

2020 Report

Warri Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP)

For

Peaceful Co-existence

between

Ijaws and Itsekiris

This report documents the activities of the Warri Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) for the year 2020. The report also identifies some challenges and opportunities for the MSP moving forward. It would be recalled that 2020 was a most challenging year for individuals, families, communities, organizations, nations, events and initiatives. The Warri MSP was not immune from the COVID-19 lockdowns. This affected many activities and planned events. It was more so because many Warri MSP members could be said to belong to the vulnerable group. But in spite of all, there was no reported death among the MSP members occasioned by the pandemic.

The pandemic restricted movements banned gatherings of large crowds, impacted resource mobilization and generally slowed activities down. The worst was the scepticism and mixed messaging associated with the pandemic. First, many public officers expressed doubts and still express doubts over the pandemic. Second, COVID-19, historically and comparatively has a relatively low death rate. Third, in spite of that, it has a high recovery rate. Four, there is still no cure for it. And five, those infected did (or were not allowed) not share the remedies they used to recover. And finally, the death rate of the pandemic in Africa was relatively low compared to Europe and the Americas generally.

It was in this context of uncertainty, scepticism and fear that the MSP operated in 2020. It would also be recalled that due to unforeseen circumstances, the MSP postponed some of its activities from 2019 to 2020. And even in 2020, those same activities could not hold. For instance, the Leaders' Summit has been on the table for two years now. All these affected the optimal performance of the MSP.

It is to the credit of the managers and members of the MSP that in spite of all of the above confusing context, the MSP managed to implement a good number of activities with very inspiring results. The essence of this short report therefore is to build on what has been achieved, implement what was left unimplemented and chart a course for the future. Further, the report shall also point a way towards the institutionalization of the MSP. And start the gradual process of making it independent and self-managing with all the accoutrements of autonomy. Further, part of this institutionalization process is to develop and reinforce a sense of volunteerism among the MSP members. It is also intended to find a way of incentivizing members (not necessarily monetarily) to keep doing the peace work which they have embarked on. It is important to pay attention to all these moving forward.

Highlights of the progress report include the following:

In 2019, the MSP held a series of Town Hall Meetings (THM) to directly put a face to the MSP. One of the key outcomes of the engagement was that members of the two ethnic groups saw their ‘leaders’ in the MSP publicly embrace peace and peaceful co-existence between the Ijaws and Itsekiris. Five of those THM were planned for 2019, only three were held. The remaining two were moved to 2020. But the pandemic did not allow it to happen. That activity needs to be concluded with lessons learned. And plans made to re-enact them as a reminder of what the MSP stands for.

Perhaps, the most innovative of MSP programs could be said to be the Leaders’ Summit. This very event has been moved twice. But it must be held because of its importance. In fact, it is the premier activity of the MSP because it has the potentials to be a yearly event and could be commercialized with publications etc. The Leaders’ Summit is close to the heart of MSP members. This is because in the planning many leaders from both ethnic groups have been pencilled down to speak. It would have been another auspicious moment to showcase the progress made towards ‘integration and cooperation’ between the two ethnic groups.

Since inception and understandably so, the MSP has paid attention to peace and conflict issues. The livelihood aspect of PIND mandate is not prominent in MSP agenda. But the Ogbe-Ijoh Market intervention provided a good opportunity for what one might refer to as ‘integrated peacebuilding’ encapsulating peace and livelihood. Further, the intervention opened up the issue of market development and management on a national scale. For instance, many states and in fact local governments do not seem to have a clear and articulated policy or legislation on market development and management. So far, this has been confirmed in Imo, Osun and Kaduna States. In fact, Kaduna State has an agency that pretends to manage markets but it does not have an enabling legislation.

In conducting the intervention, the MSP was more interested in the livelihood of the patrons of the market. They were also interested in the revenue accruing to the various levels of government from the market. The fact is that whenever there is any kind of issue in the market, people’s livelihoods suffer. It is expected that in 2021, more in-depth research shall be conducted and a detailed and analytical *Policy Brief* shall be developed by the MSP as an advocacy tool

to build sustainable peace in the market. It might also be an opportunity to carry out legislative advocacy on market development and management in Nigeria.

Closely related to the above is the Ijaw and Itsekiri Dialogue on Sustainable Livelihood held later in 2020. It was aimed at highlighting how disagreements between the two ethnic groups have accentuated poverty and impaired the achievement of sustainable livelihood. Some of the issues that were identified as points of dialogue include: GRIP, the distribution of palliatives, budgets, Vision 2020, NLTP/EGRP, Stimulus package, NAFDAC waiver and MSME enterprise Support. This dialogue needs to be continued and enlarged.

Further, empirical evidence or fact-finding is increasingly being accepted as a strategy of peacebuilding. Within the MSP it has been agreed that there is a need to study the ‘cost’ of disagreement between Ijaws and Itsekiris and its impact on livelihoods and development in the area. If we can show empirically what has been lost, it will be a good advocacy tool for the MSP. It could also be used to pursue participatory budgeting at the federal, state and local governments.

In 2019, the MSP engaged in several advocacy visits as part of the mobilization and sensitization of both the THM and Leaders’ Summit. The results were astounding as one traditional ruler asked the team why a particular ethnic group was not represented in the delegation. This was a tacit acceptance and recognition of the values and beliefs of the MSP and its composition. These advocacy visits needs to continue because some of the people pencilled down for visit were not visited. And due to the pandemic in 2020, the visits could not continue. If the visits are not continued and concluded, it might send the wrong signal about the intentions and *modus operandi* of the MSP.

During the year 2020, Delta State government planned the local government election. The story of election and its accompanying intrigues between the two ethnic groups need not detain us since it is well-known and duly documented. According to the terms of reference, the purpose of the setting up the intervention committee is to mitigate election violence and conduct media and community outreach/engagement in the three Warri Local Government areas of Delta State. Today, some semblance of sanity prevails both in rotation and the election proper. Even though there are still pockets of resistance here and there, the fact is that a new narrative is emerging. This needs to be deepened and sustained for maximum impact.

The media outreach activity is ongoing as part of the support for election violence prevention initiative. Many MSP members have appeared on the programs in various stations and spoken on the need for peaceful co-existence. The message is sinking gradually. And it is still ongoing. It needs to be continued in order to sustain the gains already achieved.

Many capacity building activities were carried out during 2020 to prelude most MSP meetings. The last was that on “Intervention” that was used to end the year. During the end of year gathering, MSP members requested that all the training materials be put in a book form and made available to them for use. This is because they found value and relevance in the trainings even though some were short because of the duration of the meetings. The trainings need to be upscaled in view of emerging issues in the polity. One key training, that must happen in 2021 is that on *Resource Mobilization*. They need also to be trained on *Engaging Democratic Institutions*. This is at the heart of the Sustainability Plan.

Areas of improvement in 2021 moving forward

Female representation in the MSP is still not very encouraging. More youths need to be recruited and indoctrinated about the MSP especially from the two ethnic groups. Inactive MSP members may have to go and new and active members brought on board. Some MSP members are still entrenched in the old narrative of division and prejudice. If they are not amenable to change, then they must give way to fresh blood with new ideas. Meeting attendance and punctuality is a big issue. This is because many MSP members are business men and women. When money calls, they leave every other issue. A way to get around this may be to find innovative ways of incentivizing them. There is always incentive for peace – both tangible and intangible. Finally, the capacity of some MSP members is not commensurate with the demands of being a member.

Conclusion

Some of the activities in the work plan for 2021 include:

1. Hold the Leaders’ Summit
2. Develop the Policy Brief on Markets
3. Develop the Policy Brief on GRIP
4. Conduct research on The Cost of Ijaw/Itsekiri Disagreements
5. Develop a Strategic Plan for the MSP
6. Continue the work on Election Violence Prevention
7. Conduct the training on Resource Mobilization
8. Conduct the training on Engaging Democratic Institutions

Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP)

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Sustainability Plan

2021-2023

Introduction

Since time immemorial research has not been able to establish the ratio of businesses, organizations and institutions that survived and those that went into extinction. A broad sweep around the Nigeria landscape that there is a high rate of fatality among businesses. Newspapers and magazines account for a large percentage. Closely following this are family businesses or enterprises. Many reasons account for this. The most prominent being mismanagement.

The not-for-profit sector has also seen its fair share of attrition. It has been suggested that many not-for-profit organisations die because they did not have a sustainability plan. But conversations around sustainability focus more on the environment and corporate social responsibility (CSR). In this instance, the approach to sustainability is slightly different.

The metaphor of sustainability that is applied in this plan is the human one. For instance, we ask the question, *what does a human being do to survive?* In order to deepen the conversation, one may also ask, *what does it mean to survive?* Using the analogy of the human person, we can break the life stage of a person into six namely: conception, infancy, childhood, teenage, adult and aged. Each of these stages has different requirements for survival.

But it is important to explore more the concept of survival. First, does it simply imply being alive? A drug addict is alive but is s/he surviving? Someone with

mental health issue is alive, but is s/he surviving? A drunk could be said to be alive, but is s/he surviving? A criminal is alive, but is s/he surviving?

It will be difficult to address these questions and concerns in this short plan. But it is important to understand some of the ingredients of surviving. First and foremost, the entity must be alive. If it is a human being, it means the person must be healthy and depending on the stage be in school, working or retired. If it is an organization, it must be functional and delivering goods and services for which it is known for. Whether as a human being or organization, survival also implies obeying the laws of the land and doing things in such a way that is not offensive to natural justice, equity and good conscience. In legal parlance this is called compliance. It also implies the institution of self-regulating mechanisms that have the capacity to adjust to the changing external environment. And at the centre of “internal sustainability” is the human factor!

Generally, sustainability especially for organizations could be broken into two namely: internal and external. Internal implies all those processes, structures and mechanisms that are put in place within the organization to ensure that it delivers on its mandate in a cost-effective and efficient manner. External has to do with the requirements for satisfying external stakeholders. A lot of this has to do with the image of the organization and how the public perceive the organization.

Going through the literature on sustainability, too much premium seem to be placed on resources and resource mobilization. This is not without due justification. However, the catch is that without the right personnel and structures, no one will give money to an organization. Therefore, while money is important, there are prerequisites for generating money. If these prerequisites are not in place, resource mobilization becomes a herculean task.

This sustainability plan shall be divided into two parts namely; internal and external. Internal shall deal with compliance issues, human resources, internal structures like organogram and aims and objectives of the organization. Some attention shall also be accorded to identity issues. Further, there shall be a work plan with targets.

The external shall focus on the mandate of the MSP, its strategies for delivering on that mandate and awareness-creation around the activities of the MSP. It shall also include resource mobilization. It would also be noticed that this sustainability plan is for an initial period of three years – 2021-2023. The

selection of the date is deliberate. First, the Corona Pandemic has affected activities all over the world. The assumption is that by 2021, the effect of the pandemic would have been reduced for normal activities to resume. The end date of 2023 for this plan is deliberate. It is also assumed that by 2023 a new regime would have come in and with the agenda of the new government, a new plan would be developed.

This is not in any way to suggest that this plan is ‘cast-in-stone.’ A sustainability plan is a living and dynamic document that could be adapted at any time to a change in the environment and context. The same applies to the present plan. However, the revision of the plan must be such that will address emerging sustainability challenges. The revision of amendment shall not be for its own sake.

In developing this sustainability plan, deliberate attempt was made to ground it in the Nigerian environment but particularly in the context of the Niger Delta but with specific focus on Delta State and Ijaw and Itsekiri peaceful coexistence in particular.

Context of the Sustainability Plan of the MSP

One of the issues that gave ‘prominence’ to the Ijaw and Itsekiri conflict is the presence of oil in the area. Unfortunately, this is not the best of time for the oil industry worldwide. First, it is estimated that by 2030 oil will move from being a strategic resource to a marginal resource. This is because of environmental concerns and the drive for clean energy. Second, the price of oil in the international market is probably at its lowest. Going by estimates by intelligent analysts, the price may go as low as \$20 per barrel. The import of this is that if oil continue to lose its significance as the major stay of the Nigerian economy, little attention shall be accorded to the incessant misunderstanding between Ijaws and Itsekiris.

Second, the conflict between Ijaws and Itsekiris has taken a toll on the development of the area. In fact, studying the ‘cost of the conflict’ is one activity that is included in this sustainability plan. Apart from stalling development projects, the conflict has also affected revenue flow and direct foreign investment in the area. This has impacted unemployment and crime rate. In fact, kidnapping and cultism has become threats to sustainable economic development. For example, the Gas Revolution Industrial Park (GRIP), proposed for Ogidigben is a \$20b investment that has the potential to generate

250,000 direct and indirect jobs. This has been stalled due to conflict between Ijaws and Itsekiris.

Recently, an FM Radio Station in Warri ran a story on how girls of between 12 and 16 years are being initiated into cultism in Delta State. One of the conditions for the initiation is that the girl must in that one night have sex with the number of boys that tally with her age. In other words, if she is 16 years, she will have sex with 16 boys at a stretch in that one night. The investigation of the story was so credible that the journalist got an award and the venue of the initiation was promptly closed down. This very high crime rate has created a distorted sense of values in the youths that is supposed to take over the development of the state.

Maritime- which is supposed to be the main focus of the diversification of Delta economy is panting for breath. Crimes such as sea piracy and insecurity on the waterways is killing this lucrative industry. At the Town Hall Meeting held at Ogbe-Ijoh by the MSP, the Area Commander of the Nigeria Police highlighted this dilemma. Further, the coast line of the Atlantic Ocean stretching from Ugborodo to Lagos is one of the most beautiful in the whole world. It is an area begging for investment in tourism. It has not been possible to invest in the area due to insecurity.

Further, political contestation among the Ijaws and Itsekiris could literally be called a war. This has robbed the area of the best and brightest thereby denying them the much needed dividends of democracy. And with the clannish approach to governance in Nigeria, Delta State will really need all the help it can get. For instance, at the onset of the Corona Pandemic, the Federal Government decided that people stay at home to minimize the rate of infection. In order to provide succour for the 'poorest of the poor,' government provided palliatives. The region where the oil is gotten to finance the palliative got second to the least allocation. This kind of marginalization has also been manifested in other aspects of our national life.

After the Corona Pandemic, the world will never be the same. The New World Order that will emerge is still unknown. Delta State like most parts of Nigeria will need peaceful coexistence to be able to engage this New World Order and to benefit from it. For instance, so much is being said about working from home. Delta State has very low power distribution and internet access. These are two key variables for a post-Covid 19 world.

Much resources have been expended in fighting the pandemic and the stay-at-home order has also had its effects on the people, the economy and the environment. The Ijaws and Itsekiris will need to work together, not just for their own sake but for the sake of Delta State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Finally, the tenure of elected leaders in Nigeria is usually four years except for Local Government officials. Research has shown that not more than two years of this four-year tenure is committed to governance. The period of this sustainability plan is worse. The first half of 2019 was used for politicking and electioneering. As the new administration was about to settle down, the Covid-19 Pandemic hit the globe. It is estimated that the whole of 2020 may be committed to addressing the debris of rubbish left behind by the pandemic. 2021 may be used to try and recover from the effects of the pandemic. By 2022, politicking and election shall be in full swing. All of these shall affect governance.

Though the Chief of Staff to the President is a personal aide and not an elected official. His death will open up a war front for succession. This will also take a toll on governance. And considering how powerful the office has become, whoever takes will need time to settle down. And the health of the president is also an issue for concern as we develop this sustainability plan. This is because, the international community is watching and the resources required at times come from abroad.

With all of the above, the sustainability plan has been developed with cautious optimism but with in-built flexibility to allow for ease of adaptation. It is also deliberate that the plan is not unduly over-ambitious. This is because the operating environment calls for concern. But with the right mix of human resources, realistic targeting and meaningful stakeholder engagement, the plan would be achieved with minimum distractions. But in case the need arises, amendments to the plan has also been factored in to allow for ease of transition from one plan to another. The MSP has over the last two or more years shown so much promise, sustaining it is a task that requires integrity, dedication, commitment and professionalism.

Objectives of the MSP Sustainability Plan 2021-2023

1. To structure and institutionalize the MSP
2. Clarify MSP identity and Mandate

3. Guard MSP against political partisanship
4. Deepen awareness about MSP and its activities
5. Enable MSP to embark on Strategic Alliances
6. Leverage more resources for its work

The theory of change for this Sustainability Plan

If the MSP is properly structured and institutionalized, then it can deliver on its mandate.

If the MSP can effectively deliver on its mandate, then it will become relevant and credible

If the MSP is relevant and credible, then stakeholders will become aware of its existence and make use of its services

If stakeholders become aware of its existence and make use of its services, then it will be able to mobilize resources

If the MSP is able to mobilize resources, then it will become sustainable

The Sustainability Plan for the MSP – 2021-2023

Section One: Internal

Activity 1: Develop a Strategic Plan and work MSP members through this Sustainability Plan for ownership.

A Strategic Plan shall be developed to give vent to the Sustainability Plan and to ensure that MSP members buy into the Sustainability Plan and own the process for implementation.

Activity 2: Review of the Charter of the MSP

There is the need to review the ‘Charter of the MSP.’ This is to enable the MSP to clearly define its identity. The Charter of the MSP is ‘light and vague.’ Using the format of the *Memorandum and Articles of Association* of the Corporate Affairs Commission with its detail is a good starting point. For instance, there is the need to be specific on sanctions for members not attending meetings or programs with cogent reasons or excuses or without permission. Further, there is also the need for an elaborate and effective grievance process in the Charter to settle misunderstanding and disagreement among MSP members.

The new document must also pay attention to the welfare of MSP members as a form of motivation. For instance, the MSP members are not remunerated. They are volunteers. But a provision could be inserted in the Charter for a more robust welfare package. For example, if an MSP member is wedding, members could contribute generously and the MSP itself will also contribute and there will be penalty for any absentee member.

The re-drafting of the Charter will help clarify the identity of the MSP and strengthen its capacity to motivate members. It will also place premium on the need for transparency and accountability for all transactions. There should be sanctions and rewards provided for in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Activity 3: Increased/improved documentation of MSP work and processes

MSP must as a matter of urgency develop policies on personnel, finance, work place conflict, health etc. These documents helps to envision an organization as being futuristic in outlook.

Activity 4: Establishment of MSP Secretariat and staff

The MSP is evolving as an organization. Currently, it is still a program of PIND. Measures needs to be put in place to begin the process of it having a secretariat where members can work in and transact MSP business. MSP members need staff they can ‘order around.’ At present they see PIND staff as their ‘bosses.’ Their relationship with PIND must move gradually towards that of nurturing and mentoring.

To ensure that this takes off as quickly as possible, the MSP could use volunteers, interns, corps members or their staff to support the work. To deepen their relationship with the communities, they may also ask for one room office in each Local Government Secretariat where they cover. Or in the alternative they may request for office space from the State Government. All these is to draw them closer to the stakeholders.

Finally, there is the need for Community-based MSP members in each community. These shall act as early warning and conflict monitors for the MSP. Where this is not immediately feasible, P4P members could be co-opted to carry out this assignment. Community members and beneficiaries of MSP services need structures through which they can reach the MSP. And MSP in return needs structures to get on the ground and accurate information of events when they break out.

Activity 5: Develop Policy Briefs and Occasional Papers for Different aspects of Ijaw and Itsekiri relations.

One key gap in the intervention on peaceful existence between Ijaws and Itsekiris is the lack of materials for advocacy. There have been many preachments on the need for peaceful coexistence. As part of the sustainability process, the MSP must begin to show Ijaws and Itsekiris what they have lost empirically due to their unending feud. For instance, it may be necessary to document something as basic as abandoned projects in the two areas. It might

also be necessary to show in monetary terms what the people have lost over the years as a result of the disputes. Apart from highlighting the shortfalls, the documents may also act as advocacy materials when MSP members do their work.

Activity 6: Develop Three –year Work Plan with Task, Targets and Timelines.

The MSP must have a three-year Work Plan that lists out some of the activities that it will carry out. The essence of this Work plan is to keep it in the consciousness of the public. It shall also discipline the members to ensure that they are up and doing at all times. For instance, it shall be expected that the MSP shall undertake at least three major activities every year. This implies that they shall do one activity per quarter. This activity may be the resolution of an existing conflict, prevention of an impending conflict from breaking out or preventing the use of violence. On the other hand, the activity may be a study, development of a policy brief, occasional paper or conflict analysis report. This shall be exclusive of such activities as advocacy visits, trainings, Town Hall Meetings etc. The whole idea is to have a target of one per quarter and with timeline.

Activity 7: Undertake a Two-day Training for MSP members on Transparency and Accountability

This activity is unique and it could be incorporated into the strategic planning process or handled as a stand-alone. It could also be part of the overall package of running the sustainability plan through the MSP members for endorsement and ownership. The importance of this is to show to any partners that the MSP takes the issue of transparency and accountability very seriously in its operations.

The Sustainability Plan for the MSP – 2021-2023

Section Two: External

Activity 1: Forging Strategic Alliance with DTSG and P4P

The MSP must forge Strategic Alliance with many stakeholders but in this first internal phase and in the first three years, it might be more plausible to start with the Delta State Government. With that they will engage the three Local Governments in the area and finally engage the P4P for their work.

Activity 2: Development of Information, Education and Communication Materials

The MSP could be said to have been press shy. For instance, publicity has been on their activities not on the MSP. The MSP as part of its Sustainability Plan must develop such IEC materials as newsletter, web site, and may be a radio

program to advocate around its values, mandates and activities. And this must be an ongoing process. These IEC materials shall address such issues as hate speech that denigrate each ethnic group. It shall also show case examples of cooperation between the ethnic groups.

Activity 3: The MSP must engage in high profile courtesy visits

The MSP has paid some courtesy calls on some prominent Ijaw and Itsekiri traditional leaders. This has helped in creating awareness on the existence and activities of the platform. Office of the Deputy Governor has also acted as a clearing house for entry to the State Government. The MSP must now move to visit the Governor – face to face with or without the Deputy Governor. Second, the MSP must also visit the Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly. These are structures to enhance their outreach to various stakeholders.

Activity 4: Resource Mobilization and Fund-raising

Resource mobilization and fund-raising shall be an ongoing activity that is both internal and external. For instance, the request for office space is part of resource mobilization. Strategic partnership is also part of Resource Mobilization. It might be worthwhile to recruit a consultant to focus on resource mobilization and fund-raising for the MSP in the first three years of the sustainability plan. This will free the members to concentrate on program activities.

Activity 5: Recruitment of more MSP members and categorization

As part of the Sustainability Plan, more MSP members need to come on board. They shall replace absentee and inactive ones. They shall also fill the gap of some stakeholders that are not represented. For instance, the number of female members and youth in the MSP is too low. In view of the role of religion in the life of Nigerians, it is important to have representation from the clergy. When they come on board, there is the need for orientation.

Conclusion

This Sustainability Plan is by no means exhaustive. Generally, Sustainability Plans are flexible to allow for adjustments based on emerging realities within the context of operations. A Sustainability Plan for an organ like the MSP is a herculean task because, the MSP is like a bath, it is neither a bird or an animal. It is therefore imperative to first and foremost clarify the identity of the MSP. It is also very important to clarify the purpose and mandate of the MSP. There is also the need for an in-depth stakeholder identification and analysis.

There is always the mistaken assumption that all stakeholders are beneficiaries and that they are favourably disposed towards a given initiative. This is not always the case. Many stakeholders are spoilers. And they need to be identified

in order to develop strategies for ‘dealing’ with them. This stakeholder analysis and identification is also important in order to ‘guard and guide’ the MSP away from political partisanship. For instance, the MSP is expected to work with any government in power. That government came to power on a partisan platform and would want to sustain that platform. That is a challenge for the MSP.