Citizen Primacy in Niger Delta's Development Aspiration: Challenging Existing Status Quo

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Abstract

This paper tried to interrogate the primacy of citizens' role in the development process of countries, using the Niger Delta region as its take-off point. Its aim essentially is to do a critical assessment of the political economy of development in the region, so as to see how the current development crisis or dilemma could best be resolved. In doing this, it adopted the Human Development Theory of Amartya Sen. It also made use of primary and secondary methods of data collection. In the end, the study discovered, among other things, that the development crisis being faced by the region is not so much as a result of the fact that the Nigerian state has failed in its responsibility than the fact that the people of the region have not shown enough commitment and ownership of the state-sponsored development processes and initiatives for the area. The study makes this submission against the backdrop that most countries in the world today only developed exponentially when citizens took up development responsibility, and this include the Asian countries. The study further discovered that local corruption, mismanagement of state-sponsored interventionist development agencies and institutions by those who have manned and managed them, most of who are Niger Deltans, are twin evils that have obstructed development in the region. The study thus recommended among other things that the citizens of the Niger Delta should come to reality with the fact that until they are willing and ready to initiate, own and commit themselves to the development processes of the region by shunning all development obstructionist acts, development will remain a mirage.

Keywords: Citizen, Citizenship, Development, Niger Delta, Human Development Theory

The Problematique

The disposition to develop abounds and redounds in all societies and among all categories of state persons. This has made the phenomenon of development, which is the quantitative and qualitative change in the socio-economic cum political conditions of a person or people, to be one of the most used – and abused - especially in developing countries. This

is predicated on the fact that since time immemorial man has always sought means by which he could move from conditions of unfavourable socio-economic realities to favourable ones so as to better his lots for survival thereby extirpating the possibilities of his sudden demise or uncomfortable living.

And so, from the hunter-gatherer age through the tribal society to the building of the modern state as we know it today, man has not ceased from devising means and modalities by which he could procure multiple alternatives for his wellbeing. It is this quest of self-survival and bettering of his socio-economic lots that pushes him to constantly revolutionize his instruments of production, from the use of bare hands through the use of hoes and cutlasses, to the use of heavy duty vehicles like tractors and today's high-yield, jet-speed, and computer-age machines in all segments of life. The implication of this is that man has always repulsed human-made or nature-designed discomfort to his existence – and so he must wake up to the call of weathering the storms in terms of innovating, discovering, inventing and refining his way through life.

This is why early philosophers especially of the modern age reckoned that in the final analysis real development can only be attained when the individual is included and not excluded, when he is considered a rational-economic being that has the capacity to produce landmark feats that would propel the entirety of the materiality of society to enviable heights. In this light, there is a primacy of the individual, of the citizen in the development of society; this even becomes more rewarding if the necessitating ambience in terms of law and order, security of life and property, become permanent emblems of state configuration. It was in this light that Smith (1994) asserted that "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest". The implication of this is that development can best be procured when the individual is made the 'king', when he is made to take ownership and responsibility for the feasibility and practicality of the development process, and not abdicate it to state apparatuses or any exogenous agency.

History is replete with the dead ends and tragic realizations of societies that initially tried to make the state assume the role of procuring and producing development for the citizens, rather than making the citizens themselves to become the 'developers'. Those which got this right from the very beginning, or which entered the bandwagon on time, are all today's first world countries – United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Japan to mention few – and in recent times precisely from 1990s Russia has joined the train. China, which is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world today, remained largely agrarian and backward until 1978 when it allowed itself to exit the utopia

of state production or generation of development, and enthroned a season or an era of individual or citizen-driven development through the de-collectivization of production and property ownership – banking on its citizens' competitive creativity, innovativeness, inventiveness, and propensity to discover new things and revolutionize, modernize or refine old ones.

In countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, India, South Korea, the Philippines, etc, this individual-driven development strategy has gone with purposeful, strong and disciplined political leadership. It was this notion of citizen-centered development possibilities that form bulk of Weber's arguments in his *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* – originally published in 1905 and translated into the English language by Talcott Parsons in 1930 - in which he contended that man is by nature an *individualistic being* that fare best when left to act out this his inborn *nature* by taking responsibility for his actions, inactions and reactions.

What is instructive in the above position is not so much the blind promotion of capitalist ethos in which there is a climax of individualism – accompanied at the early stage by a degree of ruthless parasitism - but rather what is really of significance here is the global recognition of the undisputable fact that the best way to procure and produce development for segments of society, or society as a whole, is to consciously place the ownership and responsibility burdens of development on individual citizens in society, making everyone active participant or stakeholder in the process, to the end that although the state is the 'owner' of the 'kingdom' yet the citizen is the 'king'. When citizens see themselves as 'kings' of the development process or responsible for its favourable consummation, they work better to eschew shame and remonstrations. This must have informed the demand of former President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, in 1961, who beckoned on Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country".

The Niger Delta region has been a region of failed billions of dollars Collier (2007) in programmes, policies and projects because of a sense of abdication, not on the part of the state but essentially on the part of the failure of the citizens in the region to take ownership and claim responsibility for the success of these developmental initiatives. Since the 1960s when the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was created up to the present establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the region has gulped billions in naira and dollars yet it has not reflected serious advancement in its aspirations and demands for development. In this regard, it has increasingly become clear that it is not enough to claim ownership of the natural crude oil deposits in the area, and

move by every means possible, both peaceful but most times violent or militant confrontation, to demand reparation for the repeatedly echoed barrage of degradation, by the citizens of the region, but more importantly the argument here is that if the people could muster the same energy to own the development process, and take responsibility for the area's development by shunning acts of brigandage and uncouth and unconscionable daredevil attacks, development would become more likely than ever. The rationalization for this argument is better understood when viewed through the prism of the toxic ramifications caused by the incessant bombings of oil platforms, oil wells, oil rigs and oil pipelines (Ibiyemi, 2006; Ogundiya, 2009) which inadvertently and inevitably unleash further degradation on the ecosystem of the same supposed aggrieved people thereby opening the floodgates of perennial contamination and de-development in the area, a situation which clearly resonates the indubitable axiom that two 'wrongs' cannot make a 'right'.

This becomes urgent because the quest to develop the Niger Delta region has often met impenetrable barriers most of which emanate from the conducts of peoples of the region – chiefs, youths, opinion leaders, cult groups, local political elites, indigenous contractors, etc. – some of whom, rather than ensuring that long-term developmental initiatives are birthed and consolidated, would prefer to circumvent or sabotage the development process for personal, short-term gains (Collier, 2007). Development to this extent is held hostage, as the people disallow themselves from cultivating the behavioural clout to discipline their appetites so as to guard the resources that come to the region for them to be prudently and judiciously utilized. Immediate gains thus appear to be the norm rather than the exception.

There is no doubt that the Niger Delta, by reason of its natural ecological fragility, and its immense contributions to the economic lifeline of Nigeria as a whole, deserves special attention in terms of direct and indirect intervention investments much of which may even stretch into extra-budgetary spending. This strategic position of the region stems from the fact that it accounts for more than 90 percent of earnings from oil and gas, 80 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 95 percent of the national budget of Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2009). The region also accounts for oil reserve of about thirty billion barrels and gas reserve of about one hundred and sixty trillion cubic feet. This is made possible by reason of the extant 10,000km of pipelines, 10 gas plants, 3 oil terminals, over 1,500 oil producing wells, over 600 oil fields, 5,284, on and off shore oil wells, over 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations, 3 refineries and an LNG project. These are mainly located in the core oil-producing states of the South-South like Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom (Jack-Akhigbe, 2013; Nextier, 2015).

The region also inevitably deserves special attention because of the degree of degradation incurred by the people from the hazardous and toxic industrial activities of the oil multinationals which often embark on these activities without real recourse to international best practices leading to gas flaring, air and water pollution and general environmental contamination. These activities have been said to exude acid rains, shorten lifespan, destroy farm crops, and ransack local ancestral cultural shrines, artefacts, and reserved centers of worship.

In this light, some scholars and institutional personalities like Babalola (2015), Okowa (2005), Ntete-Nna (2001), Ogundiya (2007), Ibodje (2008), Alamieyesigha (2005) as well as Inokoba and Imubua (2010) have argued that these activities have devastated and underdeveloped the region. The argument put forward by these scholars is that oil exploration and exploitation has led to family, intra-communal, inter-communal and inter-ethnic feuds, conflicts and wars; that the oil economy has disinherited and dislocated the local people who are dependent on the primary economies of farming, fishing, and hunting; that the region has been laid prostrate by massive oil-based environmental degradation; and that as a regime of massive oil spillages and gas flares, their activities have destroyed or devastated enormous land and water which has led to soil fertility loss, agricultural decline, forest loss, fisheries decline and biodiversity depletion (Ikelegbe, 2004).

All these situations no doubt make the region an endangered area and required special attention and intervention. But, has this not been the case? Has there not been special attention paid to the region; have there not been several intervention schemes initiated to address the prevalent contradictions and backwardness in the region? Of course there have been. For instance, there have been the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB-1960), Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA-1976), Special Fund for Oil Producing Areas by Revenue Act (1981), Presidential Task Force for the Development of Oil Producing Areas (1989), Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC-1992), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC, 2000), Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (2008), and Presidential Amnesty Programme (2009).

These agencies have all enjoyed different degrees of funding, both from the Nigerian federal government and international development partners. For instance between 2010 and 2015 alone, over N7.35 trillion (USD37.31 billion) was channeled into the development of the Niger Delta region – this sum was the equivalent amount of the Nigerian national annual budgets for 2013 and 2014 put together (Nextier, 2015). Despite these laudable governmental interventionist schemes and huge spending the region has gulped, it

remains grossly underdeveloped and acutely impoverished. This is not to talk about the large amount of money that goes into the coffers of the Niger Delta States through the constitutionally mandated 13% derivation.

So, it is not completely true that the region has not been receiving special attention from the Nigerian state as some scholars may want us to believe. The reality is that the region has received much more than any other region in the country – just as it has contributed much more than any other region to the country's collective purse - yet the management of the resources by the region's people in terms of consciously taking responsibility for the prudent utilization of these funds, monitoring and holding their own people accountable, as well as claiming ownership of the various developmental interventionist schemes – without trying to short-circuit the schemes or development process for selfish or private gains – has been the major bane. This is so because there have been instances where, for instance, a company may want to construct access roads in some communities and after they confer with the opinion leaders or spoke-persons or local elites on how to go about it, the same people rather than encouraging these companies to go ahead would rather prefer to be settled with the same money and thus the project will be abandoned, but their private pockets and bank accounts would become fat (Collier, 2007). The same people when they have expended the money, they would then incite militant unrest in the area to the end that militancy or insurgency becomes just a tool to satisfy not the whole but a few so that when the few have been settled they abandon the militant action and others take over for their own gain. Militancy becomes a fraud, a mere cycle of duplicitous unrest for self-centered gains.

It is to unravel why this has been the case, and to establish that the Nigerian state or oil companies may not be the main culprit in the de-development or backwardness of the Niger Delta but the evasive and avaricious attitude of the Niger Delta people, a reality which is essentially predicated on their abdicating disposition towards the whole mantra of development, that this study is being undertaking.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories could be used to operationalize the subject matter of this research discourse. Some of such theories are the Lockean Social Contract Theory, the Eastonian System Theory and the Human Development Theory. But, we adopt the Human Development Theory as the most suitable. This theory as developed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, among others, stresses human capacity development as a precondition for material or overall development. The theory especially from Sen's perspective kicks against the orientation of the basic needs theory because it argues that it is not in giving

people bread or meeting their basic needs for self-survival that really guarantees development but empowering them in terms of skills and technical know-how in line with what they want to do, and not what other people think they should do. It emphasizes that once a people have been fortified with necessary capacities rather than feeding them with temporal fishes they will be able to engender development on their own.

What the above implies is that for development to be participatory the people who are to be inclusive in the development process would have to have enhanced capacity to engender, own and guard development in their areas. If the people are thus not properly developed themselves in terms of having the requisite capacities, they would not be able to be useful to the development process. This is what Sen calls freedom. People can only be said to be free if they are able to determine or contribute to what directly or indirectly affects their lives especially in terms of development issues. This is why the theory is also called the capability approach. Among other things, it proposes that social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value. Sen notes that: "the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value…The 'good life' is partly a life of genuine choice, and not one in which the person is forced into a particular life – however rich it might be in other respects."

The bottomline is that Sen's ideas provide the core principles of a development approach whose flexible framework allows policy-makers to analyze diverse challenges that poor people and poor countries face, rather than imposing a rigid orthodoxy with a set of policy prescriptions. It is also important to emphasize that the human development approach contains two central theses about people and development, and to distinguish between them. They are what Sen calls the ''evaluative aspect'' and the ''agency aspect'' (Sen, 2002). The first is concerned with evaluating improvements in human lives as an explicit development objective and using human achievements as key indicators of progress. This contrasts with paradigms that focus on economic performance. The second is concerned with what human beings can do to achieve such improvements, particularly through policy and political changes. The human development approach is commonly associated with the evaluative aspect. The agency aspect is less widely appreciated.

The applicability of this theory to the study at hand is very clear and valid because it seeks to inquire into the possibility of redressing the long-drawn development doldrums of the Niger Delta by beaming our searchlight on the primacy of citizens' roles. Its thrust is essentially to see how citizens, in the spirit of participatory development, could own and take responsibility for the development of the region, as the attitude of placing this burden

on the shoulders of the Nigerian state since the first republic has not yielded much gains. The research is thus trying to show how the Niger Deltan citizens could act as the magic wand to end the ugly vicious cycles of underdevelopment and backwardness in the area, in particular, and Nigeria, at large – not by playing the blame game, but by claiming ownership and taking responsibility for the development of the region by shunning acts capable that have hitherto stampeded its material upliftment.

Conceptualizing Development

The phenomenon of development does not have a precise meaning; in short, in most cases it has an ambiguous nature. This nature has elicited a reality in which the concept is viewed from numerous perspectives. There is the perspective that sees it from the economic angle, while others see it as a concept that is multidimensional, meaning that development is beyond the economic domain. According to Meier (1988) development is the act of raising to the highest value the Gross National Product through the process of accumulating capital and industrialization. He notes that it should be viewed as the capacity of a nation to increase its static economy to a level where it can generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP). Additionally, he further states that development is not limited to just the process of acquiring industries, but encompasses such processes as modernization, productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical know-how, improved institutions, and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy apparatus (Meier, 1988).

While economic growth may result in increases in gross domestic product in society, development is much about enrichment of lives of all the people in the society (Okereke & Ekpe, 2002). There has thus been a shift from a holistic theorization of development towards the issue of citizen involvement or participation in the development process. The underlying principle of such phenomenon is the people's control of the processes. Todaro and Smith (2006) assert that if a development strategy results in robust economic growth and political stability without a significant change in the quality of life of the masses of the people, something is wrong. In this regard, high growth performance without people participation will amount to economic growth without development. This was evident in Brazil, a country that experienced and suffered the consequences of "growth without development" (Todaro & Smith, 2006:27). Its growth performance was the best in Latin America between the 1960s and the 1980s. However, due to its low direct citizen participation or involvement, it remained one of the countries with highest levels of social inequalities and backwardness in the world.

It is in light of the above that numerous development definitions presently focus on the capacity of the people to make and implement decisions that relate to their own material upliftment. Basic human needs form a base for this conception. It is normatively assumed that satisfaction of basic human needs should take precedence over all other development thoughts and efforts. This evolutionary trend of development was promoted by the United Nations since the 1970s and the World Bank became vocal about it in the 1990s (Todaro and Smith,2006).

This approach has continued to place emphasis on people participation in decision-making as being important, particularly in respect of initiation, planning, implementation and evaluation of a development programme.

For instance, the industrial revolution and largescale development in Europe could not take place until individualism born out of the 16th century Protestant Reformation was enthroned; China was backward and grossly agrarian until the policy of de-collectivization was introduced in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping; America's titanic economic growth and development is rooted in its citizen-centric perspective towards the whole mantra of development; the same thing goes for the Asian tigers – Malaysia, Syngapore, South Korea, Japan, etc, - all of which have experienced exponential material progress and social stability. This is because all of them opted, at one point or the other, to put citizens or individuals at the fore-front of development, while allowing the states to just create the necessary policies and roadmaps – like the NDDC, Presidential Amnesty Programme, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, etc, in Nigeria - for the development process to take-off, etc. The bottomline of this definitional argument is that development will remain largely elusive – like in Soviet Russia, pre-1978 China, etc – until and unless citizens, individually and together, assert their presence by taking up the challenge to own the development process.In the same vein, Seers (1979:98) defines development by posing three major questions. He says:

> The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" even if per capita income doubled (Seers, 1979:98).

It follows therefore that for a country to be classified as developed, there are parameters to look out for which are: the state of poverty, unemployment and inequality. To this end, development can be conceptualized as the sustained elevation of an entire society towards a better or more humane life.

Sen (1989) defines development with the aid of three central concepts: functioning, capacities and freedom. Functioning refers to what a person does or can do with the commodity of given characteristics that he possesses or controls. Capacities imply the freedom that a person has in terms of functioning. They are determined by income, health and educational standards. Freedom means, freedom of choice or control of one's life. This include: political freedom, economic facilities and social opportunities.

From the foregoing backdrop, development can be conceived as the capacity to function. It is concerned with enhancing the lives people live and the freedom they enjoy. At the core of all development effort is freedom of choice by enhancing peoples capacities for attaining higher standards of health, knowledge, self-respect and the ability to participate actively in community life (Sen, 1989).

Looking at this development mantra specifically from the point of view of the Niger Delta's material underdevelopment and crisis, Jack-Akhigbe (2013:9) asserts that:

> A fundamental flaw in state interventionist attempts in the (Niger Delta) region is that they exclude the recipients of development. Most often development projects are primarily designed to ensure that the spoils of electoral contest go round. They are mainly handled by urban elites who have completely lost touch with the people in the local communities and whose interests are completely at variance with the actual needs of the people. This is why the feeling of alienation and powerlessness is pervasive among the people. The major fallout of the foregoing is that the people see the state and its officials as enemies to be cheated or defeated. Thus, even when development is initiated by the state such development cannot be sustained by them. In all the Niger Delta communities, contractors have to pay huge sums of money popularly called 'deve' to community youths before they are allowed to execute projects. Even at this, they still need to protect their workers and facilities with heavily equipped state security agents. This has seriously constrained the capacity of development agencies to initiate and implement development projects.

Conceptualizing Citizen and Citizenship: A Case for Change in Development Thinking and Template in The Niger Delta

Citizenship is a contested and sensitive issue. The word 'citizen' was derived from citizenship and citizenship was derived from historical relationship between the individual and his city; implying the status of freedom from accompanying responsibilities (Schinkel, 2008). Citizen as a concept has been defined in several ways by different authors and writers. Imhabekhai (2009) perceives a citizen to mean any individual who resides and earns his/her livelihood in a particular community. The fact is that for somebody to accede to the status of a citizen in a community, the person must have lived in the community for a good number of years either by birth or residency. The people in that community must see, know and accept him/her as one of their own. It could thus be seen as a citizen as someone who legally belongs to a particular country and has rights and responsibilities there; whether he is living there or not.

Also, the term citizenship not only refers to the legal relationship between citizen and state, which comprises rights and obligations, but also to (expectations regarding) various forms of participations. The legal relationship between citizen and state is sometimes also referred to as 'the formal dimension of citizenship' (Schinkel, 2008). The participation dimension is 'the moral dimension of citizenship'. This moral dimension is not a new one. References to the moral aspects of citizenship date as far back as the ancient Greeks and Romans. In ancient Greece, Aristotle considered active participation in the political debate essential, i.e. apart from fulfilling rights and obligations, active political participation is also part of citizenship. In Roman times, Cicero deemed citizenship a virtue ('virtus'), as did Robespierre during the French revolution (Dunn, 2005). The 'Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen' from 1789 even distinguished between a citizen who actively engages with society ('le citoyen') and the man ('l'homme') who assumes a passive attitude in society (Schinkel, 2008).

The roots of the concept are in the Greek *polis* and the Roman *res publica* (Pocock 1998: 35). In *Politics*, Aristotle (1984) states that a citizen "is defined to be one of whom both the parents are citizens…." and who holds an office or is in some other way participating in the deliberative or judicial administration of the state: "Hence, as is evident, there are different kinds of citizens; and he is a citizen in the fullest sense who shares in the honours of the state." The view of Aristotle is well captured in the following passage:

> It must be admitted that we cannot consider all those to be citizens who are necessary to the existence of the state; for example, children are not citizens equally with grown-up men, who are citizens absolutely, but children, not being grown up, are only citizens on a certain assumption.

> In ancient times, and among some nations, the artisan class were slaves or foreigners, and therefore the majority of them are so now. The best form of state will not admit them to citizenship; but if they are admitted, then our definition of the excellence of a citizen will not apply to every citizen, nor to every free man as such, but only to those who are freed from necessary services. The necessary people are either slaves who minister to the wants of individuals, or mechanics or labourers who are the servants of the community **(**Aristotle, 1984:1277-1278)

The classical Athenian account represented here by Aristotle supposes a strict division between public and domestic lives, and requires that citizens should participate in decision-making (to rule and be ruled): to be able to participate, a citizen must be "a male of known genealogy, a patriarch, a warrior, and a master of the labor of others" (Pocock 1998).

For Badru, citizen signifies the identity of a person in accordance with his belonging to a sovereign state (Badru, 2000:3). Put differently, it denotes a full member of a definite community, country or group. Hence, it may be likened to a national. Similarly, it means an inhabitant of a city or town, especially one entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman. A citizen is a member of a state, native or a naturalized person who owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection therefrom. He may be seen as a civilian distinct from a specialized servant of the state. He is a person owning allegiance to a state and entitled to the protection of the sovereign state. It refers to the one owning allegiance to a state in which sovereign power is retained by the people (Badru, 2000:6).

A citizen is thus a participatory member of a political community – in short, it is his participatory disposition that centrally, in modern societies, define his being and belonging. Living in a country does not mean that a person is necessarily a citizen of that country. A citizen is therefore a person who is legally a member of a country and contributes to it's development. He is also obliged to perform certain duties to the state such as payment of taxes, being law abiding and so on (Badru, 2000).

It has been stated that mere living in a state or country does not mean or confer citizenship of the country upon a person. In a clear term, a person who is not a citizen of a country is automatically an alien or a non-citizen of the said country. Citizenship as an operation of law cannot be presumed or inferred but must be legally ascertained.

Having given the above discussion of the phenomenon of citizen and citizenship, it becomes expedient to note and discuss the findings of this research vis-à-vis the field survey carried out as stated in the following tables. It is however important to note that this is a survey research which used both primary and secondary data to operationalize itself. In this case a collected a sample of 400 respondents from three Niger Delta states: Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states. Some of the vital data garnered are stated below and interpreted:

Do you not think that if the restive youths in the region refrain from hostage-taking, pipeline vandalization and sabotage, piracy and development obstructionist practices, the region will experience more rapid development?

Table 1: Stoppage of Development Obstructionist Practices and Niger Delta Development

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	310	78
NO	42	11
NO COMMENT	48	12
TOTAL	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

In relation to the data on Table 1, the data indicate that 78% of the respondents agree to the fact that if incidents like hostage-taking, vandalization, sabotage, piracy and other development obstructionist acts are reduced or removed from the region that the development of the area would have been more rapid. To this end, these respondents think that by shunning these anti-development acts the people of the region would be indirectly creating the favourable environment for policies, programmes and projects to work, thereby uplifting the region from the miry mud of material backwardness. Only a paltry 11% think this is not the case, while the remaining 12% were undecided as at the administration of the questionnaire.

Do you not think that if the Niger Deltans start holding their immediate leaders accountable the region will develop faster?

Table 2: Niger Deltans holding their immediate leaders Accountable to engender the region's development

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	288	72
NO	99	25
NOT SURE	13	3
TOTAL	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

Again, this research sought to raise the issue of accountability and stewardship of the immediate leaders of the region. The political, traditional and opinion leaders who control what happen in the region, determine what kind of projects to initiate, and how funds accruing to their states will be expended. Often what is noticed is that these leaders, having squandered the resources allocated to their states, will then incite the people against the national government, thereby trying to absolve themselves from whatever blame for the region's backwardness. It is on this basis that 72% of the total respondents are of the view that holding the region's immediate leaders accountable is the best way to go about ensuring prudent deployment of the region's funds, thereby engendering rapid and comprehensive development in the area. On the other hand, 25% however rejected this position while 3% refused to give any specific view.

How has corruption among the Niger Deltan leaders charged with managing sensitive aspects of the region's development establishments constitute the main albatross to the region's backwardness?

Table 3: Corruption and Niger Delta Backwardness or Development Failure

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	311	78
NO	33	8
Not Sure	56	14
Total	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

From Table 3, 78% of the respondents agree that corruption is at the heart of the backwardness of the Niger Delta, especially corruption among those Niger Deltans have, at one point or the other charged with the management of development projects and programmes in the area. The implication of this is that through corruption the wealth of the states in the region are diverted into private accounts of some few individuals in the region – in this case, the political, traditional and opinion leaders are the first culprits. On

the other hand, 8%, on the other end, feel it may not have really been the case. 14% of the respondents could not make up their minds as at the time this field survey took place.

Has the collection of 'settlement' or 'deve' rather than development projects by the local chiefs and youth leaders from the oil multinationals been a major drawback to the region's material progress?

Table 4: Lack of Patriotism among the Niger Delta's leaders and the region's Underdevelopment

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	293	73
NO	44	11
NOT SURE	63	16
TOTAL	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

From Table 4, it could be gleaned that 73% of the respondents believe that the lack of patriotism, selflessness and altruism among Niger Delta leaders for the region, has been part of the central drawbacks of the region's development. When rather than procuring long-lasting development for their area, leaders at different levels will be cornering oil companies and other well-meaning development partners to 'settle' for forget about the projects or initiatives the developers might have for their people. When this happens, development is not only frustrated but sacrificed on the altar of avarice. This trend of collecting 'deve' or settlement is very rampant in the region, and it has been devastating. But 11% think otherwise, that is, they believe that this is not a major reason for the region's backwardness, rather it is just a diversionary tactic to beg the question. 20% were undecided.

Do you think that the bane of Niger Delta's advancement is not lack of development schemes and initiatives but the mismanagement of these schemes and initiatives?

Table 5: Mismanagement of Development Schemes and Initiatives in the Niger Delta and the Region's Backwardness

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	189	47
NO	107	27
NOT SURE	104	26
TOTAL	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

There is no doubt that since the Willink Commission was inaugurated in 1957 to look into the fears of the Niger Delta people, there have been several development schemes, agencies and even ministry that have been set up to address the development challenges of the region. In the fourth republic alone, the NDDC, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, Presidential Amnesty Programme, and several interventionist schemes have been put in place. The instructive thing is that virtually all these bodies and programmes have been headed by sons and daughters of the Niger Delta. This is why the data on Table 5 is very instructive. It shows that 47% of the respondents believe that mismanagement of these bodies or poverty of ideas by those who have manned or managed these bodies is central to the continued underdevelopment of the region. 27% however believe that this is not the case, while 26% of the respondents were undecided.

How has the Presidential Amnesty Programme used by the Niger Deltans to perpetuate fraud and waste in the region?

Table 6: Presidential Amnesty Programme and the Perpetuation of Fraud in the Niger Delta

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	342	86
NO	21	5
NOT SURE	37	9
TOTAL	400	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2019.

Table 6 reveals that 86% of those who responded to this question think that the Presidential Amnesty Programme which was inaugurated by the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration in 2009, has systematically turned into fraud, used by people of the region to perpetuate delinquency and underdevelopment of the region. This they argue has become the case because most of those who come out to disarm are more often than not the actual militants but relatives of the militants who see the programme as youth empowerment scheme. More so, these respondents think that since the PAP has become a timeless programme, militancy has then turned into a permanent decimal in the life of the region. Anybody can just wake up any time and become a militant because he knows that there is an ongoing amnesty programme. It has also become an instrument for political patronage. Only 5% do not think this argument is right while 19% were undecided as at when this research was being conducted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is a departure from extant scholarship which sees the crisis of development in the Niger Delta as a sole creation of the Nigerian state in concert with the IOCs. This scholarship makes the degradation and destruction of the ecological attributes of the region and the evolution of militancy, as function of maladministration and malapropism on the part of the Nigerian state.

What this study has done is to open the vistas of alternative perspective to looking at this issue so as to finding lasting, dispassionate and comprehensive solution to the development crisis in the region. If the extant scholarship which has been in vogue since 1957 has consistently failed, this study believes that it is time to begin to rethink our strategy, and that will necessarily involve altering existing scholarship which systematically but deviously absolves local leaders and people of the region of any wrongdoing.

The following policy recommendations are thus put forward to push the discussion forward, and to move the region forward, thereby ending the long-drawn development dilemma in the Niger Delta:

I. That the citizens of the Niger Delta should come to the reality that until they are willing and ready to initiate, own and commit themselves to the development processes of the region by shunning all development obstructionist acts, development will remain a mirage; in addition, that the citizens must be more entrepreneurial in terms of being inventive, creative and innovative in originating enterprises or establishments that can engender some modicum of development in the region;

II. That the people of the region should know that virtually all the development agencies for the region, including the NDDC, Niger Delta Affairs Ministry, and the Presidential Amnesty Programme, have all been manned and managed by sons and daughters from the region and so they should be held accountable or responsible for their failure or mismanagement, and

III. That the people of the region must begin to ask their immediate local political and traditional leaders what they have been doing with their monthly statutory allocations, rather than wanting to blame the national government for everything.

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