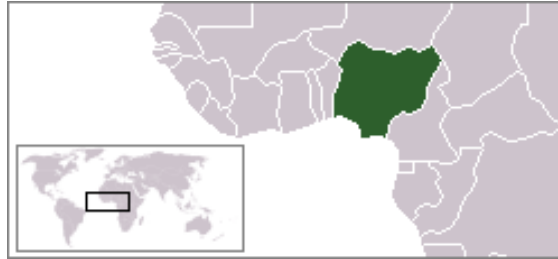


## REGIONAL REPORT – NIGERIA – NOVEMBER 2009

Report on Projects & Project Management  
in Nigeria

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**President Yar'Adua Embarks on Strategic Initiatives and Projects  
for Peace in the Niger Delta****Introduction**

As against the palpable and real insecurity that pervaded the atmosphere and businesses in the Niger Delta cities for some years since 2006, everything has now changed for better in the area. Everyone you talk with assures you that there is now peace. That the unrest is now a thing of the past is the message on the streets. This scenario appears incredible but it is true. Everyone is growing in confidence that peace has been found at last. President Yar'Adua in his determined bid to achieve peace in the area has embarked on a number of strategic initiatives and projects that have won over practically all the militants, their leaders and other erstwhile opponents of the government.

The immediate event leading up to this return of peace could be the unconditional amnesty by the Federal Government. The amnesty had stood for some weeks, but on Sunday, October 4, many militants surrendered their arms. They thus demonstrated their decision to give up arms struggle for peaceful negotiation and settlement.

On the other hand, the government exemplified its determination to match its promises with actions. On Monday, October 19, President Yar'Adua authorised the sum of \$950 million to be set aside for development projects in the Niger Delta as a part contribution

to the funding of the post-amnesty settlement. This however is subject to approval by the Nigerian National Assembly, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representative[1].

### **Strategic Moves**

The strategic initiatives that the President has undertaken to end the Niger Delta unrest include the following:

1. For months, he worked with selected and influential advisers from Niger Delta area. It would appear that some of these advisers could be trusted by many of the militants.
2. Following their advice, he went on to grant unconditional amnesty to all the militants;
3. The federal and state governments have been making arrangements to rehabilitate the militants.
4. The President, even as the number one citizen of the country, promotes and practises an open-door policy. As a result, he has been granting face-to-face audience and meetings with leaders of the militants, and indeed to anyone who has the influence to bring about peace in the area. For example, on Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, he met with the former leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Mr. Henry Okah, at the presidential villa, Abuja. The details of their discussions have not been disclosed. Mr. Okah was reportedly flown back from South Africa where he was receiving treatment for a kidney condition; he was flown to Abuja in Yar'Adua's presidential jet. Before then, the President had met with other leaders of the militants.
5. He is introducing a policy of equity participation for Niger Delta people in oil and gas exploration and servicing companies[3]. Thus, the Federal Government plans to plough back 10 per cent of the oil revenue from Niger Delta into the region. This is aimed at giving the oil-bearing communities in the region 10 per cent stake in all joint venture businesses [1]. This has been confirmed by the Group Managing Director, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Mohammed Barkindo, who explained that discussions were being held to find ways to give a share of the oil wealth to the nine oil-producing Delta states. "We are looking at the various options on how we can empower the producing communities without violating the current laws," Barkindo said. The NNPC holds Nigeria's majority stake in joint ventures operated with international oil companies. Currently 13 per cent of oil revenue goes to the oil producing states [2].

## Prospective Projects

The projects, listed below, are among those being embarked upon as promised by the President.

1. East-West Road: This road links the former Eastern and Western Regions of Nigeria. The first phase of the East-West Road is planned to cover Calabar-Uyo-Port Harcourt and Yenagoa, while the second phase will cover Benin-Lagos [1]. The road is already being constructed.
2. The design and construction of fast-track rail lines: The high-speed rail link is to go from the seaport of Warri, in the Niger Delta, to Ajaokuta, in the mid-western Nigeria, the location of a large integrated steel complex which is yet to be completed.
3. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) of the entire Delta region to re-assess the impact of exploration activities, a major concern of the pro-Niger Delta campaigners.
4. The environmental clean-up of oil disaster sites, and the building of coastal roads in Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers States [3].
5. The construction of new towns and settlements, land reclamation for industrial and residential development.[3]

## Concluding Remarks

It is certainly a Herculean but very important task to achieve peace in the Niger Delta, the President therefore deserves to be congratulated on the peace that has returned since early part of this month. It is clear to all that he is sincere in the pursuit of peace and is prepared to do all that is necessary to achieve this. It appears that he has won the confidence of most people of the Niger Delta area, what he needs to obtain the approval of the whole nation to his plan. This should happen when the members of National Assembly, that is the Senate and the House of Representatives, carry out the necessary legislative steps required to endorse his plans.

While it is the case that the prospective projects, listed above, should engender economic development of the area when implemented, the dividends of peace that the nation stands to gain will far outweigh the investments. For example, gradual reversal of the disastrous trend of activities that had become the norm over the months should facilitate the recovery and the growth of the national economy.

Some of the failures to be reversed include the following:

- 1) The drop in the daily oil production volume to about 50 percent of the production rate before the unrest.
- 2) The flight of companies from the area following the spate of kidnappings,
- 3) The epileptic power supply as a result of damaged gas pipelines that cannot convey gas to the electricity generation stations,
- 4) The insecurity that froze developmental activities both in the public and private sectors.

There are other factors that could be listed. It is therefore important to underline the fact that the move for peace by the President deserves all-round support not only by Nigerians but also by everyone who loves the nation.

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