

SUMMARY REPORT

2016 NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT FORUM “TOWARDS SELF SUSTAINING DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA: NARRATING AND SHOWCASING A RE- IMAGINED NIGER DELTA.”



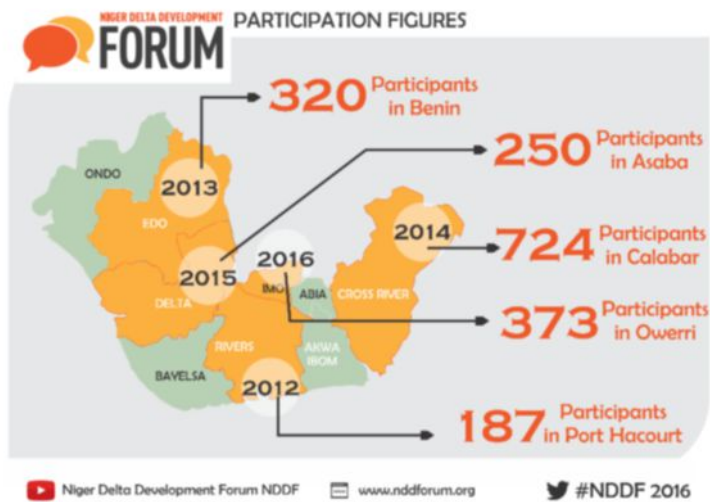
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Report written by Oteheri Odjeni, Analysis & Advocacy Officer
Edited by Ese Emerhi, Advocacy Program Manager
Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND)



1. NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT FORUM



Niger Delta Development Forums envision a Niger Delta where all persons are able to live sustainable livelihoods, generate income and employment, and create economic opportunities unhindered by constraints from within and outside the market system in the region and beyond. The forums are catalytic information sharing and collaboration opportunities for government, private sector, and civil society organizations pursuing approaches for equitable and inclusive economic growth in the Niger Delta. NDDF also provides a platform to connect with other partners to collectively pursue improved development policies and practices in the Niger Delta. The Forum is rotated among the Niger Delta states. The 1st edition of NDDF was held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State in 2012; the 2nd in Benin City, Edo State in 2013; the 3rd in Calabar,

Cross River State in 2014; the 4th in Asaba, Delta State in 2015 while the most recent edition was in Owerri, Imo State in 2016. Similar forums were held in Washington, DC (2014, 2015) and London (2015).

NDDF 2016 was held in Owerri, Imo state with a theme of ***“Towards Self Sustaining Development in the Niger Delta: Narrating and Showcasing a Re-Imaged Niger Delta.”*** For 2016, the situation for the Niger Delta was quite dire; the region was in crisis – politically, economically, socially, and environmentally. The collapse of the global oil price has taken its toll the hardest on the nine states of the Niger Delta, resulting in a new emergence of violence by new militancy groups. Despite numerous efforts by either independent organizations or by the Federal Government in convening key stakeholders in the region to collectively explore the imperatives of inclusive economic growth in an environment of dwindling oil prices, little headway has been achieved or documented on a firm way forward for the region.

Development is a complex and multi-disciplinary process, and perhaps the first step in articulating a way forward for the region is in re-imagining a possible future, beginning with changing the narrative of the Niger Delta. A Niger Delta that ranks high in inclusive citizen participation in governance; where state governments operate with the concepts of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness at the forefront; where diversity in economic pursuits are championed by state governments and executed openly; and a region that no longer grapples with violence but where peace reigns. What are the steps needed to move the region in this direction, towards action and accountability on the part of all stakeholders, not just governments?

NDDF Owerri tackled the broad issues of peace, regional cohesiveness, digital economy and climate change. Leveraging the tradition of a value-added space where interested and committed development actors - public, private sector, development practitioners, and international development actors alike - convene to take actions to promote growth while seizing the huge opportunity to influence the development agenda for the region.

NDDF Owerri was organized by the Niger Delta Partnership Initiative (NDPI) Foundation, the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), Imo State Government, and members of the DEMAND ALLIANCE.

2. REGIONAL COHESIVENESS: THE ROLE OF FEDERAL, REGIONAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS



“There is a lie we have been told and we have believed to our detriment – that the private sector would drive the engine of development.” Dr. Otiwe Igbuzor, Center LSD.

- The Niger Delta needs more of a bottom-up approach with strong linkages with community benefits systems of governance that empowers them and assists them in evolving [to the changing times]. Such a model will depend on shared opportunities and inclusive growth that materially improves the livelihoods of the people [of the Niger Delta].
- The factors that prohibit cohesiveness of the Niger Delta are not different from the factors that affect Nigeria as a nation – competition amongst the member states and unaligned interventionist agencies seems to be the order of the day instead of collaboration.
 - Role of the regional intervention bodies should focus on how to escalate the work of member states, instead of simply replicating them. The failure of these regional intervention bodies, like the Presidential Amnesty Program, is in their continuous provision of palliatives and poor conceptualization.
 - The region must begin to look inward to build its own resources rather than look elsewhere for its resources, and in looking inwards, we must begin to build local and regional accountability frameworks as part of the process.
 - The Sustainable Development Goals must be looked at as a model to follow in developing the region because it provides an avenue for the measurement of progress, transparency and accountability.
- Lack of infrastructure is key to unlocking the problem of lack of investment opportunities in the region; current trading routes and complex trading zones limit trade within and outside the region.
- Increased domestic security would create an economy of its own, but the main challenge is implementing security initiatives in an economic and political environment that thrives on instability and insecurity.
- A clearer definition of what constitutes the Niger Delta is needed – is it the original oil producing states of Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta, or the six states that the BRACED Commission is mandated to provide services for, or what is known as the South-South region? The creation of the context of what we now know as the Niger Delta states was created by NDDC and this context has given rise to different perceptions and interpretations of the region that has added to the divisiveness that we are currently experiencing.

3. PEACE, CONFLICT MITIGATION, ELECTIONS, AND DEVELOPMENT

“In designing programs for violent youths, a special focus on the rehabilitation of women must be given priority too... involvement of women in the rehabilitation process will help speed up the healing process.” Emem Okon, Kebekatche Women Development Foundation



- The Federal government needs to tackle the issue of the Niger Delta from its roots, and the issue of the region is an issue of development.
- Deepening the practice of democratic governance, which involves organizing and implementing credible elections, is one of the fundamental solutions to the challenges of the Niger Delta (and Nigeria as a whole).
- The Presidential Amnesty Program should focus on effective reintegration of the youths and women as a key strategy in curbing restiveness.
 - The program was meant to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate violent youths, however, the program has only been successful in the disarmament and demobilization components of its mandate. The most critical part, reintegration, has not been carried out.
 - Addressing the socioeconomic issues will create the enabling environment to fast tracking reintegration. The Federal government should also start designing programs targeted at nonviolent youth.
 - We have overlooked victims of violence during the reintegration process and peace cannot be achieved without proper justice.
- There is a need to understand the changing role of political actors when it comes to elections in the region; voters/civic education should be done early and often and not in the current “rush hour” method it is currently done to ensure that all stakeholders are properly educated in a transparent and cohesive manner.
 - The electorate to aid in accountability should fund election financing.
- Ending corruption is a fundamental step to ending the crisis in the Niger Delta and it can only be possible through democratic processes.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GREEN ECONOMY



“Environmental issues do not have boundaries...it is not limited to the Niger Delta. Climate change is not an emerging threat; it is already here with us.” Dr. Peter Idabor, DG, NOSRA representing the Minister of Environment, Amina Mohamed.

- The challenges of the environmental damage to the region are multitude – challenges from continuous oil spills on land and water that destroy entire ecosystems, and illegal activities of saboteurs and oil pipeline vandals that only deepen the damage and lead to loss of investor confidence in the region.
- Advocacy efforts by CSOs should not only focus on the federal and state governments and IOCs, but on youths involved in destroying oil pipelines.
- The Ministry of Environment is currently working to change the narrative of how people perceive the environment through empowering local communities, and in regulating and managing the environmental issues such as erosion, desertification, climate change, oil spillage, and gas flaring. The Ministry is also devising strategies and frameworks and entering into partnerships with donors and CSOs alike to achieve its statutory mandate.
- The promise of a green economy is to ‘decouple’ economic growth from both greater use of natural resources and damage to the environment through the development of new products, processes, and services and a new way of life.
 - Achieving a green economy, however, will not be cheap. There are international funds that can be tapped into for projects if collaboration and partnership on all levels are leveraged.
 - Climate change curriculum should be introduced into Secondary schools and Universities to teach young people about the effects of environmental damage and the role they can play.
 - In financing the green economy, there must be a connection between the investors expectation with the need of the local economy.
 - Youth unemployment can be tackled by harnessing the technology available through opportunities in the green economy.
- The past year has revealed the limitations of oil; we need re-imagine the Niger Delta beyond oil. The green economy is an emerging space for us to rewrite and create the rules of engagement that takes into consideration perspectives from all stakeholders – from local communities to private sector, from federal government to international bodies, and from CSOs to youths.
- Akwa Ibom is leading the way in the green economy challenge by promoting a clean city and driving low carbon emissions by setting up a low energy bulb factory to contribute to their quota of reducing emission/low carbons into the environment.

5. ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY



“The recent recession being experienced by the country as a result of the dwindling oil revenue is a pointer that the nation needs to diversify its economy. If we really want to grow and diversify the economy, as individuals, we need to first rely on technology.” Tosin Akingbade, Price Water House Cooper (PWC).

- The private sector can take the lead in initiating and using digital technology to promote ‘start-ups’ in the Niger Delta that use technology to solve many of societies challenges.
- Government and corporate institutions should partner with technology experts to develop systems that can support the collection of farmers information for the purposes of proper tracking of the quantity and quality of produce, authentication of farmers and for planning /implementation of business development and support services.
- In thinking of diversification, the following sectors should be targeted:
 - Agriculture – how can we ensure viability of all value chains in this sector? Nigeria can no longer afford to import the majority of what we eat; we possess over 84 million acres of land with 60% currently not cultivated.
 - Private sector players in the agriculture sector should plug technology into the existing processes across the agricultural value chains within the region.
 - Nollywood – key lessons to be learned from the Nollywood industry is that i) they involved youths and created entry jobs for them, with ongoing leadership and mentorship and ii) the use of technology has expanded the opportunities and possibilities for the industry, making it one of the fastest growing industries in Nigeria today.
 - Telecoms – Nigeria has grown tremendously since the introduction of mobile technology. The market was allowed to evolve organically with very limited rules in the beginning.
 - Stringent regulations, however, will cripple this industry if not challenged at every front.
 - Retail – the retail sector will thrive with the involvement of youth since Nigeria consumes a lot of packaged goods. Private sector can thrive on ICT initiatives to enhance delivery and boost exportation.