

Review

Niger delta struggle: Assessment of selected Nigerians' perceptions

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This study was meant to evaluate happenings in the Niger Delta region arising from agitations for physical development for the region in terms of provision of long-lasting infrastructural facilities, dependable social amenities, control of environmental pollution ravaging the area and physical transformation of some selected locations in the region into mega cities. It is also the desire of the Niger Delta people to be involved in resource control and political representation and participation. Similarly, the region wants genuine employment generation for their teeming unemployed youths who are university graduates, polytechnic graduates, colleges of Education's products, school certificate holders and some other categories of unemployed youths. Essentially, the study was directed at some selected Nigerians from different ethnic affiliation in order to know their feelings and perceptions about the struggles of the Niger Delta people in terms of the on-going oppression and marginalization they have been going through. A total of 211 participants were selected within Ibadan metropolis and in some other adjoining locations around the metropolis. The participants were made up of 117 (55.5%) males and 94 (44.5%) females from different age brackets. Questionnaire format was designated for data collected from the participants. Only descriptive statistics was employed for data analysis. The results vividly showed that 88.2% of the participants agreed that "Niger Delta region has suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country while only 11.8% disagreed to that. Similarly, the result revealed that 64.5% of the participants did agree that real attention has not been paid to the Niger Delta region while 35.5% of the participants did not agree to that. In another vein, 91.9% of the study participants agreed that 'the people in the region deserve commensurable physical development going by the region while only 8.1% did not agree to that. Also, 83.9% of the participants agreed that 'the sources of livelihood of the people in the Niger Delta region have been adversely affected by oil exploration while only 16.7% did not agree to this. The results were discussed and it was clearly pointed out that, in actual fact, the Niger Delta region deserves urgent attention from the government in terms of rapid physical transformation of the region. The region should be provided with dependable and long-lasting social amenities and infrastructural facilities.

Key words: Niger Delta Region, development, militias, Nigerians, Ibadan metropolis, expectations.

INTRODUCTION

One major issue of concern to the present political dispensation has been on how to address the age-long crisis that has engulfed the Niger Delta region. The crisis has drawn both local and international attentions. In a way, various efforts that have been put in place to bringing lasting solution to the lingering crisis in the region have not been yielding positive results. Essentially, there is need to introduce the region called Niger Delta region and some of the issues of concern in

the region. In clear terms, the Niger Delta, the delta of the Niger River in Nigeria is seen as a densely populated region sometimes called the Oil Rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The area was the British Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 until 1893 when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta). The Niger Delta as now defined officially by the Nigerian

Government extends over about 70,000 km² and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. Historically and cartographically, it consists of present day Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. In the year 2000, however, Obasanjo's regime expanded its definition to include Abia State, Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Edo State, Imo State and Ondo State. Some 31 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups, speaking some 250 dialects have been found to live in the Delta (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta). Similarly, it is on record as noted as thus, "The western Niger Delta has the Ijaw being in the majority. Their livelihoods are primarily based on fishing and farming.

The eastern Niger Delta region has the Efik people (Annang/Efik/Ibibio who are all related with a common language and ancestors were all referred to as Efik or Calabar people in early Nigerian history). Their capital city at Calabar located at the coastal southeast of Nigeria (eastern Niger Delta) served as the major trading and shipping center during the pre-colonial and colonial period. Calabar also served first capital of Nigeria and the point of entry of Western religion and Western education into southeastern Nigeria. The combined population of the Ibibio, Annang and Efik people are the fourth largest language group in Nigeria" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta). In a way, it is viewed that, "Nigeria has become Africa's biggest producer of petroleum including many oil wells in the Oil Rivers. Some 2 million barrels a day are extracted in the Niger Delta. Since 1975, the region has accounted for more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings. Much of the natural gas extracted in oil wells in Delta is immediately burned or flared into the air at a rate of approximately 70 million m³ per day. This is equivalent to 41% of African natural gas consumption and forms the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions on the planet. The environmental devastation associated with the industry and the lack of distribution of oil wealth have been the source and/or key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including recent guerilla activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta). It is on a good note that activities of local indigenous people against commercial oil refineries and pipelines have destabilized the region. Recently foreign employees of Shell, the primary corporation operating in the region were taken hostage by outraged local people. Such activities have also resulted in greater governmental concern with the area, and the mobilization of the Nigerian army and coastguard into the region (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta).

Essentially, it is put that "conflict in the Niger Delta arose in the early 1990s due to tensions between the foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt they were being

exploited, particularly the Ogoni as well as the Ijaw in the late 1990s. Ethnic and political unrest has continued throughout the 1990s and persists as of 2007 despite the conversion to democracy and the election of the Obasanjo government in 1999. Competition for oil wealth has fuelled violence between innumerable ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military and police forces (notably the Nigerian Mobile Police)

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta). Very importantly, the Niger Delta stands at the crossroads of contemporary Nigerian politics. With the growth of oil-revenues to the Delta states – now standing at 13% - the region remains desperately poor, and it is the deepening material and political grievances that stem from the region's exclusion that place the Niger Delta at the confluence of the four most pressing political issues in the federation in the wake of the April 2003 elections. First, the efforts led by a number of Delta states for "resource control," which in effect means expanded local access to oil and oil revenues. Secondly, the struggle for self-determination of the minority people and the clamor for a sovereign national conference to rewrite the federal constitution is another identified political issue. Thirdly, a crisis of rule in the region as a number of state and local governments are rendered helpless by militant youth movements, growing insecurity and intra-community, inter-ethnic and state violence (Douglas et al., 2004).

In another vein, it is highlighted that the crisis in the Niger Delta is not complex by itself but the approach to resolving it makes it complex and dangerous. Accordingly, it is noted that the people are not asking for anything out of the ordinary, since the region is a home to Nigeria's oil wealth remains the most impoverished community in the nation (Dike, 2007). On a good note, it is expressed that reports note the people in Niger Delta region lack basic infrastructure -good network of roads, health care facilities, good schools and portable water (Dike, 2007). Dike puts forward as thus:

"The recent sad images of the poor quality of life in the creeks shown to the world on CNN (and in the newspapers) show that the oil wealth is not being used to develop the area. The successive governments have collected billions of dollars from the land over the decades, but little (if any) has been invested in the area to improve the people's living conditions".

It is established that the main causes of Niger Delta crisis include greed and selfishness, deprivation and poverty (Dike, 2007) and "social injustice" (Dike, 2007). Accordingly, the Niger Delta is contributing a lot to the economic well being of Nigeria and it is getting nothing but destruction in return (Dike, 2007). It is also noted

that the oil revenue allocation has been the subject of much contention well before Nigeria gained its independence. Allocations have varied from as much as 50% owing to the first Republic's high degree of regional autonomy and as low as 10% during the military dictatorships (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta). It is on a good note that crude oil resource in the Niger delta region gives the Nigeria government about US\$ 20 million a day. It is revealed that Nigeria boasts of over 21 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, and that Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer and the world's sixth most important exporter of crude oil with the bulk of its exports going to the United States (Onduku, 2003). Accordingly, it is being emphasized as that the people of the Niger Delta believe that they have no substantial benefit to show for their sacrifices, despite being the 'goose that laid the golden egg' – the economic success that underpins the unity of the Nigerian state" (Onduku, 2003). It is also emphasized that the people of Niger Delta region also believe they are now at that stage in history when they must actualize their own wise-saying which states that "anyone who takes what belongs to a child and raises his/her hand up; when he gets tired must bring down his hand and the child will take back his objects" (what belongs to him) (Onduku, 2003).

A major issue again is that security agents have always responded to demands put forward by the people of the Niger Delta in a brutal manner: many of the locals have been maimed, women raped and many have met untimely deaths. It is revealed that local villages like Odi, Opia-Ikenyan, Okerenkoko and Ogoniland have been destroyed by the Nigerian military through the use of excessive force in counter-insurgency measures (Onduku, 2003). In his view, Ikelegbe (2005) notes that "the Niger Delta region is embroiled in resistance against the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies, and that the region is generally restive, with pockets of insurrection and armed rebellion. Accordingly, decades of oil exploitation, environmental degradation and state neglect has created an impoverished, marginalized and exploited citizenry which after more than two decades produced a resistance of which the youth has been a vanguard. Ikelegbe highlights that the Niger Delta is today a region of intense hostilities, violent confrontations and criminal violence and that it is pervaded by a proliferation of arms and institutions and agencies of.....of importance to this study is the need to provide an empirical information as regards to the agitations for oil-based benefits by individuals in the Niger Delta region, particularly the youths of the region.

Table 1 gives a good picture of this, as shown in the work of Ikelegbe (2005). As shown in Table 1, it is established that the people of the Niger delta region have different needs which they are agitating for. It is very clear that the people of the Niger Delta region

have been demanding for development, environmental compensation, employment, scholars, electricity, registration of own indigenous contractor, etc. Now, there is a question, are the people demanding for too much? Interestingly, these people are not demanding for too much; they are actually demanding for what any other community outside the region can demand for. So, why has it taken the people of the region so long to enjoy the benefits of having oil reserves, gas reserves, palm-oil, hydrocarbon and many other natural deposits? This paper is actually meant to evaluate the causes of the delay in bringing about real physical and infrastructural development in the Niger Delta Region among some selected Nigerians, particularly some individuals from the region, despite promises made to develop the region. In view of this, the following research questions are put forward: 1) Why has people in Niger –Delta region suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country; 2) why has real attention not being paid to the region? 3) why do the people in the region deserve commensurable physical development based on the availability of large deposits of oil reserves, gas reserves and many others? 4) do you know that the sources of livelihoods of the people in the Niger Delta region have been adversely affected by oil exploration, gas flaring and many other environmental hazards resulting from oil extraction? 5) do you know that poverty has become the order of the day for the people of the Niger delta region? 6) do you know that the Niger Delta people do not deserve the political marginalization they are going through? 7) do you think the agitation for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta region is too much? 8) do you really know that the agitations for resource control, development and proper political representation have actually ignited the involvement of armed gangs, ethnic militias, youth militias, which have catapulted into acts of terrorism in region?

Recent developments in Niger Delta Region: A look at the 2009 events: Specific emphasis on May, 2009

The recent happenings in Niger Delta region have become more worrisome and a real threat to national security. These people in the Niger Delta region have rights to ask for what they want. They say they want good roads, good bridges, genuine employment generation, satisfactory resource control, political representation and participation, pipe borne water, electricity supply and many more facilities that would enhance their living conditions. Yet, all these expectations are still not being enjoyed by the Niger Delta people. The oil companies operating in the region are still exploiting the people in the region; their so-called corrupt leaders are still exploiting them; their political representatives at every tier of government are

Table 1. Selected cases of youth actions in respect of oil based resource. Benefits (2000 – 2003).

S/N	Incidents time	MNC	Community youth group ethnic group state	Demands
1	Invasion of Qua Iboe Terminal seizure of 3 vessels production disruption/April 2000.	Exxon Mobil	Community Youths/Ibenu community Aqua Ibom state.	Electricity.
2	Occupation of shell rigs at Tunu and Opukulli 165 staff hostage 1 July-August 2000.	Shell	Militant youths of Egbema, Agalabiri and Agbichiama communities/Bayelsa state.	Jobs.
3	Stoppage of work on gas project, shut down of 5 flow stations/January 2001.	shell	Youths of Odidi/Delta state.	Facilities registration of indigenous contractors.
4	Seizure of shell housing estate, kolo creek camp/February 2001.	Shell	Youths of Otuasega/Bayelsa state.	Employment scholarships and environmental compensation employment.
5	Sealing off of off shore oil ring, hostage of 88 workers/April 2002.	Chevron/Texaco	Ilaje youths/Ondo state.	Employment.
6	Occupation of Itobele flow stations/may 2002.	Shell	Ogboloma youth federation, ijaw/Bayelsa state.	Employment scholarships.
7	Abduction of staff/July 2003.	Chevron/Texaco	Egbeme national front youth\Delta state.	Development and empowerment.
8	Invasions of premises/August 2003.	Oil servicing Co.	Itsekiri community youths/Delta state.	Employment.

Sources: Abugu (2000) and Ikelegbe (2005).

not doing anything to ameliorate the bad conditions. Today, the situation has led to the militarization of the region. Militant groups have violently emerged with the use of sophisticated arms and ammunitions. These groups have been struggling to ensure that their long-desired needs, being struggled for over the years by the fathers and fore fathers are met. The Federal government of Nigeria has not done anything meaningful and resourceful to ameliorate the suffering of the people in the region. Daily reports of cases of killed women, children and even youths fill our

newspapers. This is saddening! Now, it is observed very recently by Adebayo (Saturday Punch, May 16, 2009) that, "Twenty-four hours to the end of the ultimatum issued by the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta to oil companies operating in the region to evacuate their employees and shut down, the Federal Government on Friday, launched a major operation to dislodge the militants". Accordingly, it is revealed that "MEND had on Wednesday engaged troops" of the Joint Task Force in a fierce battle in which several soldiers were feared

dead and their weapons seized. The militants also took 15 foreigners hostage (Saturday Punch learnt that President Umaru Yar'adua was angry about the number of casualties on the part of the J.T.F and consequently ordered that camps of the militants must be invaded and their leaders captured dead or alive.

As a result, two warships and 14 gunboats were in the early hours of Friday deployed in the coastal Ijaw communities in Delta State. Four helicopters, gunboats were also deployed to attack the identified militants' hideouts and

camps.....” (Adebayo, 2009).

It was revealed that some identified Ijaw communities like Oporoza, Kunukunuma, Okerenkoko and Kuruties where leaders of the militants groups are believed to be hiding came under heavy bombardment by the JTF troops. In a similar development, one particular popular camp 5 operated by a well known militant Chief Government Ekpomukpolo alias Tompolo in Delta State was informed to have been razed. On this development it was observed that the fate of the warlord and even his lieutenants could not be ascertained as at 4 pm on Friday (May 15, 2009) (Adebayo, 2009). Further, it was learnt that the full preparedness of JTF to avenge the killings emerged on Thursday night when movement of soldiers and military equipment into Warri Port for onward Journey to Gbaramatu communities and the two militants' camps was found noticed (Adebayo, 2009). The unfortunate side to this recent development in the Niger Delta region was the comments given by the Ijaw National leaders, Chief Edwin Clark who noted that the Federal Government had declared total war on the Ijaw nation (Adebayo, 2009). In specific terms, Clark was said to have reported that, “the military (JTF) has declared total war on our people in Escravos in Delta State; they are bombing from the air and water, killing innocent children and women in Okerenkoko, Oporoza, Kurutie and Kunukunuwa; they (Ijaw people) are seeking for safety in the bush”; “Please intervene immediately by telling Mr. President not to declare total war on fellow Nigerians particularly when the Vice President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan is away in Europe on official mission”. The consequence of this unwholesome attack on our people would be very disastrous to the nation as a whole; God will save us from this oppression and enslavement (Adebayo, 2009). The issue now is that what seems to be the militarization of the Niger Delta region was directly caused by the ‘government’.

The armed militant groups (particularly MEND) who operate in the region have been reportedly linked up with obtaining their arms and ammunitions from some corrupt military men. This is one of the causes of the armed militancy in the region. By and large, what seems to be peaceful protest usually being embarked upon by the men and women in the Niger Delta region in the time past had subsequently turned out to be destructive protests? The youths, children and the adults have protested peacefully in the time past to drive home their age-long demands which were never met by the successive governments in Nigeria. The question now is why has it taken the Federal Government so long to peacefully address the demands of the Niger Delta people? So to say, the people in the region needed physical development, infrastructural facilities, social amenities, satisfactory resource control, employment opportunities, political representation and participation and some other expected demands, at

least for a region that absolutely sustains, maintains and retains Nigerian Economy should be adequately met. A lot is made in foreign currencies in the area of oil and gas exploration and exploitation; are the people demanding too much, knowing fully well that their farmlands, rivers in which they used to fish and many other natural facilities they once lived on have been adversely affected by oil spillage? It is really sad for the turn of events in the Niger Delta region.

The Federal Government has now shown clearly that she is not interested in any form of development for the region, going by the recent bombardment in the region in which some innocents citizens (mostly women and children had been reportedly killed and over 200,000 innocent citizens have been made to live their homes for safety; some have lost their homes due to the recent air strike. What a sad and dangerous development!

Reports from the Punch, Sunday 17, May 2009

The rising tension in the Niger Delta has become more worrisome to stakeholders, innocent citizens and many other concerned individuals, both within the country and outside the country. It is reported that “tension heightened in the restive Niger Delta on Saturday as uncertainties over the fate of 13 foreign nationals in the hands of militants persisted. The 13, identified as Filipinos were among those feared dead in the Friday's exchange between the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, Operation Restore Hope and the Warlords in the region” (Adebayo, 2009). It was on record that with the increasing search for the foreigners, the militants were said to have used dynamites on early Saturday to blow up the Escravos/Warri/Kaduna crude pipeline popularly known as Chanomi creeks pipeline and Escravos base of the American oil giant, Chevron Nigeria limited. Accordingly, the Chanomi creeks pipeline which was said to have conveyed crude oil from the fields of CNL in Escravos to Warri and Kaduna refineries was recently repaired for \$57 million. Importantly, the two refining plants were said to rely on the crude supplied through the pipelines for their operations and the fate of the pipelines being shut down is imminent (Adebayo, 2009). Still, based on Sunday Punch findings on Saturday, it was revealed that “only “...10, out of the 23 hostages-four Nigerians and 19 Filipinos-seized by the militants aboard two ocean going ships, CM spirit and MT chikana, on Wednesday were rescued after the Federal troops on Friday took over the camp 5 based of Chief Government Ekpomukpolo whose men were believed to have abducted the victims” (Adebayo, 2009).

In a similar development, it was reported that the Federal troops were found to have been on red alert following the threat by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta to block all vessels’

movement being found through Port Harcourt channels, Onne, Eket and Bonny on Saturday night. Accordingly, it was made known that other militants' leaders in the region planned the action in solidarity with Ekpomukpolo. The MEND had targeted JTF locations for attacks (Adebayo, 2009).

Reports from the punch, Monday 18, May, 2009

A number of other events were also unfolded, going by the happenings on Sunday, still being reported on Monday May 18, 2009 by Punch. It was gathered that the face-off between the joint Task Force in the Niger Delta and militants came to the fifth day on Sunday with an unspecified number of persons including a pregnant woman were found killed. In a similar vein, apart from 20,000 innocent citizens who were said to have been trapped, another Filipino hostage and a nine-year old were reported to have been killed (Adebayo and Olorok, 2009). Further, it was reported that a visit to Ogbe-Ijoh General Hospital in Warri South-West LGA revealed that 5,000 displaced persons were seen weeping as efforts were being made by the council officials to rehabilitate them. In the vein, the displaced including seven youth corps members were said to give horriblescenes of the fighting. Accordingly, it was gathered that, "the spokesman of the corps members, Mr. Lanre Abayomi said they were in a library in Oporoza when the JTF operatives invaded the community in jet fighters and gunboats. Abayomi who attributed their escape into Warri to divine intervention claimed that many buildings were attacked from the air by the troops" (Adebayo and Olorok, 2009).

METHODS

Design

This study was an exploratory research study designed to investigate perceived causes of delay in transforming the region despite agitations from the residents, stakeholders, ethnic militias and some other existing social movements in the region.

Setting

The study was carried out in some designated locations within Ibadan metropolis and some other adjoining locations around Ibadan metropolis. The designated locations have been identified to house a number of people from different states of origin and also of different ethnic affiliations. These designated locations include:

- 1) Ibadan North West Local Government Area.
- 2) Ibadan North Local Government Area.
- 3) Ibadan North-East Local Government Area.
- 4) Ibadan South-West Local Government Area.
- 5) Ibadan South-East Local Government Area.

Other are locations are:

- 6) Akinyele Local Government Area.
- 7) Ona-Ara Local Government Area.
- 8) Oluyole Local Government Area.
- 9) Ido Local Government Area.

The participants were approached in different work settings which included secondary school institutions, higher institutions of learning, business centers, cybercafés, banks, insurance companies and many others.

Participants

The participants for this study were approached at different work settings and neighbourhood settings in the selected locations. A total of 211 participants took part in the study. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are described in Table 2.

Instrument

Questionnaires were used for data collection for the study. The questionnaires were designed to have three sections in all. Section A was meant to obtain some socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The characteristics include gender, age, educational status, religion, location, state of origin, ethnic background, etc Section B was designed to elicit some responses in the area of delay in transforming the Niger Delta region.

PROCEDURES

The data for the study were collected with the assistance of some recruited, but trained research assistants who assisted in data collection in the designated locations (Ibadan metropolis and other adjoining cities such as Akinyele Local Government Area, Ona-Ara Local Government Area).

Statistical analysis

The collected data for the study were analyzed using only the 'descriptive statistics'. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 10.0 was employed for statistical data analysis.

RESULTS

The obtained data for the study were analyzed using simple 'descriptive statistics' in form of simple percentages. The results of the study are presented Table 3. The result on Table 3 revealed that 88.2% of the participants for the study responded that 'Niger-Delta region has suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country while 11.8% of the participants responded that it is not true that 'Niger-Delta region has suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country. It was revealed on Table 4 that 64.5% of the participants agreed that, 'to the best of their knowledge, real attention is not being paid to the Niger Delta region while 35.5% did not agree to this. It was found on Table 5 that 91.9% of the participants

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristic of the study participants.

Variable	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	117	55.5
Female	94	44.5
Age		
Under 30 years	26	12.3
31-40 years	41	19.4
41-50 years	83	39.3
51-60 years	37	17.5
61 years and above	24	11.4
Marital status		
Single/never married	28	13.3
Married	169	80.1
Divorced	5	2.4
Separated	2	0.9
Widowed	7	3.3
Religion		
Christianity	117	55.5
Muslim	84	39.8
Others	10	4.7
Educational qualifications		
SSCE/GCE	41	19.4
OND/HND	52	24.6
HND	36	17.1
First degree	53	25.1
Masters degree	15	7.1
Doctorate degree	6	2.8
Others	8	3.8
Total	211	100
Locations		
Ibadan North West Local Government Area	32	15.2
Ibadan North Local Government Area	29	13.7
Ibadan North-East Local Government Area	35	16.6
Ibadan South-West Local Government Area	23	10.9
Ibadan South-East Local Government Area	37	17.5
Akinyele Local Government Area	26	12.3
Ona-Ara Local Government Area	29	13.7
Total	211	100
State of origin		
Edo State	15	7.1
Anambra State	13	6.2
Delta State	20	9.5
Akwa-Ibom State	16	7.6
Ondo State	22	10.4
Osun State	17	8.1
Ekiti State	12	5.7

Table 2. Cont.d

Kano State	10	4.7
Bayelsa State	18	8.5
Benue State	21	9.9
Rivers State	19	9.0
Kaduna State	16	7.6
Ogun State	12	5.7
Total	211	100

Table 3. Niger –Delta region has suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	186	88.2
Disagree	25	11.8
Total	211	100

Table 4. To the best of my knowledge, real attention is not being paid to the Niger-Delta region.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	136	64.5
Disagree	75	35.5
Total	211	100

Table 5. The people in the region deserve commensurable physical development going by the abundant deposits of oil and gas in the region.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	194	91.9
Disagree	17	8.1
Total	211	100

indicated that ‘the people in the region deserve commensurable physical development’ while only 8.1% of the participants did not agree to this. It was made clear on Table 6 that 83.9% of the participants for the study actually agreed that ‘the sources of livelihood of the people in the Niger Delta region have been adversely affected by oil exploration while only 16.1% did not agree to this. The result on Table 7 showed that 77.3% of the participants for the study were found to respond positively that ‘poverty has become the order of the day for the people in the Niger Delta region while 22.7% were found to respond negatively towards that. It was made clear also on Table 8 that 65.9% of the participants for the study agreed that ‘the Niger Delta people do not deserve the political marginalization they have been going through’ while 34.1% disagreed to that.

The result on Table 9 revealed that 73.9% of the participants did agree that ‘the agitations for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta region are not much while only 26.1% disagreed to that statement. The result on Table 10 pointedly showed that 59.7% of the participants agreed that ‘the agitations for resource control, development and proper political representation have actually ignited the involvement of armed gangs, ethnic militias, youth militias which have now catapulted into acts of terrorism in the region while 40.3% of the participants were found to disagree to that fact.

DISCUSSION

This study was actually designed to be an explorative research study designed to evaluate from some

Table 6. The sources of livelihood of the people in the Niger delta region have been adversely affected by oil exploration.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	177	83.9
Disagree	34	16.1
Total	211	100

Table 7. Poverty has become the order of the day for the people of the Niger delta region.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	168	77.3
Disagree	48	22.7
Total	211	100

Table 8. The Niger Delta people do not deserve the political marginalization they are going through.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	139	65.9
Disagree	72	34.1
Total	211	100

Table 9. The agitations for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta region are not much.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	156	73.9
Disagree	55	26.1
Total	211	100

Table 10. The agitations for resource control, development and proper political representation have actually ignited the involvement of armed gangs, ethnic militias, youth militias which have catapulted into acts of terrorism in the region.

Response	N	Percentage (%)
Agree	126	59.7
Disagree	85	40.3
Total	211	100

selected Nigerians the perceived causes of delay in bringing about rapid socio-economic and political development in Niger-Delta region, to the point that it has now escalated into acts of terrorism in the region, up to the point that armed militias, ethnic militias, cultists, thieves, aggressive youth movements have taken over the region with different forms of criminal acts all in the name of seeking for justice. In respect of the findings of the present study, it is really clear now

that the issue of troubled Niger Delta region deserves urgent and sincere attention from stakeholders, designated Governmental institutions (such as the newly introduced Ministry of Niger Delta region, Niger Delta Development commissions, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, etc) and the Federal Government. The trend of events now in Niger Delta is a clear picture of much-awaited expectations of the Niger Delta people in terms of rapid physical development, infrastructural

growth and development, involvement in resource control, political representation and participation etc). The youths and some desperate elderly ones in the region have taken to all forms of violence and other criminality just as a way of driving home their demands. All what is happening today in the region is just to draw the attention of the 'government' (mostly particularly the Federal Government) on the need to address the fundamental problems in the region. Much is really expected from the 'government'. In fact, how long will it take any sensitive government to transform the areas similar to what we now have in Abuja (the Federal Capital Territory), Kano, Katsina and many other places in the country? However, the findings of the study have clearly shown that majority of the participants for the study agreed that 'the Niger Delta region has suffered some setback in terms of development compared to other regions in the country.

In a similar vein, majority of the participants also agreed to the fact that 'to the best of their knowledge, real attention is not being paid to the Niger Delta region. Also, majority of the participants agreed that 'the people in the region deserve commensurable physical development. Along this line of finding, majority of the participants also agreed to the fact that 'the sources of livelihood of the people in the Niger Delta region have been adversely affected by oil exploration. Further, it was revealed by the findings of the study (Table 7) that 'poverty has become the order of the day for the people in the Niger Delta region'. In a similar vein, it was revealed that a higher number of the participants for the study responded that 'the Niger Delta people do not deserve the political marginalization they have been going through. Also, the finding showed that a higher number of the participants for the study did agree to the fact that 'the agitations for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta region are not much. In a similar development, majority of the participants for the study agreed that 'the agitations for resource control, development and proper political representation have actually ignited the involvement of armed gangs, ethnic militias, youth militias which have now catapulted into acts of terrorism in the region.

CONCLUSION

In view of the findings of the study, it is now empirically clear that a number of Nigerians from different States of Origin and ethnic affiliations agreed that much is needed to be done to address the age-long agitations by Niger Delta people for physical transformation of their region, solid infrastructural development, employment opportunities, resource control, political representations and participations, provision of dependable social amenities (such as reliable, constant supply of electricity, pipe-borne water, etc). In a way

however, all these needed expectations should be implemented immediately before it is too long.

IMPLICATION/RECOMMENDATION

It is necessary now to know that what is happening in Niger Delta region may be translated into full blown war. Government (I mean the Federal Government) is not supposed to wage any war against the youths in the area that seems fighting for a just cause. Government should transform the region. The people have been suffering a great deal from the activities of oil and gas exploration. Their farmlands are not more fertile; their rivers, where they used to fish are not okay and more. Oil exploration has destroyed the water resources: the fishes, crabs and many other resources had been destroyed by oil exploration; this is really sad and unfortunate. Abject poverty has become the order of the day for the people in the region; why this sad development! Very importantly, the escalation of crisis in the region may be controllable; to some extent, now since government's forces in the name of naval force, air force and armed force are trying to quench the crisis. But it should be emphasized here that this small-scale gun duel between the armed militants in the region and government's military forces may be seen as trivial. However, it may degenerate into a full-blown war whereby the region may be begin to have forces outside the country that may be interested in fighting for them or better put assisting them in whatever way.

Emphatically, all what I have been saying is that the Federal Government and designated governmental institutions (such as the newly created Niger Delta Ministry, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and many others) should rise up to their responsibilities. They should develop the region at all cost! They should create provide adequate and reliable social amenities! They should also provide long-term existing infrastructural facilities. Government must create employment opportunities that are equal to the number of unemployed youths in the region. As a matter of facts, the region seems to have a high number of unemployed graduates, school certificate holders, diploma holders and many other certificate holders. Genuine employment opportunities must be created for the youths in the region; because the idleness being experienced by the unemployed youths subject them to be easily approached and influenced by other individuals with self-interests who really want to make wealth in the face of conflict. Yes, people are likely to be making wealth with what is happening today in the region. The oil bunkering, oil theft, arms dealing, kidnapping and many more are actually being benefitted from by some self-centered individual people.

Above all, government needs to be very serious in addressing the long-desired demands crisis in order to

save the region from further crisis and even save the country at large from imminent insecurity of lives and property in the face of ongoing kidnapping and terrorism that are spreading to every other part of the country.

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