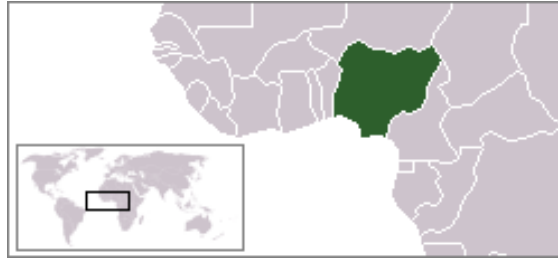


REGIONAL REPORT – NIGERIA – APRIL 2009

Report on Projects & Project Management
in Nigeria

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**Need for Coordinated Program Management in the Regional Development
of the Niger Delta**

Within the past few years, the World Bank, EU, the Nigerian federal and state governments, and other organisations have been making various investments in the Niger Delta. Even as some of these investments were being announced last month, also reported were the sad and worrying incidents of continuing killings, kidnappings, and infrastructural damages and destruction by militants in the oil-rich region. These have been happening since 2006. On the face of it, the investments do not appear to have any obvious impact in ameliorating the frequency of the reported destructive activities.

In this paper, we intend to examine some of the investments. We suggest that the various projects be coordinated into a program initiated with a view to achieving peace and resumption of welcome economic activities in the region. While, it is clear that the desired goal is not being achieved yet, it should be consoling if we were confident that the process we have adopted is such that all the investments are integrated towards the achievement of the same goal.

We shall take a look at some of the announced investment projects and examples of the continuing militancy. We shall suggest the use of project management in regional development with the goal of achieving a return to normalcy and economic developments in the Niger Delta.

I Some of the Current Investment Announcements and Projects

1. EU plans investment for Niger Delta in 2009

The European Union (EU) is planning to invest massively in the Niger Delta of Nigeria in 2009. Acting head of delegation to Nigeria Denis Thieulin, reportedly made this statement in December last year [1]. This was further reinforced by the Voice of Nigeria. It reported that a statement from the EU Commission in Abuja had it that EU has approved N7.7 billion (38.5 million Euros) to support the implementation of more projects. The support would be implemented under the EU Micro Projects Programme (EU-MPP9) in nine states. It added that EU had earlier financed two schemes (MPP3 and MPP6) worth 63 million Euros in all the nine oil producing Niger Delta states.

2. World Bank to invest N334 million (1.67 million Euros) in Rivers community projects Guardian, March 11, 2009

The World Bank Senior Social Development Specialist on Fragile States, Conflict and Social Development Unit (African Region), Paul Francis, explained that the bank's decision was based on its keen interest in future development of Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta region. He stated this during the formal introduction of Rivers State Community Foundation (RSCF), an institution headed by 10 trustee members, to work out modalities that would enhance sustainable development in the state[2].

According to the World Bank representative, so much has been said about the Niger Delta but not much has been done to address the situation. He, therefore, stressed the need to give priority attention to the region. "The grounding premise for the World Bank's engagement in the Niger Delta is that improved accountability and enhanced trust in public institutions is the cornerstone for peace development in the region. The aim is to promote such trust and accountability through a new model partnership among key stakeholders in the region", he said.

3. Amaechi Depopulates Militants

It was reported that Governor Chibuike Amaechi of Rivers State is trying to purge the oil-rich state of militants and cultists by setting up a Social Rehabilitation Committee (SRC) charged with helping willing militants to dump the gun and get rehabilitated [3]. The SRC Chairman, Chief Albert Horsfall, explained that a number of militants have decided to abandon camp and come aboard the rehabilitation train. Speaking as guest of "Hot Seat", a programme of the Correspondents Chapel of the Rivers State Council of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Chief Horsfall said no fewer than 3,000 militants had shown up at the SRC rehab centre at Okehi in Etche Local Government area of the state. This number of 'converts' was recorded about three weeks ago and the chairman said more are still coming.

4. World Bank partners Bayelsa on Education

The World Bank has pledged to provide support for Bayelsa State to enhance its educational service system. Through the Governance Partnership Facility, the bank will also build the necessary capacity of civil society and government [4]. These were some of the resolutions at the end of a joint session of officials of the state government and the World Bank in Yenagoa. The Bayelsa State-World Bank partnership is aimed at improving service delivery and transparency through public financial management reform and social accountability.

5. Niger Delta ministry set to construct Coastal Road Network.

A Nigerian national newspaper, The Guardian, reported that the Niger Delta Minister, Obong Uffot Ekaette, is working on the implementation of the Niger Delta coastal road network [5]. This is one of the recommendations of the report of the 45-man Technical Committee on the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, led by Mr. Ledum Mitee. The Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan is a blueprint for the sustainable development of the area. It is said to be the “first integrated development plan in Nigeria that is solely based on stakeholders' participatory inputs and experts' analytical guidance in 25 sectors, including health, education, transportation, and agriculture”.

II Continuing Militancy Problems

On the reverse side, announcement of the continuing militancy problems include the following:

1. JTF arrests 14 Oil thieves in the Delta State

It was reported that the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta on Monday, March 23, arrested 14 suspected oil thieves in the Niger Delta [6]. Seven of the oil thieves were apprehended at Ughelli while the remaining seven illegal oil operators were arrested at Yokri oil fields in Warri South West Local Government Area of the state.

2. Shell's onshore production drops to 300,000 barrels

On March 24, Royal Dutch Shell declared that production from its onshore business has dropped to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd), from the nearly one million barrels per day, owing to the Niger Delta crisis [7]. According to the report, this was due to the harsh impact of the activities of Niger Delta militants, who have waged an armed campaign against the government and oil companies since 2006.

3. Pipeline vandalism grounds 26 NNPC depots

A Nigerian national newspaper, THIS DAY reported that 26 out of the 31 receiving depots owned by the Pipeline and Products Marketing Company (PPMC), a subsidiary of the

Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), were lying fallow [8]. As a result, lifting of petroleum products from them has since been suspended owing to pipeline vandalism.

III Analysis

1. Coordinated Projects

It should be correct to observe that the projects and initiatives by the EU, World Bank, Niger Delta Ministry, Rivers State Government are certainly aimed at solving the running problem of militancy and restiveness in the Niger Delta. However, one is not sure of any deliberate and planned integration of ideas, objectives, and procedures among the planners of the various projects. It would be gratifying if we could read that all the projects were based on the implementation of The Niger Delta Master Plan. The plan has been described as : “ the first integrated development plan in Nigeria that is solely based on stakeholders' participatory inputs and experts' analytical guidance in 25 sectors, including health, education, transportation, and agriculture.”

It is clear that these projects are not taken from the Niger Delta Master Plan. This is obvious because the very first recommendation of the 45-man committee for the implementation of the Niger Delta Master Plan is the construction of the cross country roads. In other words, the Niger Delta Master Plan implementation committee has not recommended all the other projects, including those being initiated by the EU, World Bank and even the state governments.

2. Stakeholders' Participation

Whist the Niger Delta Master Plan has been described as based on stakeholders' participation; it may be relevant to find out exactly what this really means in terms of consultation with the various communities in the nine states of the Niger Delta. Consultations from the grass root in the various villages such that the chiefs meet with their people and send their views to their respective state governments. Consultation could also be in the form of the respective elected representatives of the people meeting with their constituencies and passing on their views to the respective state Houses of Assembly where they could be debated to arrive at a consensus. It is difficult to be sure of how the stakeholders' views were obtained and the efforts made to ensure that everyone is aware of this position. This uncertainty has been underscored by the vice chancellor of Igbinedion University, one of the higher institutions in the Niger Delta. Commenting on the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry, part of the statements credited to the professor includes the following:

“(The Ministry) ---- will eventually become “ a parallel state. Never again should our leaders take us for granted because we produce the oil wealth of this nation” [9].

3. Continuing Restiveness

The continuing spate of militant activities suggest that some of the citizens of the region still need to be educated on the agreed projects being embarked upon to achieve an outcome that should be in the interest of the generality of the peoples of the region. It is certainly difficult to arrive at a situation in which everyone is working energetically to achieve the desired objectives.

IV Observations and Suggestions

There is a common thread running through the statements and speeches of all the stakeholders in the Niger Delta, it is the development of the region. The federal and state governments and international organisations make their investments with the objectives of developing the region. The militants contend that they have taken to their otherwise unacceptable activities because of the failure of the governments and the oil companies to develop the region rather they leave it depleted and abandon its people as they exploit its rich oil wealth. Regional development should therefore be the goal acceptable to every stakeholder.

1. Regional Development of the Niger Delta

In trying to suggest the use of coordinated program management for the regional development of the Niger Delta, it may be instructive to start with a relevant definition. Regional development is the development of a region, economically, politically, socially, etc., to ensure the development of the quality of life in the region. For example, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were set up by the British Government to promote sustainable economic development in England. They are business led. To illustrate further, the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) leads the economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest and is responsible for:

- Supporting business growth and encouraging investment
- Matching skills provision to employer needs
- Creating the conditions for economic growth
- Connecting the region through effective transport and communication infrastructure
- Promoting the region's outstanding quality of life

There are also Regional Development Agencies in Yorkshire, North East, West Midlands, East Midlands, East England, South West England, South East England, and London

2. Project Management as a Tool for Coordinated Regional Development

Using the UK example, with the establishment of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), the government defined its objectives and worked for their implementations through the agency. All organisations interested in the development of the

region, worked through the regional agency. It is therefore safe to adduce the following, among others:

- There was a clearly defined goal which was acceptable to all stakeholders.
- All developmental projects were approved and supervised by the agency.
- All resources for the region were passed through the agency.
- The agency was accountable to the people as represented by the government for its activities.
- There was a unified, controlled, and coordinated program to achieve the specified objectives of the agency.

3. Application of Project Management in Niger Delta Regional Development Agency (NDRDA)

The Preparation of a Project Scope Statement.

There should be a Project Scope Statement for NDRDA projects. It should be a document that should describe all the deliverables for each project and the work required to create them. It also provides a common understanding of the project's main objectives. During planning the project team members and other stakeholders define and analyze the stakeholders' needs, wants and expectations. These are translated into project requirements and are components of the project scope statement. In preparing such a document, deliberate efforts will have been made by the agency to consult as much as practicable with all the stakeholders.

Coordinated Implementation

With a defined program of projects, the agency will be able to direct the implementation of the various projects in order to achieve the desired project objectives. In such an arrangement, any investment by any organisation or government will be directed towards achieving a defined and universally accepted and known objective.

As it is now, the various projects by the EU, World Bank, federal and state governments and other organisations are being implemented in silos. There is no integration of efforts between the organisations. There is a known objective but no generally coordinated, and unified approach for its achievement. This is analogous to disparate project management which has been discarded even in enterprises and replaced with enterprise project management. Enterprise Project Management enables organizations to transcend specific divisions in order to see the whole picture, thereby promoting synchronization and integration of efforts. It enhances communication and collaboration and provides managers with the ability to make quick and timely decisions based upon access to comprehensive information on projects in their corporate systems. This is required in the Niger Delta.

Coordinated Risk Management

This ongoing analysis may appear idealistic as one tries to suggest that regional development agency that has been successfully implemented in an advanced country such as the UK is replicated in Nigeria's Niger Delta. It is equally well documented that one of the reasons why the EU, World Bank and other international organisations choose to implement projects directly in developing countries is to eliminate, as much as possible, the corruption and fraud which are rampant in those countries.

This risk of mismanagement of resources was underlined recently in Port Harcourt by Mr. Paul Francis, the World Bank Senior Social Development Specialist on Fragile States, Conflict and Social Development Unit (African Region). He said: "The grounding premise for the World Bank's engagement in the Niger Delta is that improved accountability and enhanced trust in public institutions is the cornerstone for peace development in the region. The aim is to promote such trust and accountability through a new model partnership among key stakeholders in the region".

It is certainly clear that this is one of the major risks that need to be managed. Elimination of such and other risks should be across all projects. This makes a case for coordinated risk management as an aspect of coordinated program management in the region.

Use of Structured Project Management Methodologies

In suggesting the coordination, integration and unification of resources in the implementation of projects, it should be accepted that any organisation that makes an investment has a right to insist and oversee the use of such resources. Unified implementation should make it possible for enterprise project management methodologies with built-in transparency and accountability tools to be used in the management of projects in the Niger Delta Region. The donor agencies could ensure that they have their consultants in the implementation and decision making of the agency. These are issues that could be resolved between the donors and the agency or ministry that could be charged with the Niger Delta Regional development. Such involvements should help the introduction of checks-and balances in the management of projects and other aspects of resource utilisation in the region.

V Conclusion

The coordination of efforts, resources under an integrated management by an agency or ministry is necessary to achieve regional development of the Niger Delta which is desired by all stakeholders. In the short and medium term, such coordination is required in order to stem the tide of waste of resources both in mismanaged resources and in avoidable damages and death through the activities of the militants. For, it appears reasonable that when everyone is educated to the fact that there is a concerted effort to use tried and tested developmental tools for regional development in the Niger Delta, most sceptics may be won over.

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