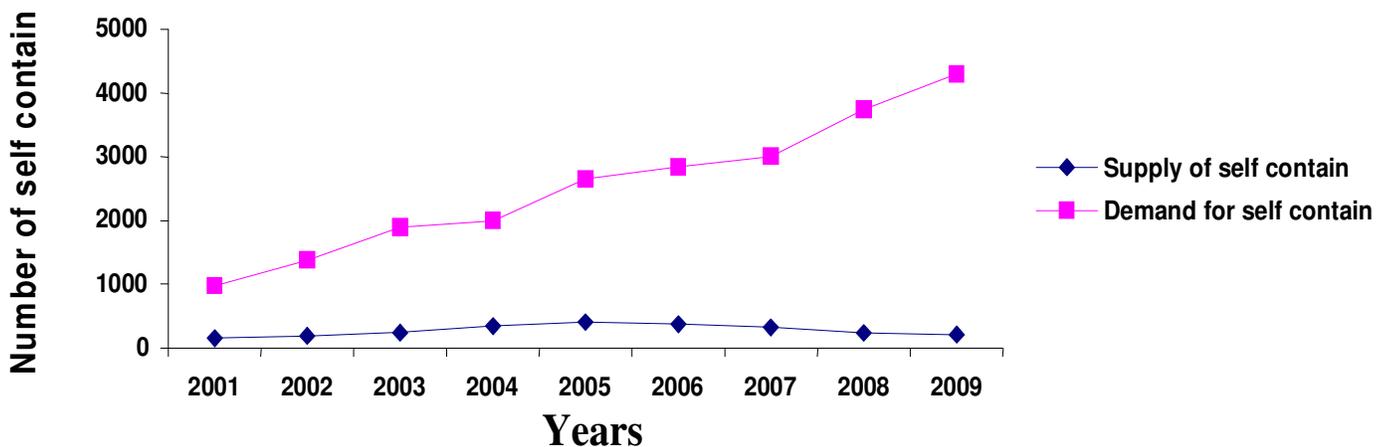


Figure 3. The graph of supply and demand for self contain from 2001 to 2009.

developer while the government at all levels have fail to acquire and built houses to ameliorate the situation. This has led to an exorbitant increase in house rent in the area. It is therefore projected that to avert this ugly trend, an average of about 4000 self contain per year need to be built in the area for the next eight years while this should be supported by an average of 2500 rooms per year.

### The economic and social impact

Given the aforementioned trend, it is believed that the demand for food items will grow rapidly and to get the corresponding supply of food would not be easy. The dominant factor determining food demand in an area has been the population growth. Therefore, the general increase and demand for facilities has equally led to the

**Table 2.** Apartment rentage from 2001 to 2009.

Type of house	Years((N))									
	Before 2001 (N)	2001 (N)	2002 (N)	2003 (N)	2004(N)	2005 (N)	2006 (N)	2007(N)	2008 (N)	2009(N)
1 Room	800	1,500	2,000	2,000	2,300	2,500	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,500
2 Room	1,300	1,800	2,300	2,300	3,000	3,000	3,500	3,500	3,500	4,000
3 Rooms	1,700	2,500	2,500	2,500	3,500	3,500	4,000	4,500	4,500	5,000
1 Bedroom flat	NA	NA	80,000	80,000	<b>95,000</b>	95,000	100,000	100,000	120,000	120,000
2 Bedroom flat	NA	NA	100,000	100,000	120,000	120,000	150,000	150,000	180,000	180,000
3 Bedroom flat	NA	NA	150,000	150,000	200,000	200,000	230,000	230,000	250,000	250,000

NA: Such houses was not available for rent; the rent for self contain and flats are on yearly basis; N, naira (the Nigerian currency). Source: Fieldwork, 2010.

establishment of markets, hospitals, stores, restaurants, kiosks, bars, cyber cafes, computer centre, hair/barbing saloons, private schools, etc. Also, businesses around the main gate/junction of the university are on the increase as well as food supplies but the prices are exorbitant. There are many eatery and restaurants that provides for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There is also a market and various provision stores at people disposal. The World Bank (2008) observed that markets have an influence on the allocation of resources on capital, labour as well as on many microeconomic decisions within the economy.

The study also reveals that there has been an increase in the number of provision stores, yet the goods in these stores are very expensive. The main factor responsible for this is population explosion or growth. However, in a market driven economy, not only do prices differ from one good to another in such a way that it can be seem illogical but that the price for a single commodity can fluctuate over time. Hence, the shifting of demand/supply for foods are therefore reflected in price changes and it is price that equates demand with supply. IFAD (2007) opined that prices for food used to very cheap before the start of the liberalization process of the mid 1980s but the

case of Amassoma include population explosion. Also, in Amassoma, there is no pipe borne water, electricity, good transport system etc. Audu (2008) observed that high prices and high profit provides market signals for expansion of supply while low prices and low profits provide market signals for contraction of supply which is in consonance with economic theory.

The demand for pipe borne water and electricity is very high in Amassoma but it is non-existence as the inhabitants rely solely on borehole water and personal generator (both on campus and off campus) for survival, therefore, this is as a result of government total neglect to its social responsibility to the people. Furthermore, the number of registered buses and taxis from 2001 to 2009 are as shown in Figure 4. There has been a steady increase in buses and taxis from Bayelsa State transport company (BTC) and the National Union of Road Transports Workers (NURTW) and this is understandable due to the population explosion and the quest to maximise profit.

Prior to May 2005, Amassoma was only accessible by water hence the phenomenal increase in speed boats to convey passengers from Yenagoa and other parts of the State to Amasoma but with the emergence of road, there

was a sharp decline in water transport as exemplified in Figure 4. The university as its welfare scheme also acquired buses to convey both students and staff to Yenagoa the State capital as shown in Figure 4. However, the growth in commercial transportation in the area is as a result of it high viability or profit because of the number of passengers and goods that ply the road on a daily basis. The rapid population growth in Amassoma has led to insecurity with student's occasional harassment by people of the underworld. Despite the intervention of the university authority and government, the harassment has still continued unabated. The trend in these increases will definitely continue to rise as the student enrolment increases and this will lead to greater negative socio-economic impact on the inhabitants.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A holistic assessment of the extent of the effects of the establishment of Niger delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State in its temporary site at Amassoma in 2001 on the socio-economic life of the inhabitants reveals an increasing

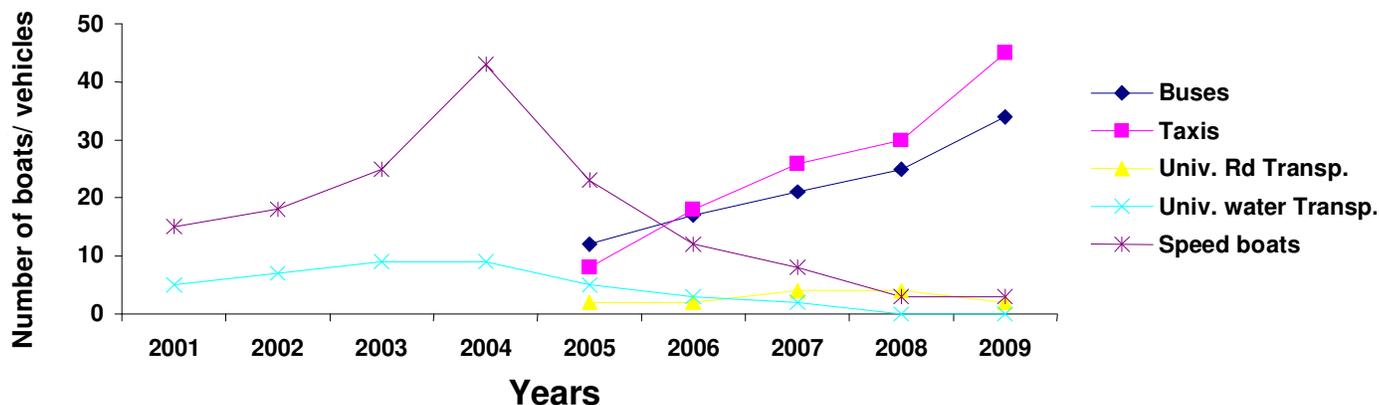


Figure 4. Trend in registered speedboats, buses and taxis from 2001 to 2009.

trend in the demand and supply of land, housing and other social amenities. The demand for completed apartments far outweigh its supply while there is insufficient or total absence of portable drinking water, electricity, streets, etc and it is projected that the cost of land will triple in the next few years if not properly checked by government.

The projection of the various trends into the future will be useful for identifying new areas for further settlement, planned developmental projects as well as the provision of social services such as hospitals, health centres, refuse disposal, security and above all a better control of rents for students who live in off campus. It is hoped that this will reduce the mistake of the past nine years of the existence of Niger Delta University, which has been marred by uncontrollable housing project and the high demand for facilities which constitute negative socio-economic consequences on the people living in the area and its surrounding environment. These increases have drastically changed the socio-economic life of the natives from a purely rural community to a densely populated cosmopolitan settlement with insecurity, high cost of living as well as total absent of recreational facilities, pipe borne water and electricity for the inhabitants. The latter must be provided if Amassoma is to attain the status of an urban city.

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