

## THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION ON HEALTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF AKWA IBOM STATE

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UDOM, BASSEY SUNDAY  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examined the impact of Niger Delta Development Commission on rural community development in Akwa Ibom State. Two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of adult males and females from the ages of 25 years and above; and are residents of the various rural communities in Akwa Ibom State who are beneficiaries of NDDC programmes, officials of NDDC and opinion leaders in the area. The sample of this study was made up of five hundred (500) respondents randomly selected from ten (10) local government areas mostly benefiting from NDDC activities through cluster sampling technique. The main instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire designed by the researcher with the help of the supervisor. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis ( $r$ ); and the chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical techniques were employed in testing the data. The results revealed that before the coming of the NDDC in Akwa Ibom State, only very little was gained in terms of an enduring African value system in the entire region. But with the inception of NDDC in 2000, empowerment of youths and capacity building opportunities have been provided with about 5,000 students benefiting from the first phase of the NDDC computer-training programme at 62 centres across the region and Akwa Ibom State in particular. Therefore, it was recommended that, since most of the activities of NDDC are perceived to wedge various significant influence on the developmental processes in Akwa Ibom State, advisory committee of the NDDC be made to properly advice the commission (which has already raised the hopes and promoted the confidence of the people that government agencies can be trusted) to complete or continue with the projects it has already initiated. It would be added that this zeal to perform should be emulated by other governmental agencies in the country.*

**Key Words: NDDC, rural community development, health development, economic development, Akwa Ibom State**

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### INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, close to 80% of the population live in rural areas, which are the principal sources of food, as well as raw materials for the whole country (Williams 197). The essence of this research is to assess the impact of Niger-Delta Development Commission on rural developments in Akwa Ibom State, which is one of the principal areas known for oil production in Nigeria. According to Ekpo (2004). Akwa Ibom is classified among the rural communities in Nigeria, hence produces food and raw materials that makes Nigeria a known figure in the world.

At the beginning, the areas referred as the Niger Delta was limited to the geo-political zone occupied mainly by minorities of Southern Nigeria which currently comprises six states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. But in recent years, the Niger Delta region was re-defined and engaged to include all the contiguous nine oil-producing states. The new states of Abia, Imo and Ondo were therefore added to the original six. Niger Delta Development Commission has recorded achievement in the area of health, education, water, electricity, roads, transportation, youth's empowerment and agriculture to justify its existence. Niger Delta Development Commission has launched its development plan which was applauded, unlike other development agencies. With this, hopes are high; the chairmanship is to be rotatory. For example it has a credit in this direction, because after Chief Onyema Ugochukwu, from Abia State comes Ambassador Sam Edem from Akwa Ibom State. This research is particularly focused on Akwa Ibom rural communities. The idea is to assess what the Niger Delta Development commission does to develop Akwa Ibom communities. We need to also examine Niger Delta Development Commission potentially in the areas of health and economic development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Rural development according to Ihejiamaizu (2002) is a strategy designed in the area. He went on to say that, the main issue in rural development is the modernization of the rural society through a transition from traditional isolation to integration with the National economy for equitable and balanced development of the Nations. Obasanjo during his electioneering campaign, was opportune to travel round the country and was amazed to discover that, the Niger Delta region which gives Nigeria more than 90 percent of its foreign earning has nothing to write home about in terms of development. He therefore promised a relief which came as Niger Delta Development Commission. This was to impact positively on the lives of the people of the region. Akwa Ibom as one of the state in the Niger Delta region is equally affected by this scenario of underdevelopment, absence of infrastructural amenities, unemployment etc. In order to address these problems, various governments of the federation have formulated policies, but none has actually yielded any positive result. Then problem of policy implementation failure forms the central concern of this study. The problem of this study is provided by the fact that, many years after the establishment of various agencies as a strategy for rural infrastructure in the rural areas in the region, it still remains deplorable and hopeless.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out if Niger Delta Development Commission has created any positive impact on health development in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Examine the activities of Niger Delta Development Commission with respect to economic development of the people of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Questions**

1. Does Niger Delta Development Commission create any significant impact on health development in Akwa Ibom State?

2. What impact does Niger Delta Development Commission create in the economic development of the people of Akwa Ibom State?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- (1) There is no significant influence of NDDC activities on the health development of rural communities of Akwa Ibom State.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between NDDC activities and the economic development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The concept of NDDC and Rural Development**

Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is a nomenclature (name) given to one of the administrative bodies in Nigeria. This body is saddled with the sole aim of administering the developmental activities of the rural south-south/south-east geographical zone of Nigeria. A similar body was first established in 1958 by her majesty's government (Queen Elizabeth II) through the recommendation of Sir Henry Willink's commission and was named Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB). This Board has gradually metamorphosed from Niger Delta Development Board to River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) after the civil war in 1970; to the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (COMPADEC) in 1993; and finally into the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2000 (Ejiogu, 2004).

In itself, the Niger Delta region, comprises Nine States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Abia, Imo and Ondo). This region in essence is a unique ecosystem by virtue of its size, location and physical configuration. It is one of the largest wetlands in the worlds found or based at the southern extreme of Nigeria with an area of 70,000km<sup>2</sup> (Ekpo 2004). It extends from Benin River at the West to Bonny Rivers at the East and begins a few miles below Ndokwa area of Delta State) and stretching into the Western Atlantic Ocean at the South; (Akpan, 2000). According to Akpan (2000) the NDDC is expected to harness the developmental activities of the Niger Delta vis-à-vis the numerous oil exploration interests of the various multi-national companies involved in the exploration bids. It is envisaged that natural mineral exploration (of any form) is beclouded with a lot of environmental degradation, such as land and water-bodies pollution, extinction of land and marine biodiversities – thus forcing the migration of communities to unknown localities (Bassey, 2002). Also, oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta belt has caused a lot of untold hardship to the rural communities due to loss of farmlands, and fishing ponds set by oil spillages, and the entrophication of water bodies.

#### **NDDC and Rural Health Development**

According to Uya & Okoro (2002) grassroots for (rural communities) health sector became fully recognized in respect of rural development as per the national development programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's ten-years development plan of 1990. That in the area of health attention was given to primary health care scheme, which aimed at providing at

least one health centre in every Local Government Area, and the UNICEF assisted guinea worm eradication programmes launched in 1988. Issues involved in Nigeria's health policy include adequate nutrition health education, safe drinking water and sanitation materials and child health among others. Provision of affordable health services to all Nigerians was the objective of the Health policy (Ovat, 2001): in support. Ovat, & Den-Berg (2002) in reviewing the activities of one of the multi-national oil exploring companies (the Shell Petroleum Development Company Nigeria Limited (SPDC) assert that as at the end of 2001, the SPDC has built about thirty-two (32) primary health care facilities across the entire Niger Delta Region. Furthermore, that in the entire region, records, shows that more than 173000 patients have been treated, while 9,200 patients attended the SPDC's mobile clinics. That, in respect of continued community participation in health-care programmes, the multi-national Shell Company has supported the region to the tune of ₦74.4million for National Immunization Days Programme, with 1.4 million children immunized in host communities. Also, that several health awareness campaigns have been conducted in many communities of the Niger Delta (ND) Region in the aspects of HIV/AIDS, typhoid, tuberculosis and teen-pregnancy, with over 15,000 school children successfully de-wormed. In the region, only about 316 village health workers and traditional birth attendants have so far been trained to support the health-care bid of the company. Finally, basic health-care activities are still being carried out in other/more communities with the Niger Delta region.

In his own assessment of the general contribution of a single multinational company like Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) Chinedu (2004) asserts that, out of the large number of communities in the ND region, attending to only 32 of these communities as at 2001 is not enough at all for such a company to credit itself as doing good; judging from the inception of its oil exploration bid, since early 1980s. That is a region with a population of more than 50 million people, giving treatment to only 15,000 school children or 1.4 million (i.e. 0.006 and 2.8%) patients is too insignificant compared to the devastation so far committed in the region by the SPDC's activities.

In his study of community participation in health care activities in the rural/developing nations of the world, Mayo (1994) posits that community involvement in health care activities plays significant beneficial role in rural development; especially when the developmental activities are geared towards projects that concern their felt needs and in which they will take informed decisions and be self-reliant, they will definitely opt to be participants in such projects. Hence, in the event where this participatory aspects by the community are lacking, there is bound to be conflicts and unrests. This is why in some developing countries like Nigeria where minerals explorations are going on without commensurate rewards to the grass-root people, problems are bound to occur – as is the case in the Niger Delta Region (Uya & Okoro, 2002).

According to Jegede (1998) community participation in rural developmental projects gives the people some sense of belonging, responsibility and communal identity. The participation and involvement of communities in the design and operation of not only primary health-care programmes but in all rural developmental projects (especially as being carried out in the Niger Delta region) is very essential if they are to be culturally acceptable and responsive to the people's needs (Sands, 1996). Khare (1963) noticed that when some community-based intervention programmes were not given to the community as an entity in a Northern Indian

community a civil rife resulted. This is why many sociologists and educators like, Ering (1999); Ihejiamaizu (2002); Olisa & Obiukwu (1992); Uya & Okoro (2002) and a host of others separately posit that when rural development is made to take place in any place, the grass-root/community people who are the immediate beneficiaries, must be made to participate. This is to enhance not only a sense of belonging, but also lasting peace among the people and country as a whole. The provision of health care programme is a welcome development in the Niger Delta region, but the bone of contention is that the multi-national companies do not commensurately involve the rural people concerned in the execution of these projects. This situation breeds protracted conflicts, and a sense of dissatisfaction among the rural dwellers (Ejogwu, 2004).

### **NDDC Activities and Economic Development**

Obasanjo & Mabogunje (1991: 139) carried out a study on the farm-house dialogue. In this study development is defined as “a process concerned with peoples capacity in a defined area over a defined period to manage and induce change; that is, to predict, plan, understand and monitor change and reduce or eliminate unwarranted change. Thus, the more people develop themselves, the more they would become instruments for further change.” Rural Economic development therefore entails a programme of economic activities directed at increasing the efficiency of rural population and quality of life. It also ensures that productivity is enhanced, education and sanitation promoted and resources optimally exploited. However, unwanted or unwarranted changes (e.g. taxation) must be avoided. Also, rural development must avoid importation of ugly characteristics of urbanization such as traffic jams, unemployment, slums, human litter, inflation, crime, corruption, cheating, customer appetite, pollution, and uncaring attitude.

According to Ajaegbu (1997) the presence of NDDC has not significantly influenced organization set ups in the rural Niger region, especially in Akwa Ibom State. In that, zone, the rural communities have traditional rulers who have consultative representatives down the line to the family level. These communities rely heavily on very important and powerful groupings, such as age-grades, women societies, thrift societies, vigilante or security out-fits and religious organizations. When the NDDC set into the region, only the traditional rulers were to an extent given some little attention, in respect of organizing their youth-groups so that they do not cause conflicts in the region by the activities of the multi-nationals (Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1991). But in reality, the presence of the multi-national oil companies do not only neglect the traditional heads, but as well as the traditional groupings generally; this has predictably engendered conflicts between the multi-nationals, the government and the traditional rulers and town unions.

According to Blau (1994) in his study of exchange of power and social life, asserts that the various traditional and cultural groupings and associations have been the most willing and ready tools for development especially human resources improvement and provision of amenities in their communities. The rural areas demonstrate a considerable amount of communal spirit, and are quite amendable to change when they are taken into confidence right from the planning stages. Yet, the multi-national companies always neglect this very important aspect of this rural administration bid; the result of which is conflict and riot by the rural dwellers.

According to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004), before the inception of NDDC in the Niger Delta region, government had planned a series

of developmental activities. The plan included among others the yearly allocation of budgets, to develop the private sector and by implementing a social charter for the people and to re-orientate the grass-root people with an enduring African value-system. Very little was achieved in these dimensions due to bureaucracy and idiosyncrasies of the stakeholders in the region. Therefore, when the NDDC was established in 2002, it was saddled with responsibility of making and amending where NEEDS failed (NDDC, 2004). According to this source, as soon as the NDDC set into the region, empowerment and capacity building opportunities were provided and within its first 12 months, about 5,000 students were awarded scholarships under phase one of the commission's computer training programme at 62 training centres across the region, it is also asserted that within the first 12 months of its inception, NDDC engaged another batch of 3,748 youths on the second more specialized phase of the computer programme. Similarly, within this period 800 mass transit buses were acquired and issued on liberal financing terms to youths and women societies, under the NDDC's mass transit programme. According to this same source (NDDC, 2004) the commission is active in the provision of basic and functional education to the region. To this, the commission has provided over 500 scholarships in various Engineering, science and medical sciences to youths at various institutions of higher learning across the nation.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study is a survey design. The survey was conducted in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria between April and October 2005.

### **Research Area**

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

### **Population of the Study**

The study population comprises of adult males and females from the ages of 25 years and above; and are residents of the various rural communities in Akwa Ibom State who are beneficiaries of NDDC programmes, officials of NDDC and opinion leaders in the area.

### **Sample and Sampling technique**

Data for this study came from questionnaire administered between April and October 2005 in Akwa Ibom State. The sample of this study is made up to five hundred (500) respondents randomly selected from ten (10) local government areas mostly benefiting from NDDC activities (Ekpo, 2004). A community was randomly selected from each local government area using simple random sampling technique. A breakdown of the figure shows that fifty (50) respondents were randomly selected from each of the ten communities chosen for the study. The selection was further done using cluster sampling techniques.

### **Instrumentation/Sources of Data**

The main instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire designed by the researcher with the help of the supervisor. The major sources of data for this study were from text books, published and unpublished, magazines, news dailies, journals etc. internets sources were also used, all as secondary source. A field survey was carried out where raw data were obtained through a structured questionnaire. These were actually the primary sources of data for this research work.

### **Validation of Instrument**

The items in the questionnaire were drawn in reflection of the hypotheses generated and the variables under study. Before using the instrument, the items development were given to

experts in research and statistics for screening and finally to the supervisor who carefully vetted the items and passed its face validity. Those found relevant were retained while the irrelevant items were dropped.

**Reliability of Instrument**

To ensure that the instrument measures consistently with what is purported to measure, a pilot study was carried out in the population area. Test retest method of reliability was done.

**Procedure for Data Analysis**

To test the hypotheses of the study, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis (r); and the chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) statistical techniques were employed. These statistical techniques were used because of the nature of the variables involved in the hypotheses for the study.

**Results and Discussions**

**Hypothesis One**

In presenting the result, the decision rule was first stated, thereafter the hypotheses were tested and analysed under 0.05 degree of significance with appropriate degrees of freedom.

The hypothesis as stated here, the independent variable (X) of the hypothesis was health development of the rural communities; while the dependent variable (Y) was NDDC activities. In testing these hypotheses, the data testing health development were extracted and grouped according to provision of hospitals, health centers, and training of nurses/health attendants. The categorized data were then weighted against the data for the dependent variable, and then subjected to analysis, using the 3 by 2 contingency chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test statistical technique. The result is as presented in table 1 below

**TABLE 1**  
**Contingency Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) analysis and the relationship between NDDC activities and health development of rural communities n = 500**

Variables	Health Development			Totals	df	X <sup>2</sup> – Cal
		Hospitals	Health centres			
Development	(fo) Fe	115 (111.888)	165 (156.492)	98 (109.62)	378	
Non-Development	(fo) Fe	33 (36.112)	42 (50.508)	47 (35.38)	122	7.30
Total		148	207	145	500	

\* Significant at P< 05, df = 2, crit – X<sup>2</sup> = 4.303

It could be observed that the calculated chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) value of 7.30 is higher than the critical X<sup>2</sup> – value of 4.303 required for significance at .05 level with 2 degrees of freedom thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is a significant influence of NDDC activities on the health development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is quite supported by the studies of Uya & Okoro (2002) that

state that, grassroots or rural communities became fully recognized in respect of national development programme of the Federal Republic of Nigerians ten-years development programme of 1990. In this development plan, health scheme was given priority attention with the aim of providing at least one health centre in every Local Government Area of the country

**Hypothesis Two**

In testing this hypothesis, all the data measuring economic development were extracted from the data bank (with respect to youths empowerment, through short and long-term training programmes), and weighted against those of the claims of NDDC’s activities. The data were then subjected to analysis using the Pearson Product Moment Correlational statistics. The result is as shown in table 2

**TABLE 2**  
**Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient analysis (r) of the relationship between NDDC activities and economic development n = 500**

Variable (economic development)		$\Sigma X$ $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma X^2$ $\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma XY$	Df	r-cal
Youths Empowerment	(X)	7228	184460	498	163524	0.99*
Other empowerment activities	(Y)	6141	193651			

**\* Significant at P< .05, df = 489, crit-r = 0.195**

It is observed that the calculated r-value of 0.99 is by far higher than the critical r-value of 0.195, needed for significance at .05 level, with 498 degrees of freedom. Then the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypotheses is accepted, hence there is a significant relationship between NDDC activities and the economic development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. The study also found out that the people form themselves into sub-groups and it is through these sub-groups that NDDC reaches onto the masses to provide communal financial assistance and to embark on projects like construction of culverts, bridges, town-halls and market squares. However, as supported by NEEDs (2004), the findings of this study show that before the coming of the NDDC in Akwa Ibom State, only very little was gained in terms of an enduring African value system in the entire region. But with the inception of NDDC in 2000, empowerment of youths and capacity building opportunities have been provided with about 5,000 students benefiting from the first phase of the NDDC computer-training programme at 62 centres across the region and Akwa Ibom State in particular.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it was observed that before the coming of the NDDC in Akwa Ibom State, only very little was gained in terms of an enduring African value system in the entire region. But with the inception of NDDC in 2000, empowerment of youths and capacity building opportunities have been provided with about 5,000 students benefiting from the first phase of the NDDC computer-training programme at 62 centres across the region and Akwa Ibom State in particular. Furthermore, it is expedient to add (or sum up) that the core concern of the NDDC is the development and well being of the generality of the people of the Niger Delta. The fundamental issues sought therefore are to be above mundane politics. All stake holders in the



region must be positive contributors to the NDDC and must, of necessity, be involved in making these very important projects a people-oriented success.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That, since most of the activities of NDDC are perceived to wedge various significant influence on the developmental processes in Akwa Ibom State, advisory committee of the NDDC be made to properly advise the commission (which has already raised the hopes and promoted the confidence of the people that government agencies can be trusted) to complete or continue with the projects it has already initiated. It would be added that this zeal to perform should be emulated by other governmental agencies in the country.
2. That since one of the hypotheses of the study showed non-significant influence of the developmental activities of NDDC, the commission is highly advised not to worry over the relevant criticisms, rather it should continue to pursue its mission to facilitate the rapid sustainable development of the state to its logical conclusion. Since it is only about four (4) years since its inception, it is perceived that the present areas which are not experiencing development in infrastructural dimension, may still benefit in the nearest future.
3. Lastly, it must be remarked here that an organization like NDDC must not be without challenges; and some skeptics are already predicting its failure like its predecessor commissions such as OMPADEC and petroleum special Trust Fund. This study recommends that the NDDC must remain steadfast and diligent in the dissipation of its much needed developmental projects in the State; bearing in mind the adage that “the end justifies the means”

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