

STATE INTERVENTION IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE IDEOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS

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Abstract: *For many years now, the development intervention in the Niger Delta has not achieved desired results, as the amazing paradox of underdevelopment in the area continue to deepen. That is why the paper explains the mistakes made by the different commissions and proposes the adaptation of an alternative approach, suggesting the set up of an Oil Producing Communities Commission by the Federal Government of Nigeria, having a clear mandate. The paper argues that the new ideas will accelerate the development of the region. The success of this is given by the transparency and accountability in governance at all levels.*

Keywords: management of the Niger Delta, economic transparency, development commissions.

JEL Classification: O₁₁, O₅₅.

1. Introduction

The development plight of the Niger Delta is an issue of topical concern at both national and international levels. This is necessitated by the strange paradox where the regions vast resources, including oil and gas, have barely touched the pervasive local poverty (UNDP, 2006) in addition to deteriorating economic conditions that threatens the regions future (World Bank, 1995). The raging conflicts in the region, and its implications for peace, stability, insecurity and development, have also added to this attention.

The development question in the Niger Delta dates back to the colonial period, when minority agitations, based on fears of ethnic based political

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domination, brought to the fore, the need to give the area special development attention. The Willinks Commission (1958), having recognized the development quagmire imposed on the people by the harsh geographical terrain and the misplaced perception of the development needs of the area by the then regional and central government, recommended the establishment to a Board of intervene in the region's development.

The Willink Commission opted out of State creation, as demanded by the people. It thought that the fears of neglected can be addressed through the establishment of an interventionist agency. This was predicated on the assumption that governance will be based on democratic institutions. This decision had two implications. Firstly, it has created a mind set among the leadership of the country that the development of the Niger Delta can only be done through interventionist agencies. Secondly, the inability of the country to entrench democratic governance has created a huge obstacle for the regions development.

In 1961, the federal government established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), which metamorphosed to become the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) in 1976, and later renamed the Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority (NDBRDA). In 1981, the 1.5 Percent Presidential Committee, was established to manage the Mineral Producing Areas Development Fund. Similarly, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created in 1992 (OMPADEC Quarterly Report, October 1991). The Niger Delta Development Commission followed in the year 2000.

The agencies were given the mandate to bring development to the Niger Delta, but have achieved meager results. Studies on the minimal results recorded by these agencies have highlighted the failures of transparency and accountability, and the associated corruption as the fundamental cause of failure. Misplaced projects, faults in implementation strategy, and inadequate funds have also been cited. The literature appear to have ignored the inter connectedness between the ideological orientation of these interventionist agencies, and their inability to promote Niger Delta development.

This paper intends to explore this theme. It argues that the ideology of development agencies in the Niger Delta is not people centered, in addition to not being participatory; thus setting in conflicting agencies. For this reason, the ideology suffers from a crisis of irrelevance that undermines the

usefulness of these development agencies. As such, a critical appraisal of the ideology of development commission in the region will allow for a broader understanding of their failures, and the development quagmire of the Niger Delta. Broadening our understanding of these issues could guide future development strategy and engineering for the region.

The remaining part of the paper is in 4 sections. The first, *Theoretical Statement*, provides the theoretical setting of the study. The second, titled, *The Challenge to Niger Delta Development*, examines the huge challenge, transparency and accountability failures pose to the development of the region. The third part titled, *The Ideology of Development Commissions: the Conflict of Agendas*, examines the conflicting perspectives and interests on Niger Delta development, demonstrated by the development commissions, the Niger Delta people, and the culture of politics. The last section concludes.

2. Theoretic al Statement

Development Means different things to different people, depending on their intellectual dispositions, ideological orientation, and the issue in question (Obinozie, R. O., 1991). However, the literature agrees that it is a multidimensional process that improves on the quality of standards of living; measured with the realization of higher levels of civilization, (Ake, C., 1996) control over productive forces (Anikpo, M., 1984) reduction in the rates of poverty, unemployment and inequality; access to basic social amenities (electricity, potable water, etc) and institutionalization of democracy (the South Commission Report, 1993), advanced infrastructural development, enhanced education and improved productivity (Onuoha, B. C., 1999).

The analysis of development is largely situated within the framework of the modernization and dependency theories of development. These two theories are sharply divided by the capitalist and Marxist ideologies. The modernization theory, which is capitalist oriented, sees development as the transition from a pre-modern to a modern state of being. It posits that underdeveloped or less developed societies are in that condition because of internal factors that limits development.

The theory takes the developed capitalist countries as the model of development, and attributes their success in development engineering to their possession of values that promotes development. The diverse strands

in their theory – the psychology personality, the institutional and economic variables, the Index Gap, Psycho-Dynamic and Diffussionist perspective (Okodudu, S., 1998) call for the replication of western values, as the strategy of and sine qua non development.

The dependency theory blames underdevelopment on external factors. For example, it blames African underdevelopment on imperialism, even though it acknowledges the role of internal class contradictions. It is useful to note that both theories capture the African reality with limitations. However, the modernization theory dominates policy circles in Africa, including Nigeria.

In Nigeria, rural development programmes are conceived within the framework of the modernization perspective of development. Accordingly, the programmes attempt to replicate urban infrastructure in the rural communities. Governments in Nigeria have assumed that rural development means transferring various urban amenities wholesale to the countryside (Anikpo, M., 1984). This has become the ideology that guides development planning for rural communities.

Significantly, this has been brought to bear on development engineering in the Niger Delta. It is imperative to point out that ideology expresses the fundamental interests of classes and social groups. It stands to reason that ideologies differ among people, and therefore, conflict of ideologies is unavoidable. Again State policy reflects the ideology of those who govern; thus, when policies are developed by partisans of specific interest, (class, ethnic group, etc), the setting of development goals will tend to advance that interest (Nwabueze, G. O., 1991).

A number of issues are discernible here. Firstly, development objectives that are out of sync with people's aspirations can be imposed on them by policy makers. Secondly, the development agenda of a development agency can come into conflict with the agenda of its target group. Thirdly, the agenda of the operators of a development agency could differ with the agenda of the organization. In all these scenario, efficiency tends to be impaired.

The establishment of interventionist agencies for the development of Niger Delta has always adopted the top – bottom approach to development engineering. Development commissions in the region have always been imposed on the people by a partisan Nigerian State that is ethnicised. What interests this paper is the ideology of developing rural areas through modernization. Development commissions in the Niger Delta have reduced

this to *fill the gap* method, where they execute projects to address perceived needs and problems of the people.

Development literature has highlighted the inadequacies of this approach to development engineering. A fundamental problem with this method is its attempt to develop without the people. It is associated with misguided paternalism, as it decides the types of facilities and projects to be executed for the people (Anikpo, M., 1984). Development agencies therefore act like foreign agents. According to Ake (1996): "Foreign development agents do not see the people as agents of development or as the essential energy that must fuel it, as a source of ideas of how to proceed, or even as a constituency to which the agents are accountable."

Thus, the *alien status* of the interventionist agencies in the Niger alienates the people from the development process. Importantly, development is for man, and by man. This tends to create a gap, described by Anikpo (1984) as: "The loss of control over the development process, which follows from the fact that the intended beneficiaries of the development projects are unable to utilize it. Once built, and the attendant fees and kickbacks paid to contractors and politicians, the only group with an interest in seeing the project function (the rural population) has no decision making power over its operation... the projects fail to be incorporated into the rural productive forces, which should include all means necessary for the production and reproduction of material life."

It is widely known that the negative effect of the oil industry, which includes the collapse of economies, impacts more on the local people. The inability of development commissions to mobilize them for the development process clearly demonstrates the misplacement of focus. Whereas development literature insists that development is a process (Ake, 1996), interventionist agencies in the Niger Delta see development as a project.

This project approach fails to invest in human resource development. Significantly, knowledge and skills are critical ingredients of economic development (South Commission Report, 1993). This denies society, the advantages of taming the environment; a fundamental requirement for development to take place. The exclusion of citizens from the development process encourages the centralization of power and resources. This promotes corruption, indiscipline, and lack of commitment to development goals. An examination of the challenge this poses to Niger Delta development will enhance the exposition in this study.

3. The Challenge to Niger Delta Development

The thesis here is that the failures of transparency and accountability in governance, is the most fundamental challenge to Niger Delta development. In Nigeria, politics directs public resources to the promotion of individual and sectional interests, rather than the common interests; Ake (1996), Aaron (2002), Ekekwe (1986), Oyovbuaire (1980), among other scholars, blames this on the lack of autonomy by the State and the resultant dependency and privatization, Ake (1996) has noted that: “The State lacks autonomy... in two senses. First, it lacks autonomy in the sense that it is externally controlled... second, the State lacks autonomy in the sense that it is not detached from the dominant class, but used by it directly as a tool for the pursuit of parochial interests”.

Essentially, the State its structures and agencies are used to secure the private interests of those who exercise power or authority at all levels, in the context of primitive accumulation (Ekekwe, E., 1991). This necessarily undermines transparency and accountability. The corruption that results negates development, and denies citizens the right to qualitative living.

One of the significant outcomes of corruption in Nigeria is that only a very small proportion of budgeted funds trickle to their targets. Development goals and objectives are therefore not realized. This is a crucial issue for Niger Delta development. The point is, the harsh geographical terrain of the Niger Delta makes development very expensive. The swampy land and rivers necessitates land reclamation, pilling and construction of bridges. This adds to the cost of construction. For example, the Bayelsa State government spent N500 million to reclaim (sand fill) land for the construction of a 500 bed hospital in the year 2000. Asiodu drew attention to this when he stated that: “Like in many other areas of the world, the regions where oil is found in this country are very inhospitable. They are mainly in swamps and creeks. They require massive injection of money if their conditions and standards of living are to compare with what attains elsewhere in the country where possibilities of agriculture and diversified industry are much greater (cited in National Agenda, July/August, 1995).”

Evidently, funds allocated for the development of the region are not adequate. For example, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) budgeted N10 billion in 2001, and N14 billion in 2002 (ANEEJ, 2004); in 2005, its budget rose to N28 billion (Nigerian Tribune 03/06/2006). It is important to note that actual receipts of funds by the NDDC are less than its

budgets. For example it received N19,988.9 billion between 2000 – 2003 (UNDP, 2006). This compared with funds required for the execution of its development programmes show that there is a yawning gap. See table one below.

Table 1
NDDC Development Projects/Programmes and The Cost Implications

S/N	Project/Programme	Duration	Cost (₦)
1	Programmes on governance	1 year	1.8 billion
2	Sustainable livelihood programme	2 – 3 years	969 billion
3	Provision of basic social services (education, health, transportation, and others)	2 – 5 years	260 billion
4	Development of social and physical infrastructure	10 years	1,800 billion
5	Investment promotion initiatives	-	1 billion

Source: Draft Issue Paper, International Conference for the Development of the Niger Delta, March 2001.

It is clear that the gap between the finances of the NDDC, and the cost of funding its programmes is very wide. With its highest budget of N28,000 billion as the basis of projection, the commission's budget for 10 years will be N280,000 billion. Meanwhile, the cost of funding the NDDC's programmes and projects for 10 years is N3,0131.8 billion; leaving us with an amazing gap of N2,751.8 billion. Given this, corruption therefore creates a double tragedy for the Niger Delta.

It is expected that with the billions of Naira that have flowed into the Niger Delta as derivation funds since 2000, and the billions allocated to the Oil Minerals Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the development problems of the region would have abated reasonably. However, this is not the case.

Available statistics show that the implementation of the 13 percent derivation fund has generated enormous funds for the development of the area. In 2000 for instance, the Niger Delta States received a total of N58.099.9 billion as derivation fund. The figure rose to N75.8320.0 billion in 2001, N85.136.6 billion in 2002, and N110.025.9 billion in 2003

(ANEEJ, 2004). The totals include allocations to Abia, Imo and Ondo States. See details of allocation to Niger Delta States in table 2 below.

Table 2

Allocation Of 13 Percent Derivation To Niger Delta States
(N = Million/Billions)

S/N	State	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
1	Akwa-Ibom	12.808.2	16.7171	7.068.7	16.094.9
2	Bayelsa	10.571.2	13.797.4	17.485.8	22.726.4
3	Cross River	1.2	1.6	8.836.0	1.763.0
4	Delta	17.433.7	22.754.9	30.427.5	33.627.7
5	Edo	337.1	438.8	6.737	1.236.0
6	Rivers	10.571.2	13.797.6	23.106.6	25.854.7

Source: Oil of Poverty in the Niger Delta, African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), 2004.

These huge sums of money have impacted marginally on the common people. Poverty is high, unemployment levels have continued to rise, and infrastructural development is very low. Self-assessment or perception index put the poverty level at 74.8 percent in 2004. This sharply contrasts with the National Bureau of statistics figures of 45.35 percent in Delta State as the highest, and 19.98 percent Bayelsa State as the lowest (UNDP, 2006).

Despite this dispute over the poverty level, it is unarguable that the poverty is endemic in the Niger Delta. This does not reflect the volume of monies that have been injected into the region. The point is that the conditions of the people would have been better. Statistics show that just about 20 – 24 percent of the rural population, and 45 – 50 percent of urban people have access to potable water. Also of note is the fact that schools are inadequate, as one primary school serves an area of 14 square kilometers or 3,700 people, while one secondary school serves on area of 55 square kilometers or 14,679 people (UNDP, 2006). This odd paradox is largely blamed on corruption, which appears to have taken epidemic proportions. The 2006 Niger Delta Human Development Report noted that: “The effectiveness of governance, especially at the local government level is an issue warranting concern. For both State and Local governments, accountability, transparency and integrity have not necessarily kept up with

the increased flow of resources in the deltaBad local governance is also a major cause of endemic poverty and the poor quality of human development”.

This is also true of development agencies created to intervene in Niger Delta development. The Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) is a classic example. The OMPADEC received huge sums of money from the 3 percent derivation fund. The commission received 2 – 3 billion Naira in the first 4 years of its existence (OMPADEC Quarterly Report, October 1993). Following its dismal performance, and allegations of corruption and maladministration, an investigation team headed by Eric Opiya was established to review its activities. The findings of the Committee were shocking. For example, the Report showed that the commission paid N6,619,612,443.00 as mobilization to contractors who embezzled the money (Newswatch magazine, 27th January, 1997).

The Investigative Panel’s findings on the administrations of the commission gives clear insight into the collapse of transparency and accountability in the OMPADEC. The Committee reported that: “While the commission spent N48,812,559.00 on general administration in 1993, the amount went up to N114,372,550.00 in 1994; N191,942,480.00 in 1995; and then to N354,614,829.00 in 1996... In 1994, the average monthly bill was N1.5 million, but the figure for June was N3.2 million, while the figure for December was 7.5 million and in January 1995, it rose to variations that was wider with a monthly average of N3.7 million, but the figures N8 million in January, N8.3 million in April, and N8.1 million in December were not easily understandable” (Nwabueze, G. O., 1991, p. 7-14).

It is not difficult to associate OMPADEC’s failure with such reckless expenditure. The African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) reported in 2004 that corruption is equally crippling the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). But, what is the implication of this for the ideology of the development commissions and the Niger Delta people.

4. Ideology of Development Commission in the Niger Delta: The Conflict of Agendas

This section of the paper explores the argument that the ideology of development commission in the Niger Delta is not participatory and people

centered. For this reason, the agenda of these agencies and the agenda of the people are incompatible. I posit that this conflict of agendas is a fundamental cause of the agencies inability to drive development in the region.

The point was made earlier that Nigerian politics largely promotes individual and sectional interests, as against the public good. Accordingly, public policies reflect such parochial interests. Thus, whereas the policies appear to be in sync with the common interest, they make very little impact on people's aspirations, as the agendas are not same.

The peculiar development challenges of the Niger Delta made the Willinks Commission Report (1958) to recommend the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board. Following this recommendation, section 14 of the Independence Constitution of 1960 made provisions for the establishment of the Board. Essentially, its mandate was the physical development of the area. To achieve this, the Niger Delta Board Act of 1961 was enacted by the federal parliament (ANEEJ, 2004).

It is well known that the NDDB achieved very little results that were almost imperceptible. This has been blamed on the ethnicisation of politics and the resultant ethnic based political domination, corruption, and the lack of commitment to the goals of the agency by government; inadequate funding, the renaming of the NDDB as Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), and the resultant proliferation of river basin authorities are also noted.

A crucial issue that has not been adequately captured is that the Willink Commission predicated its recommendations on the institutionalization of democratic governance in Nigeria. The Report declared that: "We, consider that when the Board has drawn up the schemes it considers desirable and possible, it should place them in an order of priority and endeavour to obtain the agreement of the Governments concerned. We do not recommend powers of compulsion, which we believe would defeat their own objective. Our proposal would provide some financial inducement to the Regional Government, but its sole ultimate sanction is the working of the democratic machine and the value of votes... It would be difficult for either Government to justify to the electorate either a blank refusal to accept a plan recommended by the Board or a failure to implement an accepted plan; in this... recommendation, we assume a desire to continue with democratic institutions... (1958)."

It is discernible that the Board was not given executive powers, based on this assumption of democratization. It is proper to argue therefore that the absence of democratic governance in Nigeria was the fundamental cause of the NDDB's inability to promote development in the region. Transparency, accountability, and protection of minority rights are essential values of democracy. Thus, the pervasiveness of corruption, ethnic domination, and non inclusion of Niger Delta people in the affairs of the NDDB was a manifestation of the absence of democratic governance in the country.

Elections, the central ingredient of democracy, are almost always rigged in Nigeria, making citizens to vote without choosing (Ake, C., 1996). This erodes the bond between leaders and citizens; as votes are not required to choose leaders, citizens are alienated while leaders become less responsive to the needs of the governed. This results to a situation where leaders see their positions as opportunities for personal aggrandizement, and not for service (Okoko, K., 1998).

The leadership of the federal, eastern and western governments would have been sensitive and responsive to the development aspirations of the Niger Delta, if the votes of the people were required to gain or retain political power. If democratic governments could not enhance the operations of the NDDB, because they were undemocratic, then the effects of military rule on the Board are not difficult to understand.

By and large, the agenda of the NDDB could not be actualized, as it came into conflict with the agenda of politicians who sought for their selfish ends of accumulating wealth, or pursuing an ethnic agenda of developing their ethnic homelands, at the expense of the Niger Delta area. The implication was that, the recognition of the region as an area that requires special development attention, due to its peculiar challenges of development was lost. This meant that the development question of the Niger Delta remained unresolved.

Again, in 1981, the federal government established the 1.5 Percent Presidential Committee to administer the 1.5 derivation fund, set aside for the development of the Oil Producing Communities of the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta people were not involved in the determination of the committee members, whose selection was largely defined by political patronage. The *misguided paternalism* (Akikpo, M., 1984) of the federal government was brought to bear.

The two layer structures of the Committee did not integrate the communities that were the target group. At the federal level, the Committee membership was made of:

- Minister of Power and Steel – chairman;

- Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity – member;
- Minister of Finance and Economic Development – member;
- The Chief of Naval Operations – member;
- The Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria – member;
- Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) – member.

At the State level, the Committee was made of a nominee of the State government as chairman (such a person was either a public officer or political office holder), a representative of the Presidential Committee, and 3 eminent persons chosen (by the State government) on the basis of geographical spread of the State to cater for local interest; a state civil servant served as Secretary (OMPADEC Report, October, 1992).

The Committee was made of people who largely did not understand the problems of the communities. Those who did pursued class or elite agenda. Largely for this reason, projects executed by the Committee reflected parochial or elite interests. The non involvement of the people in project, selection worsened this situation. Perceived community needs, or projects which reflected elite interests were imposed on communities. (See table 3 below for details of project executed by the committee).

Table 3

*Project Executed By The 1.5 Percent
Presidential Committee*

Project	Number of states							Total number of projects
	Abia	Akwa Ibom	Bayelsa	Delta	Edo	Imo	Rivers	
1. Road/ Drainage		3	1	82	11	6	15	118
2. Electricity	35	1	3	146	11	42	53	291
3. Water	12	4	17	110	2	25	76	246
4. Share Projection/ Land Jetty			5	80			9	94
5. Building/ Equipment a) Basic Health Centre	8	1	5	45		6	46	103

Project	Number of states							Total number of projects
	Abia	Akwa Ibom	Bayelsa	Delta	Edo	Imo	Rivers	
b) Administrative block			1	12			10	23
c) Classroom			2	52			22	76
d) Cottage hospital	1		2	48			13	64
e) Nurses Quarters			6	33			9	48
f) Doctors Quarters			4	27			9	40
g) Market stalls			0	47			3	50
h) Science block/ assembly hall			1	18			10	29
i) Principal Quarters			2	22			2	26
% share of projects	4.6	0.7	4.0	59.7	2.0	6.6	22.4	100
Total	55	8	48	720	24	80	271	1,207

Sources: Adapted from OMPADEC Quarterly Report, Vol.1, No.1, October, 1993, p.15-44

It is deducible that executed projects were stereotypes, picked from a potpourri of projects. Of significance was the absence of agricultural and industrial development focus. Projects were not self-sustaining and misplaced. The Committee therefore made marginal gains in its development engineering of the Niger Delta.

Following dissatisfaction with the performance of the 1.5 percent Committee, and agitations for development, the federal government, via Decree No. 23 of 1992, established the Oil Minerals Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) to rehabilitate and develop the Oil Producing Areas (OMPADEC Quarterly Report, October 1993).

The projects executed by the OMPADEC were not significantly different from those executed by the 1.5 Percent Committee. OMPADEC

projects centered on provision of potable water and electricity and all season network of links roads; canalization; shore protection and land reclamation; economic development of individuals and cooperatives; provision of health services, communication facilities, market, transportation, specialized education and educational facilities; and improvement and support for fishing and farming (OMPADEC Quarterly Report, October, 1993).

Appraisal of OMPADEC's programmes shows a replication of errors made by the 1.5 Percent Committee – communities were not preference-determined type of project executed in communities, and project approach to development. Of significance is the use of funds to develop State capitals and other urban areas, and politically powerful sections of oil producing or non-oil producing sections of the Niger Delta (Okoko, K., 1999).

The World Bank (1995) highlighted faults in OMPADEC's strategy of development as a fundamental cause of its inability to impact on the development of the oil producing communities. It noted that: "...OMPADEC only provides infrastructure or equipment. For examples, OMPADEC builds health centres but does not provide support staff for them. The obvious problem with such a development programme is that the communities may not have the funds to maintain a project and watch it breakdown."

Anikpo (1984) stressed that projects imposed on communities, often times worsens rural underdevelopment, as they disrupt social and economic relations. The environmentally unfriendly projects add to the problems of environmental degradation. Thus, OMPADEC roads have blocked streams and flood plains, resulting to stagnant ponds of water that kill forests and flood fields (World Bank, 1995, Vol.1). By and large, OMPADEC failed to actualize its mandate. The Niger Delta Development Commission was created to replace it in 2000.

Section 7 of the NDDC Act, captures its crucial mandate as the promotion of sustainable development in the region. The Commission, funded by 15 percent contribution equivalent to the total monthly allocation of member States of the Commission, 3 percent of the annual budget of oil and gas companies operating in the area, and 50 percent of ecological funds due member States of the Commission (section 14 of NDDC Act 2000), set out by developing a master plan at the cost of N1.5 billion (Draft Issue Paper, International Conference for the Development of the Niger Delta, March, 2001).

The master plan was largely developed by foreign experts, in conjunction with stakeholders that excluded the rural communities. Again, non-participation of the expected beneficiaries emerges as a problem. Since

inception, the NDDC has intervened in road construction, educational support, mass transportation, construction of jetties, provision of potable water and health infrastructure, equipments and services, skills acquisition, provision of refuse bins/trucks, and electricity projects. Between 2001 – 2002 the NDDC has embarked on 156 roads and 47 bridges projects; construction 686 classrooms, and the rehabilitation of 178 of such projects; and 316 electrification of projects (Nigerian Tribune, 03/06/2006).

Similar with the OMPADEC experience, politicians, elites and other powerful individuals decide on projects for their communities. This has resulted to misplacement and duplication of projects. The project approach to development it has adopted lacks the advantages of backward and forward linkages, required to engineer the growth of local economies. The absence of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies has made its road projects to block fishing channels, and cause severe flooding. The Kaiama – Opokuma – Sabagreia road in Bayelsa State is a classic example.

Although environmental degradation is crucial to Niger Delta development, the intervention of the Commission in this area has only manifested in the provision of waste bins and trucks. Indeed, the impact of the NDDC on the population is minimal. Despite disagreements on whether it has failed or not, it is logical to conclude that the establishment of the consolidated council on Social and Economic Development of Coastal States of the Niger Delta, attests to federal government's dissatisfaction with the performance of the NDDC.

The establishment of the NDDC by the federal government was in conflict with the Niger Delta people's agenda for resource control. The call for resource control is predicated on the need for adequate funds to develop the Niger Delta, and the placement of the people's destiny in their own hands. The reluctance of the federal government and the oil companies to fund the Commission brings into sharp focus, the conflicting agendas that weaken development engineering in the Niger Delta. The NDDC Committee of the House of Representative reported in 2003 that: "Some oil companies are not complying with the NDDC Act...even the Federal Government is not fully complying with the provisions of the Act. For example, an oil company, which year 2002 budget was \$2.235 billion, made a deduction of \$627 million from its budget before making its 3 percent deduction from the remainder. Another company budgeted \$1.203 billion for 2002 but deducted \$504 million before the 3 percent was worked out...

Federal Government is paying 10 percent instead of 15 percent (ANEEJ, 2004).”

This graphically captures the reluctance of the government and oil companies to assist in the development of the region. Equally, it draws attention to an element of transparency and accountable failure, noted earlier as a fundamental roadblock to the development of the region. Clearly, the conflict of agendas provides a useful explanation for the meager results achieved by interventionist agencies in the Niger Delta.

5. Reflections and Conclusion

For many years now, the development intervention in the Niger Delta has not achieved desired results, as the amazing paradox of underdevelopment in the area continue to deepen. Despite its evident and abundant resources, the area is extremely poor. The Willinks Commission Report of 1958 brought into clear relief, the peculiar development challenges of the region.

Following the recommendations of the Willink Commission, the Niger Delta Development Board was established in 1961 by the federal government, to stimulate the development of the area. The NDDB failed to enhance the development of the region. Following the people’s agitations for development, the 1.5 Percent Committees was created in 1982; the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992; and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000.

Evidence clearly show that all these agencies have yielded meagre results; a grim reality that has generated a lot of concern. This paper attempted to explain the contradictory realities that have thrown up this dilemma. It explored the thesis that the ideology of the development agencies holds the key to the understanding of their failure. It argued that the ideology of the development commissions is not people centred and participatory.

The study blames this on the nature of politics, which sees personal aggrandizement as a necessary thing to do in governance. For this reason, policies and programmes reflect partisan interests, as against common interests. The paper noted that this has been brought to bear on the interventionist agencies in the Niger Delta, resulting to transparency and accountability failures, and a conflict of agendas. The study sees this as the

most fundamental cause of these agencies inability to promote the development of the Niger Delta.

The Paper proposes the adoption of an alternative approach, in this regard it suggest the establishment of an Oil Producing Communities Commission by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the following framework or mandate:

- I. Provision of guidance to Communities in project determination and selection. For this purpose, it will work with Community Development Committees.
- II. Project selection will be done by the Communities through a Community need survey. This will be done at two levels. Firstly, all strata of the Community (Youths, Chiefs, Elderly Men and Women among others) will be required to provide a hierarchy of needs. Thereafter, this different hierarchy of needs will be integrated to form a community hierarchy of needs.
- III. The Commission will be in charge of contract award for the execution of projects, as well as supervision.
- IV. Community Development Committees will establish project monitoring Committees to enforce project execution.
- V. The Commission shall not be involved in the disbursement of funds.
- VI. Development funds raised through the Oil derivation fund shall be paid into designated Banks that will be in charge of payments. The Banks will be supervised by the Federal Ministry of Finance and a Ministry of Niger Delta Development that should be created.
- VII. Payments shall be made in milestones to Contractors upon the presentation of Certificate of honour, attesting to their completion of work. This Certificate shall be issued by the Development Commission and must be authenticated by the Community Development Committees.

These suggestions are meant to tackle the weaknesses identified in the Commissions or Development Agencies that failed to promote Niger Delta Development. The paper argues that the new ideas, in addition to an increase in the percentage share of derivation in national revenue allocation (at least 25 percent), will accelerate the development of the region. The success of this is given by the transparency and accountability in governance at all levels.

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