RETHINKING THE DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP FAILURE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT DEBATE

IYABRADE IKPORUKPO PhD
Department of Political Science
Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island
Bayelsa State
ijikporukpo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *The debate of a Niger Delta, rich with abundance of natural wealth that account for approximately 95 percent of Nigeria's export earnings and over 80 percent of federal government revenue yet classified as one of the less developed regions of Nigeria is an on-going debate. There is the argument that development cannot be achieved in the region because it is crisis prone. Another narrative has it that the development of the region is the possible solution to put an end to the different dimensions of crisis in the area. This paper interrogates the development, leadership and crisis nexus. It relies on desk survey of relevant literatures and asserts that the huge revenues the region gets from the federation account have barely benefitted the people and have not reflected on the region as it should. The paper blames leadership failure in the Niger Delta for the recurring crisis in the area and recommends that rather than argue whether development drives crisis or crisis brings development, the question of leadership failure in the Niger Delta should be resolved.*
Keywords: Development, natural wealth, leadership, revenue, management.

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region is classified as underdeveloped and in dire need of development. The region is Nigeria's main source of revenue. It is the storehouse of the country's crude oil which accounts for approximately 90% of the total export earning of the country, yet there is a deep seated feeling of neglect, marginalization and discontentment in the region, Scholars and other research based institutions have come out with far reaching recommendations and programmes on ways and means of resolving the developmental challenges of the Niger Delta. The Nigerian state has equally founded and funded various commissions that made recommendations on how the challenges can be resolved. There are different schools of thought that explain the narrative of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. One school of thought, mainly government officers and their sympathizers, believe that the underdevelopment of the region is because the region is crisis prone. It is the opinion of the proponents of this school that development cannot be achieved in a crisis-prone environment and as such, if the much desired development of the region would be achieved, the crisis situation must be addressed. Another school of thought argues that development is the possible solution to overcome the Niger Delta crisis. It is the argument of this school that when the people of the region are deprived of benefits accruable to them, they resort to violence as a means of expressing their frustration. It is an on-going debate.

The question then is how can the challenges of development in the Niger Delta be resolved? An issue that compelled the colonial government to institute the Willinks Commission to look into the complaints of the region and similar problems of minorities. An issue that made the Nigerian state to institute: the Don Etiebet Commission of 1994, the Ogomudia Commission, amongst others. The underdevelopment of the Niger Delta prompted the establishment of the Niger Delta Development

Commission (NDDC) in June 5, 2000 by the Obasanjo Administration, the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs on September 10, 2008 by the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration.

Although the Niger Delta cannot lay claim to be the only underdeveloped region in Nigeria, placing the development index of the region side by side with the huge revenue the region gets from the federation account, the need to rethink the development, leadership failure and crisis debate becomes a necessity. The study relied on academic journals, reports of commissions on Niger Delta issues that are relevant to the study, both formal and informal discussion with ex-militants and Niger Delta crisis parties as sources of data.

Conceptual Clarification

The basic concepts used in this study include: development, leadership failure, crisis management, Niger Delta, amongst others.

Development means different things to different people depending on their intellectual ideological beliefs and the issue in questions (Ibaba, 2011 citing Obinozie, 1999:157). It can be seen as a process of creating positive change. Seers (1975) categorized it to mean a reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Todaro (1981: 70) on his part defined development in terms of three interrelated conditionality's or core values: life sustenance which implies sustainable improvement in the ability of a socio-economic system to provide the basic material needs of the people. These needs include food, shelter, health, education and clean environment. The second core value is self-esteem, that is, the "sense of worth and self-respect of not being used as a tool by others for their own end." The third core development value according to Todaro is that of freedom from servitude. Fundamental to the foregoing conception of development is the ability of man to productively manipulate his environment, physical, human and perhaps, "spiritual" in such a manner as to maximize the welfare of its entire people.

It is clear that development is a man-centered process that leads to qualitative improvement in standard of living. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures development in terms of life expectancy, education and purchasing power parity. In this paper, development implies a continuous process of productive change in the quality and span of life of a person or group of persons. The change can be through the provision of basic infrastructural facilities or human empowerment.

The crises discussed in this paper are crises of development and these are incidents that distorts or violate the process of development. They stagnate or reverse the development process. The crises also include events or activities that prevent the implementation of development programmes or projects. Therefore, crisis management is the operationalization and responses to the enforcement of the strategic provisions, goals and ideals of crisis reduction agenda. It is the process by which emergency situation, threat, insecurity and confrontation are handled to minimize damage.

Crisis is a common occurrence in the Niger Delta. The Niger delta is the largest area of wetland in Africa and is indeed one of the largest (World Bank, 1995). The Niger Delta is in the southern part of Nigeria and has a landmass of about 112,110 kilometres. The vast landmass of the regions spread across five ecological zones (low land rainforest zone, the mundane zone, derived savannah zone, fresh water swamp zone and mangrove forest/vegetation zone) (NDDC, 2006). The description of the Niger Delta has elicited two broad view points (Ibaba, 2017) one that describes it as a geographical entity and the other which sees it as an oil producing region. Whereas, the geographical definition which is used in this paper lists six states (Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers) as the component states of the region, Abia, Imo and Ondo States are included in the conception of the Niger Delta as oil producing region.

In the context of this paper, leadership is sees as a process by which an executive can direct and influence the behaviour and work of others towards accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. It is the capacity to develop a vision and influence others towards the realization of the vision.

In any society, leaders are those that are given the responsibility to drive development and in the opinion of this paper, they are the political office holders (the governors and their teams). The inability, failure or unwillingness to carry out the responsibility of a leader is considered as leadership failure.

The Niger Delta Crisis: Dimensions and Categories

The Niger Delta region is crisis prone. The seed of the crisis which has spread like wildfire in the region was laid during the pre-colonial era (Etekpe, 2008) and became pronounced with the discovery and exploration of crude oil. The exploration of crude oil brought high expectations of better life and infrastructural development to the people of the region but with time, the expectations were dashed hence, the crisis which Ikporukpo (2008) identified to include:

- Sabotage of oil facilities,
- Hostage taking/kidnapping,
- Illegal bunkering, and
- Conflicts of all categories

These crises have adverse socio-economic consequences on the region and beyond. For instance, on January 1, 2008, Ateke Tom led group, Niger Delta Vigilante invaded Port Harcourt and 14 persons were killed including policemen. This singular event reverberated across the globe pushing oil price at world market to a record of 100 US dollars per barrel (Arowolo, 2008). The crises are of various dimensions and categories. Sabotage of oil facilities is perhaps, the oldest form of protest/interference in t eh oil industry. It involves taking actions that disrupt oil production activities. The most common form is the damaging or destruction of the pipeline which are used in the movement of oil. Ikporukpo (2008) noted that the first instance of sabotage was in February, 1966 when Isaac Boro during his "Twelve Day Revolution" blew up the pipeline connecting Oloibiri, the first oil well, to Port Harcourt and Ughelli. Presently, sabotage has become very common in the Niger Delta. It is important to note that sabotage does not only involve the damage/destruction of pipelines. It is sometimes characterized by the destruction or damage of an entire production platform.

A notable case of sabotage was the attach on Thursday, June 19, 2008 by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Detla (MEND) on the Bonga Field which is Shell's largest field/platform and located about 120 nautical miles (1 nautical mile = 1.15 miles or 1.852 km), from the coast of the Forcados Terminal in Niger Delta (Vanguard, 2008).

In a recent press release by Shell, it was alleged that the number of sabotage related oil spills of more than 100 kilograms in volume in 2018 increased to 111 compared to 62 in 2017 (https:/www.shell.com.ng). It is important to note that the sabotage referred by shell are those involved in shell facilities alone. One can then imagine the dimension when it involves other oil companies' facilities. The damages sabotage causes can hardly be quantified; loss of lives and properties as in the case of Jesse in Delta State in October, 18, 1998 when an estimated 1,082 persons died (Ikporukpo, 2019).

Whereas, sabotage of oil facilities may not be known to many Nigerians, the same cannot be said of hostage-taking and kidnapping. Hostage-taking is the forceful abduction of a person or group of persons with the sole intention of using such captive as a means of negotiation or to make specific demands. Hostage taking in the Niger Delta emerged around 2005 as a strategy by the militants to put pressure on government and oil companies (Ikporukpo, 2008). The first noteworthy case was in 2005 when MEND took nine foreign oil workers in Delta State to unknown destination to press for the release of the leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) Mujahid Asari Dokubo who was detained by the federal government. The principle behind hostage-taking then was that the focus was on oil workers particularly, foregoing ones and no ransom payment was usually demanded.

Unfortunately, commercial and political hostage-takers rode on the back of MEND and other genuine protests hostage-takers to introduce indiscriminate hostage-taking for ransom payment purposes. Commercial hostage-taking eventually gave rise to kidnapping and this has attracted global attention over the years as the Niger Delta region became unsafe for anybody to line, do business or invest in. Kidnapping is the unlawful detention of a person through the use of force, threats, fraud or enticement. The purpose is largely for commercial benefits. It is alleged by government officials that the famous East/West road in the Niger Delta was abandoned because of Kidnapers.

While kidnappers are operating in the major roads and construction sites in the region, sea pirates equally make the river outlets and the coastal areas of the region unsafe. Piracy activities in the Niger Delta are such that the 2018 report of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) classified the region as a very unsafe zone. Of the 57 attacks that occurred in the Gulf of Guinea in 2018, 41 happened in Nigerian waters, particularly the Niger Delta (https://criticalmaritimeroutes.eu).

The categories of crisis in the Niger Delta are such that the region became notorious and classified as a hotbed of crisis. The list is endless: ethnic conflicts, intra/inter-communal conflicts, cult activities and so on. The literature on crisis in the region blamed the trends on the low level of development in the region.

Development and Crisis in the Niger Delta

The argument is made that the various crisis in the Niger Delta re triggered by the low level of development in the region. Ukiwo (2009) puts it thus:

> The conflicts in the Delta arise from legitimate causes as the people, as citizens seek a
> better deal from the Nigerian state and transnational oil corporations...

An interesting question to ask at this point is: how underdevelopment is the Niger Delta? Ibaba (2017) did an assessment of the poverty profile of states in the region. Quoting from a data of the National Bureau of Statistics in 2004 and 2010, he came out with the figures presented in table 1.

Table 1: Profiling the Poverty Status of States – 2004 & 2010

Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010	Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010
North-East				**North-Central**			
Abia	22.3	57.8	1,638,051	**Benue**	55.3	67.2	2,835,331
Anambra	20.1	57.4	2,400,486	**Kogi**	88.6	67.3	2,206,421
Ebonyi	33.1	73.6	1,599,696	**Kwara**	85.2	62.0	1,470,075
Enugu	31.1	63.4	2,065,126	**Nassarawa**	61.6	60.4	1,125,418
Imo	27.4	50.7	1,997,528	**Niger**	63.9	33.9	1,339,134
All Zone	34.2	59.2	9,700,887	**Plateau**	60.4	74.7	2,378,497
				FCT	43.3	55.6	781,291
South-South				**All zone**	63.3	59.7	12,132,167

Akwa-Ibom	34.9	53.8	2,109,071	**North-East**			
Bayelsa	20.0	47.0	800,578	**Adamawa**	71.7	74.3	2,353,899
Cross River	41.6	52.9	1,528,263	**Bauchi**	86.3	73.1	3,418,510
Delta	45.4	63.6	2,606,576	**Borno**	53.6	55.1	2,838,307
Edo	33.1	66.0	1,124,099	**Gombe**	77.0	74.2	1,746,578
Rivers	29.1	50.6	2,623,812	**Taraba**	62.2	68.9	1,585,206
All Zone	48.9	56.1	11,792,399	**Yobe**	83.3	74.1	1,720,298
South-West				**All Zone**	67.3	69.1	13,662,798
Ekiti	42.3	52.6	1,245,095	**North-West**			
Lagos	63.6	49.3	4,443,721	**Jigawa**	95.1	74.2	2,484,697
Ogun	31.7	62.5	2,468,905	**Kaduna**	50.2	61.8	3,749,197
Ondo	42.1	46.1	1,586,312	**Kano**	61.3	66.0	6,193,230
Osun	32.4	38.1	1,304,366	**Katsina**	71.1	74.8	4,332,848

Source: Ibaba (2017)

The poverty level of the different zones before 2004 is presented in table 2

Table 2: Poverty Level by zone in Nigeria

Zone	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004
South-South	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1
South-East	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.5	26.7
South-West	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9	43.0
North-Central	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.7	67.0
North-East	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.1	72.2
North-West	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.5	71.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2005

Although the tables indicate that the level of poverty is high in all the zones, placing poverty level side by side with the huge revenue which are presented in table 3, 4 and 5, the explanation that the area cannot be developed because of crisis in the region is untenable. The amnesty programme in the region that has brought relative peace to the region emphasized that if some of the challenges of the crisis are resolved, development and crisis can simultaneously take place. In terms of Human Development Index, a Technical committee on the Niger Delta did an extensive study and its findings are presented in Table 3 thus:

Table 3: HDI for the Niger Delta States

States	Life Expectancy	Education Index	GDP Index	HDI
Abia	0.492	0.578	0.560	0.543
Akwa Ibom	0.506	0.638	0.540	0.576
Bayelsa	0.455	0.523	0.520	0.499
Cross River	0.556	0.630	0.565	0.584
Delta	0.587	0.636	0.621	0.615
Edo	0.579	0.602	0.600	0.594
Imo	0.503	0.546	0.591	0.547
Ondo	0.501	0.575	0.512	0.529
Rivers	0.563	0.590	0.620	0.591

Source: Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta

In the same vein, data/reports of the World Bank (https://www.documents.worldbank.org), National Bureau of Statistics (https://nigerianstat.gov.ng), some reputable institutions such as the Central Bank of Nigeria and research based institutes have shown some of the highest levels of unemployment. The point should be noted that he level of development is low in the Niger Delta in whatever indicator used in measuring development and as Ibaba (2005 and 2011) argued, the huge oil revenues states of the region get have barely benefitted the population living in poverty. The high rate of crisis is an expression of the frustration of the people.

Leadership Failure in the Niger Delta

The challenges of developing the Niger Delta are complex but not insurmountable. The region has the capacity to develop but the major problem is leadership. An analysis of the plethora of leaders in the region revealed that there is a very high level of persons with good vision, development driven and

capacity to achieve goals but blindfolded by corruption, mismanagement of resources/misplaced priority and lack of accountability.

The Niger Delta states have received more revenue than other states of the Nigerian federation. According to Ibaba (2017:20), in 2008, the Niger Delta states received N852,112,410,154.40 out of the total sum of N1,975,830,151,342.50 allocated to the 36 states of the country. The ratio has been consistent; for instance, the tables below shows different revenue for selected states received in March 2018 and September, 2019.

Table 4: Amount received Selected States in March, 2018

- i. Akwa-Ibom   ₦17.2 billion
- ii. Bayelsa   ₦13.2 billion
- iii. Delta   ₦17.4 billion
- iv. Rivers   ₦14.7 billion
- v. Osun   ₦ 1.5 billion
- vi. Ogun   ₦ 2.9 billion
- vii. Imo   ₦ 3.9 billion
- viii. Gombe   3.2 billion

Source: https://www.pulse.ng quoted in Ikporukpo (2019, p. 177).

Table 5: Amount received Selected States in September 2018;

- i. Akwa-Ibom   ₦12.9 billion
- ii. Bayelsa   ₦10.9 billion
- iii. Delta   ₦14.2 billion
- iv. Rivers   ₦12.4 billion
- v. Osun   ₦ 1.7 billion
- vi. Ogun   ₦ 3.0 billion
- vii. Imo   ₦3.9 billion
- viii. Gombe   ₦3.4 billion

Source: https://www.pulse.ng quoted in Ikporukpo (2019, p. 177).

These do not include internally generated revenue (IGR) or revenue given to interventionist agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) or the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. It goes without explanation that the Niger Delta is riddled with bad governance because as Ogundiya cited in Agbiboa (2012) puts it:

> The amount of money that has accrued to the South-South governors in the past nine years is enough, more than enough, to transform the Niger Delta ...if monies are being used judiciously and religiously, the monies that have come to the governors of the South-South today, we would not have the problems we are having in the Niger Delta. Do you know what one billion naira can do in a community? What are these people asking for anyway? Roads, water, electricity, school building and furniture for these schools ...the corruption among governors in the South-South is enormous, the stealing is enormous (Agbiboa, 2012:118).

The challenge hindering the development of the region that has generated crisis in teh area is leadership failure which is evident in corruption and misplaced priorities. Ejibunu (2016:8) cited in Agbiboa corroborated this position when he stated thus:

Rivers state government for example had a budget of $1.3 billion US dollars in 2006 which includes transportation fees of 65,000 dollars a day for the governor's office, 10 million dollars for catering, gifts and souvenirs, 38 million dollars for two helicopters (Agbiboa, 2012:118).

It is important to note that the governor then, Peter Odili, is currently facing corruption charges in Nigeria. His successor, Rotimi Amaechi was equally accused of corruption by the current governor of Rivers State, Ezebunwo Nyesom Wike. Scholars express some level of scepticism when it comes to studies on corruption related issues. This is largely because most of the issues are being investigated by different agencies of government. However, Uddoh (2016) cited in Ikporukpo (2019) equally corroborated the assertion when he gave the instance of one time governor of Delta State, James Ibori who was convicted by the Southwark crown court, London in February, 2012 and sentenced to 13 years in prison based on his admission of a 10-count charge of conspiracy to defraud and money laundering estimated 250 million US dollars. The Ibori's instance cuts across the entire region, D.S.P. Alamieseigha, a one-time governor of Bayelsa State was also convicted on July, 2007 on a 6-count charge of corruption and sentenced to prison terms.

There is also the twin vices of mismanagement of funds and misplacement of priorities in the Niger Delta. Ikporukpo (2019) did a study and noted that every governor of the region try to site university in his community when there are existing state-owned universities (the case of Bayelsa under Seriake Dickson and Edo State under Adams Oshiomole are instances under this category). The rivers state government budgeted N150,000 billion and spent about N30 billion on monorail projects (https://www.businessday.ng). This was done when the inner roads in the state were in bad shapes. In the same vein, the Bayelsa State government under Seriake Dickson spent billions of naira to build an airport in the state and since the first plane landed on the airstrip months after it was alleged to have been concluded, travellers to the state still make use of the Port Harcourt airport. As Ikporukpo (2017) put it, the money used for the airport could have been spent on building low cost houses, roads or create jobs for teeming unemployed youths of the state. This in his view will take the youths out of restiveness and stop certain crises in the state and region at large.

Crisis Management in the Niger Delta

Some known crises management techniques in the Niger Delta are:

- Military intervention
- Compensation/Payment of ransoms
- Dialogues

These techniques have not adequately achieved the aim which is to bring about relative peace in the region, a region that is in dire need for development. The view of government is that development can only be achieved in a crises-free Niger Delta while it is the view of different groups and youth bodies in the area that development of the region is the engine that will drive a crises free Niger Delta. It is the position of hits paper that for the desired development of the region to be achieved, the question of leadership failure in teh region should be addressed. The debate is ongoing.

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