Awareness and Ratings of the Niger Delta Development Commission's Interventions for Conflict Resolution in the Region

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Abstract

Oil production is Nigeria's major economic base. The Niger Delta region that produces most of the oil is often laden with crises resulting from the people's perceived marginalization in the development of the area. To address the endemic problem of revolt and agitations in the Niger Delta region, the federal government of Nigeria established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to embark on developmental programmes in the area as conflict resolution strategy. Not many studies have been done to ascertain the level of awareness and ratings of the programmes by the people of the area. To fill this knowledge gap, this study, using survey research method, a sample size of 400, selected through multi-stage sampling technique, examined selected residents of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. Findings indicate that many residents of the Niger Delta region are aware of NDDC interventions in managing crises in the region and that the Commission was created to respond to development and environmental challenges in the area. The study also found that despite these interventions and high level of awareness, crises and agitations still persist in the area. The people perceive NDDC as lacking the capacity to address the challenges of the region due to corruption and other factors, making its conflict resolution strategies ineffective. This finding suggests inclusion of other alternative dispute resolution strategies.

Keywords: Awareness, conflict resolution, crisis, Niger Delta, Nigeria, ratings.

Background

Nigeria is one of the leading oil producing nations with about two million barrels production capacity per day. The Niger Delta being a multi – state region, is also multi ethnic. The oil and gas in the region is operated by multinational companies such as Shell, Mobil, Chevron, Elf, Total, Agip, and Texaco, in collaboration with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). The first successful drilling of petroleum was at Oloibiri in 1956. It is estimated that the region harbours nearly 200 oil fields with over 400 oil production storage facilities scattered within its swamps and creeks (Akpan, 2008).

The challenges or some of the causes of the crises in Niger Delta range from age-long poverty, environmental pollution and degradation, absence of development, injustice, political marginalization, loss of community, gross human rights violation, disinheritance, unemployment, poor governance, absence of social infrastructure, lack of participation in the oil industry, amongst others (Wilson, 2009).

The Niger Delta people had been using peaceful means to ask government to look into the challenges of the region before it escalated to violent conflict. Some of the peaceful efforts they made include: going to Lancaster Conference in 1957, representatives were also sent in 1958 to the Willinks Commission where it was recommended that attention should be given to the developing region. Others include written petitions, community delegates sent to make formal complaints to state governments, federal government and oil companies involved (Erere, 2009).

Lack of sensitivity to the rights of the region as perceived by members of the Niger Delta region led to the introduction of various agitation groups such as the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Asari Dokubo, Niger Delta Solidarity Front (NDSF) led by Abiye Abaku,

Icelanders led by Soboma George. Others include: The Niger Delta Vigilante Movement (NDVM), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta (COMA), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) led by Ken SaroWiwa and the Niger Delta Vigilante Services, (NDV) led by Ateke Tom, etc. Every act by these groups signifies the struggle for better conditions of the region. As a result of this, even acts of criminality are presented as part of the struggle for better condition of the Niger Delta.

The problem in the area heightened in the early stages of Abacha administration (1993-1998) when it executed an environmental activist, Ken Saro Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni kinsmen after a trial. This extra judicial killing earned Nigeria a suspension from the Common Wealth of Nations as well as isolation by the international community, especially the advanced economies of the West (Ganiyu, 2009).

On November 20, 1999, the government of former President Obasanjo deployed military troops to Odi, a town in Bayelsa State under the excuse of dealing with hoodlums, who have their base in Odi and who killed 7 policemen on "assignment" in Odi, thereby wiping out the entire community. Environmental Right Action (ERA) in their publication "*A Blanket of Silence*" believes that the killing of the policemen was never the reason for the onslaught on Odi. To them:

> It was just an excuse by the government of Obasanjo in collaboration with Shell, another oil company in the area, to summarily resolve the Niger Delta question. The idea was to contain the agitation of the people of the Niger Delta for resource and environmental control, political autonomy and a democratic Federal Nigeria. Obasanjo and the social forces he represents perceive this agitation as a major threat to the status quo. They therefore want to conquer the Niger Delta by force of arms, easier way to sustain the rape on the people and their resources. (A blanket of Silence, 2008, p.7).

Despite such speculations about the motives of the former president to deploy military troops to Odi, the Obasanjo led administration still set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as a strategy to resolve the crisis in the region in a peaceful manner. And many years after the establishment of NDDC this tension between the people of Niger Delta and the various Nigerian governments has persisted over the years.

Statement of the problem

Over the years, the Niger Delta region has been agitating over the oil exploration, production and exploitation as well as the pollution of the land by the oil companies producing in the region. The Niger Delta people expressed their dissatisfaction over what they regard as injustice to them in the form of outright hostility, peaceful demonstration, work disruption, blockade of access way and hostage taking, pipeline vandalization, etc. Yet, for the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta whose lands contribute about 90% of foreign earnings of the economy their conditions are still shocking, and extremely bad (Akpan 2009).

This situation of neglect by the government as perceived by the people of the region prompted Isaac Boro, General Officer commanding the Niger Delta Volunteer Service in 1966 who was born in the region, to declare the Republic of the Niger Delta which lasted for 12 days and was stopped by the Federal Government. Other groups also rose to agitate but prominent among them are MEND, NDPVF, Niger Delta Vigilante, The Marty's Brigade, etc. There have been records of killings, kidnapping and all manners of criminalities resulting from the degradation of human existence in the region. The situation is best summarized by Isaac Boro's assertion that conflict was born in the Niger Delta (Tell, February 18, 2008).

Albert (2007) observes that conflicts are responded to in three possible ways in any society: avoidance, confrontation and problem solving. Several attempts have been made by the Federal

Government to resolve the conflicts that easily erupt in the region by solving the problem of neglect often decried by the people. NDDC was thus, established as an interventionist agency by the government of Nigeria to help solve the problem of the people in the Niger Delta area who have been crying and agitating against the perceived marginalization of the region. The Obasanjo led administration, therefore set up NDDC as a conflict resolution strategy. Its mission is even, rapid and sustainable development of the region into an economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful region (Asadu, 2008, p.224). While a lot of scholarly articles have been written on NDDC and the challenges in the Niger Delta region, this study evaluates how the people of the region recognize and rate the success of NDDC intervention programmes as conflict resolution strategies.

Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the level of the Niger Delta residents' awareness of NDDC intervention programmes which were adopted as conflict resolution strategies in the region by the Federal Government of Nigeria; and also find out how they rate these actions. In explicit terms, the study seeks to:

1. Identify NDDC intervention programmes which were initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria as conflict resolution strategies in the region.
2. Find out to what extent Niger Delta residents are aware of these intervention programmes in the region.
3. Find out how they rate the success of these intervention programmes carried out in the region as conflict resolution strategies.

Research questions

1. What are the intervening steps used by NDDC in managing the Niger Delta crises?
2. To what extent are Niger Delta residents aware of these NDDC interventions?
3. How do residents rate these intervention programmes by NDDC?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Niger Delta intervention programmes, stakeholders perception and the dynamics of crisis management

Agbororo (2008) argues that since the inception of oil exploration decades ago, the Niger Delta region has become the main source of foreign exchange earnings for the Nigerian nation through petroleum production. Accordingly, from 1975, the Niger Delta's oil resources account for about 90% of the nation's export earnings, yet the region does not seem to benefit in any significant way. He adds that, the region is the least developed in the country in physical and socio-economic terms. The deplorable situation led to incessant crises and subsequent agitation for the emancipation of the region by the youths of the region. Similarly, Wilson (2009) observes that there are many factors that are responsible for the problems in the Niger Delta region. Some of them include the following:

> Poverty and its politics, deprivation of the people of the rights to their resources or disinheritance of God-given rights, despoliation of the environment, unemployment disenfranchisement, arrogance of power, lack of community development, inequalities in the sharing resources, grave human rights violations, injustice (pp. 5-6).

Thus, injustice and abuse of rights (Deutch, 2000; UN, 2000) are copiously observed in the Niger Delta. On the consequences of the crises, Herbert (2008) states that conflict in the Niger Delta claims about a thousand persons each year in the region. (p.564). Hostage taking, attacks and sabotage activities occur frequently in the region which results to loss of billions of naira due to reduction in oil production as a result of the crises. While previous scholars have paid attention to these challenges there appears to be little or no focus on assessing the efforts made by the government to solve this persistent problem. Yet,

the NDDC since inception had carried out some projects and programmes as intervention plans to resolve the crisis in the Niger Delta region. These are amongst others:

NDDC Niger Delta Technical Aid Corp Contracts (NTAC), the NDDC Global Comempowerment Scheme, the NDDC Mass Transit Scheme, various skill acquisition empowerment programmes, constructions and repairs of some specialist hospitals, free medical service programmes, construction of roads, provision of numerous transformers and bore- holes to many communities in the region, etc. Dan-Abia (2014) also posits that in the course of stakeholder' interface with the Federal Law processing in 2014 that the NDDC was set up to carry out projects and programmes for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region in the provision of infrastructural facilities, physical and socio-economic development and to tackle ecological and environmental problems. In spite of these NDDC programmes, do people have awareness of these programmes as conflict intervention strategies in the region? How do they see or view these plans or actions as successful intervention steps in Niger Delta region crisis and what is the success rate among Niger Delta residents? These are the focus of this study.

Perception deals with the psychological activities through which individuals organize meaningful interpretations of sensory stimuli that they receive from their environment. Due to differences in cognitive factors such as interest, needs, values, beliefs, attitudes, prior knowledge etc., people respond or behave differently to issues. Perception is also the process through which we become aware of objects and events in the external world through our senses. The senses are sense of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling. Our perceptions are a result not only of what we sense but also of the meaning we attach to what we sense. Meaning we learn in our culture from our family, friends, and relations. People perceive as they are taught and they learn to perceive in the way that helps them function most effectively in their environment. Therefore, we should expect differences in the way different people respond to even the same situations.

Ihejirika and Ochonogor (2012) in emphasizing more on perception asset that because human beings care about what they hear, feel, see, etc, psychological factors can influence what they perceive and how they perceive it. According to them, some of these psychological factors are needs, beliefs, emotions, and expectations.

It is against this background that this study examines Niger Delta intervention plans by NDDC and awareness / success ratings among Niger Delta residents. It is assumed that the manner in which Niger Delta residents will rate the success or otherwise of plans used by NDDC will be different based on their selective perception of the strategies used. Information is very important and essential to everyone and not just Niger Delta residents. Therefore, it is important for NDDC and other interventionist agencies not to be involved with only the contents of the information provided but also its awareness and perception.

Conflict is everywhere, it is part of life and sometimes unavoidable but no sign of conflict is too small to be ignored. According to Sing (2008), conflict is defined as an expression of hostility, aggression, antagonism, rivalry amidst misunderstanding, negative attitude (p.6). There are three views of conflict: (1) Traditional view – to them, anything about conflict is wrong or bad.. It is brought into existence in academic work between 1930's and 1940's. (2) Human relations view – this group believes that conflict is natural occurrence in all groups and organizations. It came into existence between 1940's and 1970. To them, since conflict is inevitable, management should accept it. Also to them, conflict is avoidable by creating an environment of goodwill and trust. (3) Interactionist theory – to this group, nothing is wrong with conflict. The view is based on, conflict is not only a positive force for a group, but also necessary for group productivity. To them, if a group is harmonious, peaceful and corporative, it is prone to becoming static and non-responsive to the need for change and innovation. They believe some conflict should be allowed to happen so we can remain viable. (Idowu 2008, p.770-771).

Empirical Review:

This study recognizes works done earlier by other scholars that relates to it. For example Okon (2014) conducted a research on Diffusion of Innovation Patterns among Poverty Alleviation Agencies and

Sustainable Development Challenges in the Niger Delta Region: The Rivers State Experience. He examined how the poverty alleviation agencies in Rivers State have been able to make more efficient their programmes to shape with forces or influence of diffusion of innovation with a view to according support to poverty eradication. Two government agencies that deals with poverty alleviation were studied, namely, The Adolescent project (TAP) and Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI). It was found that the activities did not bring into existence a better quality of life for the grassroots as the outcome of the programme did not lead to empowering participants into meaningful engagements of starting a business of their own or meaningful adventure into the business world. According to him, it was because the diffusion of innovation pattern adopted by these agencies was mainly downward, as a result participants responded based on "bandwagon" effect rather than based on conviction. The diffusion of innovation pattern of the agencies was therefore vertical rather than lateral, this was seen as the reason of its lack of sustainability.

Okon's (2014) study is relevant to this study because it sought to know how efficient, successful or otherwise the government agencies are doing in order to solve problems of the citizens especially with view to causing a positive change in peoples life through their programmes, ideas or strategies.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovations theory. Diffusion of Innovation theory by Rogers (2003) states that Diffusion is a process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels overtime among members of a social system. It is concerned with the spread of new ideas or how innovations are taken up in a population. It also explains how people respond to innovations and the stages such ideas go through before they are finally adopted. An innovation is seen as an idea, object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.

Diffusion of Innovation offers three variable insights into the process of social change: (a) The qualities that make an innovation spread successfully; (b) The importance of peer-peer conversion on network; and (c) Understanding the need of different user segments.

Also five things are important for any community to adopt the new technology. They are: relative advantage, compatibility (is it within the existing norm), complexity (the more complex, the less possible to be adopted by the people), triability (test and see) and observability (we observe and see that it is doing what it is said to do). These five things are important for any community to adopt the new technology. Rogers (2003) posits that there are four major elements that influence the adoption of an idea. These are (a) innovation, (b) communication channels, (c) it involves members of a social system and (d) time – there are three elements involved in time. They are, (1) innovation decision process – which talks about the time it takes to carry out this innovation. Innovation decision process talks about mental process which has five steps. This process can lead to either adopt a new method or reject it. They are (i) knowledge. (ii) Persuasion, (iii) decision. (iv) Implementation. (v) Confirmation. (2) Innovativeness and (3) innovation rate of adoption.

This theory is relevant to this research work because it is necessary to have an understanding and knowledge of how these intervening actions by NDDC are introduced in the society and how people accept them variously as conflict resolution strategies in the Niger Delta. Also, an understanding of this theory can help in successful development of intervening plans. This theory can also help by providing an insight into steps for overcoming obstacles in the adoption of ideas / innovations in managing the conflict.

Research method

The study was a survey research that made use of questionnaire as measuring instrument. Three major states out of the nine states in the Niger Delta region were purposively selected for this study based on noticeable exploration activities in those areas as well as a commendable operational presence of leading oil companies. To this end, Delta State, Bayelsa State and Rivers State were selected. Multi-stage sampling was adopted for the sampling, first using simple random sampling technique, a Local Government Area was selected from each state based on a scientific ballot process. Three communities

were selected from each Local Government Area based on the same process. All the residents of the selected communities were thus eligible to be used for this study; therefore convenience and accidental sampling techniques were used to select the ones who were readily available and willing to be studied.

The population of these communities listed in the table below cumulatively stood at 759110 according to the projected 2017 population census of National Population Commission (NPC). A sample of 400 respondents was drawn for this study as the researchers adopted the Taro Yamane sampling formula. To ascertain the degree of respondents' awareness of concern raised in the questionnaire, tables and percentages were employed for data presentation and analysis using Weighted Mean Score (WMS) on a five – point Likert scale and simple percentage.

Table 1 Selected communities and proportion of sample retrieved

S/N	Name of community	State	population
1.	Elekahia	Rivers	30170
2.	Nkpolu Oroworukwu	Rivers	103737
3.	Azubiema	Rivers	116024
4.	Amassoma	Bayelsa	71875
5.	Tebidaba	Bayelsa	2469
6.	Ogboinbiri	Bayelsa	3833
7.	Warri town	Delta	429008
8.	Warri corner	Delta	1024
9.	Ado Ireland	Delta	970
	Total		**759, 110**

Data presentation and analysis

To obtain data for this study, a total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sample of the study. Out of this number, 389 (97.25%) copies were correctly filled and returned and 11 (2.75%) copies were poorly filled and so not useful for data analysis. Data obtained with copies of the questionnaire were presented in statistical tables using the five point Likert scale and simple percentages.

Statistical presentation of data

Table 2 Demography of respondents

Demography	Category	Rivers State	Bayelsa State	Delta State	Total	Percentage
Sex	Male	95	82	104	281	74
	Female	30	32	46	108	26
	Total	125	114	150	389	100
Age	18-20 yrs	15	9	20	44	10
	21-30 yrs	25	11	27	63	16
	31-40 yrs	19	40	45	104	27
	41-50 yrs	35	27	40	102	26
	51-60 yrs	21	18	20	59	14
	61 yrs & above	6	5	6	17	7

	Total	121	110	158	389	100
Education	None	4	7	19	30	8
	Primary school	17	16	33	66	16
	WAEC/NECO	30	20	25	75	20
	NCE/ND	19	15	19	53	12
	HND/BSC	39	39	44	122	33
	Post graduate	16	17	10	43	11
	Total	**125**	**114**	**150**	**389**	**100**

Table 3 Awareness of the existence of NDDC as a conflict resolution strategy

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	367	94
Not aware	22	6
Total	389	100

Data presented in table 3 indicate that many residents of the Niger Delta region are aware of the creation and existence of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as a conflict resolution strategy.

Table 4 Reasons for the creation of NDDC

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	SD	DD	Total	WMS	Remarks
1.	NDDC was created for the development of the Niger Delta region	281	82	26			1, 679	4.7	Accepted
2.	Despite the creation of NDDC, crises linger in the region	293	44	29	16	7	1, 615	4.5	Accepted
	Total mean score							4.6	Positive

Data presented in table 4 indicate that the people of Niger Delta region are aware that NDDC was created for the development of the region following the weighted mean score of 4.7 obtained by the item that examined people's understanding of the creation of NDDC. It was accepted that despite the creation or existence of NDDC, crises will persist in the Niger Delta region. The weighted mean score of 4.5 obtained by the item that examined the spate of crises in the Niger Delta region despite NDDC interventions confirms this.

Table 5 Perceived causes of crises in the Niger Delta region

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	SD	DD	Total	WMS	Remarks
3.	Government neglect of development issues in the Niger Delta region	326	42	14		7	1,708	4.7	Accepted
4.	People's unrealistic demands on the government	69	36	51	196	37	1, 005	2.8	Rejected
5.	Environmental degradation	208	72	25	49	35	1,384	3.8	Accepted
6.	Unemployment	288	44	17	19	21	1, 574	4.4	Accepted
7.	Poverty	279	40	55		15	1,547	4.3	Accepted
8.	Gas flaring/oil spillage	126	49	104	83	27	1,192	3.3	Accepted
Total								**3.8**	**Positive**

Data presented in Table 5 indicate that the perceived cause of agitations in the Niger Delta region is the people's disapproval of government's neglect of development challenges in the area Environmental degradation, unemployment, poverty and pollutions arising from oil spillages and gas flaring are other issues that are seen as responsible for agitations in the region. This is based on the 3.8 weighted mean score obtained by the summary of the conditions that cause crises in the Niger Delta.

Table 6 Awareness of intervention projects in the Niger Delta by NDDC

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	257	67
Not aware	132	33
Total	**389**	**100**

Data presented in table 6 indicate that many residents of the Niger Delta region (67%) are aware of the intervention projects or programmes initiated by NDDC to address the agitations in the Niger Delta region.

Table 7 Sources of awareness of NDDC intervention projects in the Niger Delta region

Source	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Friends	48	11
Mass media	221	59
Social media	73	18
Community leaders	47	12
Project boards	0	0

Total	**389**	**100**

Data presented in table 7 indicate that the main sources of awareness of the intervention projects of NDDC in the Niger Delta region are the mass media and social media.

Table 8 Intervention projects/programmes by NDDC in the Niger Delta region

S/N	Projects	SA	A	U	SD	DD	Total	WMS	Remarks
1.	Projects-roads, power, water, classroom blocks, town halls	171	116	29	47	26	1, 460	4.1	Accepted
2.	Empowerment-fishing, farming, computer skills, etc.	126	71	82	76	34	1, 293	3.6	Accepted
3.	Packages-laptops, printers, funds, fishing net, etc.	41		208	127	13	1, 030	2.8	Rejected
4.	Monthly meetings with ex-agitators			316	49	24	1, 014	2.8	Rejected
5.	Contracts for ex-agitators	73	31	204	54	27	1, 167	3.2	Accepted
6.	Implementation of amnesty programme			232	125	32	909	2.5	Rejected
7.	Introduction of youth traffic volunteer services	83	22	223	51	10	1, 161	3.2	Accepted
8.	Annual stakeholders' forum	86	33	205	43	22	1, 212	3.4	Accepted
9.	Operation of state offices	235	118	36			1, 607	4.5	Accepted
10.	Overseas scholarships	176	85	61	44	23	1, 441	4.0	Accepted
11.	Mass transit	111	47	84	108	39	1, 127	3.1	Accepted
Total								3.3	Positive

Data presented in table 8 indicate that NDDC has some intervention projects or programmes across communities in the Niger Delta region. The projects range from infrastructural (roads, electricity, water, classroom blocks, etc.), to contracts. The intervention programmes also include overseas scholarships, mass transit and interaction with stakeholders in the region. The positive mean score obtained from the items that identified different intervention projects and programmes of the Commission across the Niger Delta region attests to this.

Table 9 Participation of people of the Niger Delta region in NDDC intervention projects/programmes

Extent of participation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Participated	102	29

Did not participate	287	71
Total	**389**	**100**

Table 9 indicate that many residents of the Niger Delta region (71%) do not participate in the planning and execution of NDDC's intervention projects and programmes in the region.

Table 10 Rating of NDDC's interventions in the Niger Delta Region

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very poor	263	68
Average	85	20
Good	41	12
Very good	0	0
Excellent	0	0
Total	**389**	**100**

Data presented in Table 10 indicate that the development interventions of NDDC were rated by majority of the people (68%) as very poor, only 12 % saw them as good.

Table 11 Factors that underlie respondents' appraisal of NDDC's interventions

Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Not properly constituted	0	0
Mismanagement	21	6
Not properly funded	208	62
No competent hands	0	0
Short of ideology	0	0
Misappropriation	0	0
Lack of focus	0	0
Corruption	141	32
Politics	0	0
Lack of information	19	0
Total	389	100

Data presented in Table 11 show that the condition that underlies respondents' identification of NDDC development efforts in the Niger Delta region is that the Commission is not sufficiently funded to respond adequately to development challenges in the region. Another factor is that the Commission is perceived as being corrupt among some people in the Niger Delta region. Only 6% of the respondents perceived mismanagement as one of the challenges of the Commission.

Table 12 NDDC's accomplishment of its mandate in the Niger Delta

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
To a large extent	41	12
To a little extent	237	60
Not sure	111	28
Total	**389**	**100**

According to the data presented above, it is believed that NDDC is yet to accomplish its mandate in the Niger Delta region as most of the respondents stated that the Commission has only done little in terms of addressing development challenges in the Niger Delta region.

Discussion

Findings of the study showed that many residents of the Niger Delta region are aware of NDDC interventions in managing crises in the region and that the Commission was created to respond to development and environmental challenges in the area. This finding corroborates Dan-Abia (2014) which states that NDDC was set up to carry out projects for sustainable development of the region. This is affirmed as findings of the study also indicate that NDDC uses projects (such as construction of roads, bridges, classroom blocks, markets, health centres, town halls etc.), empowerments (training in fish farming, poultry, snail faring, computer application and appreciation, etc.) and consultations with stakeholders to manage crises in the Niger Delta region. It was also found that apart from projects, empowerment and consultations, NDDC organizes overseas scholarships, youth traffic volunteer services, mass transit services and approval of contracts for ex-agitators as further measures to pursue peace in the Niger Delta region.

However, the study also showed that despite these interventions and a high level of awareness of their existence by the people, there are still crises and agitations in the Niger Delta region. The people rate NDDC as lacking the capacity to address the challenges of the region. This is based on the perception that funds appropriated to the Commission cannot sufficiently address development and environmental challenges in the Niger delta region. Corruption is also seen as a major drawback on the Commission's ability to perform. This perception is perhaps due to the non-participation of the people in the planning and execution of projects and empowerment programmes which corroborates with Ihejirika and Ochonogor (2012) that factors such as needs, beliefs, emotions and expectations can influence how individuals perceive things.

This shows that creating awareness does not necessarily lead to conviction. While the people of the Niger Delta are aware of many of the intervention programmes carried out by NDDC and the purpose for which they are embarked on, they still rate NDDC as unsuccessful as a conflict resolution strategy of the federal government.

Conclusions

Many residents of the Niger Delta region are aware of NDDC interventions in managing crises in the region. The people are aware that NDDC was created to respond to development and environmental challenges in the Niger Delta region and the conditions that cause crises in the region, such as government neglect of development deficits in the area, environmental pollution and degradation, poverty, unemployment, etc.

The interventions used by NDDC in managing Niger Delta crises are projects, such as construction of roads, bridges, classroom blocks, markets, jetties, health centres, shore protection, etc. The Commission carries out empowerment programmes, such as training in fish farming, snail farming, poultry and computer skills. The Commission engages youths of the area in other ventures such as youth traffic volunteer services, mass transit services and overseas scholarships. NDDC also organizes stakeholders' meetings where issues about the development of the Niger Delta region are discussed by stakeholders and partners. The commission uses its empowerment programs to engage the people in meaningful ventures. This is to make the people self-reliant and to address issues of poverty and unemployment – the leading causes of restiveness among youths of the Niger Delta region.

However, NDDC interventions are rated as grossly inadequate by residents of the Niger Delta region, hence unsuccessful as conflict resolution strategies. The Commission is seen to be under-funded and as such cannot effectively address development and environmental challenges in the Niger Delta region. Political differences and perceived corrupt practices in the administration of the commission are other factors that affect the poor ratings of NDDC by residents of Niger Delta region. This is perhaps due to non-involvement of the people in the planning and implementation of projects and empowerments by NDDC.

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