

NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICS OF RESOURCE CONTROL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Resource control has remained one of the intractable national questions in the search for a united Nigeria, devoid of suspicion, ethnic or regional sentiments and other political trickeries. The controversy over the issue has become a recurrent decimal in almost all the national debates made in an effort to ensure an enduring nation. This study takes a look at the political intrigues of the agitation for resource control and allocation in Nigeria in relation to the concept of development. Specifically, it interrogates the link between resource allocation and the level of development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It uses two principal approaches in its methodology, namely, qualitative descriptive approach and the Elite theoretical analysis to scrutinise the enormity of rot in the area. It recommends, among other things, that in as much as it ascribes to true federalism, greater focus of the leaders and people of the region should be on the transparent and accountable deployment of the resources accrued to the region, particularly from the revenue derivation formula of the Nigerian state to guarantee competitive growth and development with the other regions of Nigeria.

Keywords: Resource control, Derivation, Development, National Question, Niger Delta, Nigeria.

Introduction:

In the recent past, the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria has been a major international news item, especially since the time of Ken Saro-Wiwa. Even before this time, the history of the region has been characterized by agitation for resource control. First, after the abolition of slave trade in 1807, local traders engaged in 'resource control' struggles to compete actively in the palm oil trade (Ako & Okonmah, 2009). Also, the agitation for resource control was one of the highlights in the representation made by the Ijaw people of the area to the Willink Commission of 1957 whose principal term of reference was to enquire into the "Fears of the Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them." Resource control struggles in the post-crude oil era that began with the botched Adaka Boro-led attempt to create the Niger Delta Republic in 1966 has culminated in contemporary oil-related restiveness in the region, (Ako, 2011). Since the Ijaw representatives failed to achieve their desired results to secede from Nigeria, or, alternatively, have a state of their own, subsequent 'resource control' struggles have suffered a similar fate (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

However, the Willink Commission's Report attracted response from the immediate post-independence government which established the *Niger Delta Development Board* (NDDDB) in 1960 to handle the development needs and challenges of the region. As a result of the negligible achievements of the board, there was increased agitation for a renewed focus on the development of the region. The Shehu Shagari administration set up a Presidential Task Force Account (popularly known as the 15 Per cent Committee) in 1980 and set aside 15% of the Federation Account for the Commission to tackle the developmental problems of the Niger Delta. Also four of the eleven River Basin Development Authorities created by the Shagari administration were domiciled in the region, they include; the Niger River Basin Development Authority, Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority, Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority and Cross River Basin Development Authority (Akanmu, Eluwa & Ekpo 2013). These authorities like the preceding Committees and Boards also had very little impacts as their board members often emasculated and collapsed under the corrupt and egoistic interests of partisan politics.

Subsequently, the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida created the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 to correct the mistakes of the previous bodies and bring about positive changes. OMPADEC appeared better equipped to make some impact on the development of the region but was to suffer from a number of problems which include lack of a master plan that would have defined its development objectives and strategies. Other problems were inadequate funding and unfavourable political interference (*Daily Times*, 2008, cited in Akpomovie, 2011).

The Sani Abacha regime upheld the recommendation of the 1995 Constitutional Conference which adopted the setting aside 13 percent from federation account as derivation revenue in the sharing of the Federation Account Revenue to assist the development of oil-producing communities. This was subsequently entrenched in the 1999 constitution. The intention was to financially empower the oil-producing states of the Niger Delta to tackle the monumental neglect and degradation of the area, and put a reasonable amount of revenue in their hands to assist them in tackling the enormous problems of under-development in the oil-bearing communities (Edevbie, 2000). Analysts believe that for over 20 years now, the 13% derivation revenue is yet to make appreciable impact in the development of the Niger Delta region.

The failures of previous development interventions and the oil companies to make the much needed positive impacts in the development of the region created a volatile atmosphere characterized by protests, agitations and communal conflicts as well as the emergences of ethnic militias by the late 1990. In response, the Obasanjo administration in 2000 established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to succeed OMPADEC, with a view to offering a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta, which previous governments had struggled with, even before independence. The NDDC board in its master plan had a mandate to identify areas of focus as; Development of social and physical

infrastructures, Technology, Economic/environmental remediation and stability, Human development, Pursuit of a peaceful environment that allows tourism to thrive and supports a buoyant culture (Akpomuvie, 2011).

The NDDC since its creation has been bedevilled with allegations and counter allegations of corruption and discriminations in its operations, and like preceding boards and commissions, have not made positive developmental impression on the peoples of the Niger Delta. This has yet led to the creation of the present Federal Ministry of Niger Delta Development, headed by a Minister, under the supervision of the President, and the establishment of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme aimed at empowering the youths in the region through education and artisanal trades. It is pertinent to note that with the exception of the River Basin Development Authorities, membership of these development intervention agencies and commissions were constituted of and chaired by indigenes of Niger Delta. The point being made is that there is no administration in Nigeria, from pre-independence 1957 to date, that has not embarked on a development oriented strategy aimed at making efforts to attract development to the Niger Delta region.

In spite of all the efforts, the Niger Delta people and their environment are still living in a state of poverty and squalor. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate the link between the huge resource allocation and the level of development in the Niger Delta, and why all the revenues and development efforts deployed to the Niger Delta have not made appreciable impact in the region. Is the Nigerian state entirely responsible for the development crisis in the Niger Delta? In corollary, the study hypothesizes that poor transparent deployment of resources particularly, from the 13% derivation, and operations of other interventionist programmes by the leaders of the region account for the much clamoured underdevelopment and poverty in the region; and that the Nigerian state is not entirely responsible for the development crisis in the area.

Resource Allocation and Development in the Niger Delta: A Review

Many scholars and development oriented agencies in and outside the Niger Delta had variously analyzed the goring state of the environment and human resources attributable to the oil exploration, exploitation and neglect that have led to marginal standard of living of the majority of the population in the region and maintained that the fact that the area that provides the national wealth is the poorest in the country is provocative. Consequently, Duru (1999) avers:

Foremost is that although the bulk of crude oil, the country's main source of revenue is derived from the Niger Delta land, they belong to the ranks of the most marginalized groups in the country. Another is that several years of oil exploration and hazards of spillage and gas flaring that go with it have degraded their environment and left the communities desolate. Not only have farming and fishing, the major occupations of these mostly riverside communities has been decimated, their

territories have continuously lacked basic infrastructure and amenities like electricity, roads, schools, hospitals, portable water and so on (Duru, 1999, cited in Ebegbulem, 2011, p. 5).

Duru's observation was corroborated by O'Neill (2007) who posits that "the cruelest twist is that half a century of oil mining in the Delta has failed to change the lives of the people for the better. Instead, they are poorer still and hopeless" (cited in Ebegbulem, 2011, p. 5). Although Duru and O'Neill's claims are factual, they fail to point to the unutilized rich vast agricultural potentials of the delta region which has been abandoned in pursuit of oil money, and the pleasure-seeking life style encouraged by 'booties' from Nigeria's money politics and compensation from oil companies by both the leaders and the youths.

In his view, Okoko (2002) opines that one of the problems associated with Nigeria's federalism which impacts much on the Niger Delta region lies in "internal colonialism in Nigeria." He condemned the central government for subsequently being increasingly dominant at the expense of the oil producing states. Looking at the aspect of ethnic balancing in terms of state creation, Okoko observes that out of the 36 states and Abuja, which now assumes the status of a state; only 6 states are created in the oil producing minority areas and with the fact that these states are not viable, and that they all depend on the Federation Account built around oil revenue for survival and also the fact that the prevailing revenue allocation formula lay emphasis on population, landmass, need, equality of states over and above derivation, one begins to appreciate the fears and concern of oil producing communities in the Niger Delta (Okoko, 2002). As plausible as Okoko's argument is, he fails to see also the problem of 'internal factors' as perpetrated by the local compradors of the Niger Delta to inflict poverty on their people through misappropriation of even the 'little' that accrue to the region.

Ibaba (2001), blames the situation largely on the nature of Nigerian federalism as defined by "ethnic based political domination" used to expropriate the wealth of the oil communities for the dominant groups, and the alliance between the majority ethnic groups, the oil companies and the state enterprise which "restricts the minorities' access to the contemporary and more rewarding sectors of the economy". He also blames the government and the multinational oil companies operating in the region for the long neglects, and cites the poor state of infrastructure and high unemployment of the indigenes as major indices to substantiate his proposition. The problem with Ibaba's work is that he contradicted himself when he described the crisis of development and general state of instability in the Niger Delta region as an "old paradox" in many respects because, in spite of its obvious abundant resources, both human and materials, including oil wealth of the country alongside its potentials for economic growth and sustainable development, the region represents one of the severe situations of poverty and underdevelopment. He also links the myriads of problems faced by the region to what he describes as "internal factors" such as weak socio-economic foundation of the region, compradorial leaders, represented by the elites, and opinion leaders, social disintegration, educational backwardness and lack

of entrepreneurship coupled with the difficult geographical terrain of the area.

Ebegbulem (2010) maintains that the advent of military intervention in the political process of Nigeria which sacrificed federalism on the altar of centralization was a major problem to the country. He laments that the government of Nigeria has made hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue in the last 40 years of oil production in the Niger Delta, but despite this huge amount of money, the people in the region still remain very poor and are deprived of basic things of life such as good water and electricity. In his words, life in the creeks of Niger Delta is anything but rich and prosperous. For Mukagbo of the Cable Network News (CNN – *Inside Africa*) the Niger Delta, “is a region where time seems to have stood still and where people live the most meagre of existence, leaving them angry and hostile from not having benefitted from the black gold which Nigeria is Africa’s largest producer.” He concurs with some leaders of the region that deprivation and poverty amidst its plenty oil and gas resources are the major reasons behind the agitation and crisis among the people of the region (Mukagbo, 2007). Although Ebegbunem and Makugbo are critical in their analysis, they fail to interrogate the failure of transparent deployment of the 13 per cent derivation and poor performance of the several intervention programmes and agencies aimed at poverty alleviation and development of the Niger Delta.

Shankleman (2006) agrees with the World Bank view that poverty is one of the few causes of conflict in oil producing countries. According to him, the Bank, in an outcome of a research conducted contends that:

The key root cause of conflict is the failure of economic development such that many of the world’s poorest countries are locked in a tragic vicious cycle where poverty causes conflict and conflict causes poverty. The Niger Delta region is underdeveloped in all its ramifications despite the fact that it is the bread-basket of Nigeria (World Bank, 2004, cited in Shankleman, 2006, p. 38)

Whittington (2001) aptly describes the economic dilemma of the region, arguing that “the oil region in Nigeria seems to be stuck in a time warp, with little physical change since oil was discovered about 45 years ago. Away from the main towns, there is no tangible development, no roads, no electricity, no running water and no telephone”. He similarly laments that the youths of the region are the hardest hit by lack of development and ascribes the situation to why many of them have resorted to militancy in an effort to focus national and international attention to their plight. He observes that all the claims by the oil companies to be involved in the development of the region are to the contrary, and notes that in spite of the pervasive underdevelopment, “the government and multinational oil companies have made profits by hundreds of billions of dollars since oil was discovered. Yet most Nigerians living in the oil producing region are living in dismal poverty.” There is excessive

rate of unemployment among the people of the Niger Delta region as the oil companies do not hire their employees from the region that produces the oil, but from non-oil producing regions of Nigeria.

Corroborating Wittington on the unemployment level among the youths of the Niger Delta, Birisibe (2001) expresses regret that majority of the youths from the region do not benefit from the presence of the multinational corporations operating in their communities, as “less than five per cent of the people from the Niger Delta work in these companies, less than one per cent of women from the region are employed in the oil companies, while majority of the beneficiaries are from other parts of Nigeria” (p. 5). He also attributes violation of the human rights of the local populace as one of the factors responsible for the militancy in the Niger Delta region, and contends that oil companies like Chevron, Shell, Agip, Mobil and the other multinational oil companies have been very unkind to the inhabitants of the region. The rights of the people are constantly violated by security forces at the order of the companies. There has been excessive use of weapons by security agencies in the course of peace keeping often leading to avoidable deaths. The Federal Government, exercising the instruments of coercion, forcefully descends on the communities of the region through the use of policemen, complemented by trigger-happy soldiers and plaincloths security agents who are ready to kill at the slightest ‘provocation’.

There are so many instances where the government deploy soldiers and other security agents to decimate entire communities. These include but not limited to the Ogoni crisis of 1994 which resulted in the murder of the environmental rights leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his kinsmen, the Umuechan Saga of 1990, the Choba crisis of 1999, as well as the near extermination of Odi community in 1999. Although the observations of these duo scholars – Wittington and Birisibe – are apt, they failed to observe that a good number of the Niger Delta youths, for unjustifiable reason, drop out of schools and trades for quick and easy money, which in the long run make most of them to turn into social deviants and therefore unemployable.

Natuye (2005) blames the current political instability in the Niger Delta States on the gross abuse of power by the majority in denying the minority its rights over control of its own resources, which is the same rights that the majority accorded themselves in pre January 1966 Nigeria, on the basis of true federalism. He argues that from the concept of Equity, Justice and Fair play, this is unfair to the Niger Delta resource owners. He alleged that the central government, supported by the Northern and South-Western majority governments are using their majority powers to ignore the agitations of the delta owners for fair allocation and this has caused serious frustration and made instability inevitable in the area and Nigeria at large. As plausible as Natuye’s argument is, he also fails to reason that the unseen hands of the Niger Delta elites cause confusion in using the youths to perpetrate their agenda of holding the region down to achieve their selfish agenda of amassing wealth at the expense of the people of the region.

Dafinone (2001) sees resource control as “the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the

maintenance of common services of the government at the centre". This view of Dafinone is deemed not to be acceptable in its entirety, as the success should be seen in its effects on the individuals. In other words, the benefits of resource control should transcend the federating units and reflect on the well-being of the citizens. He fails to recognize that the benefit of the resources should also be felt by the real owners of the resources- the local communities who suffer the impact of the exploration. Of more true is that the leaders of the region have made greater contribution to the poverty and underdevelopment of the area.

Theoretical Explication

The subject matter of resource control in Nigeria has become topical and a recurrent national question, and has therefore attracted contemporary national discourse from scholars and politicians. Scholarly works on the problem under interrogation usually anchor their theoretical propositions on the theory of post-colonial state; Marxian economic theory; drain theory or rentier state theory. While not vitiating the methodological ingredients or potency of these approaches, we argue that such analyses propose that the Nigerian state is entirely responsible for the poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This, of course, can be understood as an inauthentic view point, and cannot satisfactorily advance possible explanation to the central problem of our study.

As an objective reaction to the above standpoint, the theoretical perspective adopted to concretely explain the problem is the *elite conspiracy theory* of politics which, according to Higley (2010:161) originates mostly from the writings of Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), and Robert Michels (1876-1936). However, as noted by Henry (2001:299), the classic expression of this theory can be found in C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*. Elites are dominant and determinant figures in society. The elite conspiracy theory dimension to Nigeria's numerous socio-economic and socio-political problems have, over the years, been expounded immensely in the scholarly works of Ayandele, 1974; Achebe, 1983; Bakun, 2003; Fenser, 1999; Osakwe, 2002; Adewale, 2009; Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010; Agena, 2010; Amadi, 2011; Ebohon and Obakhedo, 2012; Edigheji, 2013; Ihonvbere, 2013; and Okeke, 2014.

Okeke (2014) opines that elite activities have expanded to reach finance, business, bureaucracy, the military, education and other areas. Consequently, types of elite, in addition to the power or political elite include the military elite, business elite, economic elite, bureaucratic/administrative elite, educational elite, social elite and even sports elite (Okeke, 2014:5). Whichever type, the theory of elite conspiracy postulates that all the elites have common characteristics of covert groups conspiring against the wishes of the masses in order to maintain the *status quo*.

In this study, the elite conspiracy refers to the amalgam of all the activities of the elites. In consequence, Agena (2010:17) posits that the conspiracy theory boldly explains events as being the result of an alleged plot by a covert group or organization, or more broadly, it proposes that important political, social and or economic events are the products of secret plots that are largely unknown to the

general public. Conspiracy theory is used by scholars and in political culture to identify secret military, financial, or political actions aimed at “stealing” power, money or freedom from the people, which is based on the notion that complex plots are put into action by powerful sudden forces (Adewale 2009, cited in Akena, 2010:17).

Bakun (2003) argues that the theory is a “belief which explains an event as a result of a secret plot by exceptionally powerful and cunning conspirators to achieve a malicious end”. He believes that elite *conspiracism* is of three types: the first appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing; second, they try to achieve the first in an appealing way, by dividing the world sharply between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. In this case, they trace all the evil back to a single source, the conspirators and their agents. Thirdly, the theory is often presented as special secret knowledge unknown or unappreciated by others.

For Fenser (1999), the conspiracy theorists are of the view that the masses are brainwashed into believing the actions undertaken by the conspirators (the elites), while the conspirators congratulate themselves on penetrating the people, though by deception. Achebe (1983) vehemently argues that the Nigeria elites are blind or deliberately pretend to be blind. He postulates as follows:

As a class, you and I and our friends who comprise the elite are incredibly blind. We refuse to see what we don't want to see. That is why we have not brought about the changes which our society must undergo or be written off (Achebe, 1983, p. 30).

The application of the elite conspiracy theory is very appropriate in appreciating the existence of the politics of resource control and the development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The import of this assertion is anchored on the fact that there exist in the Niger Delta region covert groups that have not only led to the deplorable economic and infrastructural development situation of the region but has also led to loss of many innocent lives in exchange for the sustenance of their *status quo*. These groups do not only receive the revenue allocations accrued to the States or the region and deceitfully cry foul to divert the attention of the masses, they also use a small portion of the resources they control to sponsor restiveness and militancy in order to consolidate their status. In other words, rather than using the revenue judiciously for the amelioration of the lives of the people of the region, the region's elites not only misappropriate it and blame the Nigerian state on the pitiable state of the Niger Delta region, but also sponsor the masses to take up arms against the Nigerian state; engage in illegal oil bunkering to accumulate more wealth and impoverish the region and the people.

The elites refuse to develop the educational infrastructure, an omission which leads to early drop-out of schools by the young ones who are attracted by their flamboyant and extravagant life styles which they endeavour to emulate. They

covertly sponsor these youths to blow oil pipelines which spill oil, and damage their environment the more, as a bet to get compensation from the oil companies which finds refuge in the pockets of the same elites. A pittance from the 'booty' is paid to the youths to encourage them for more 'jobs'.

The failure of several intervention policies and programmes by different administrations in Nigeria and the 13% revenue derivation to make the expected impact in the development of the Niger Delta region is traceable to the conspiracy of the elites of the region and their obsession to primitive accumulation of wealth. While they turn to brainwash and lobby the youths of the area to go into militancy in the name of resource control agitation, they stash the revenue accrued to the region into their foreign bank accounts. This treachery has made the elites and people of the Niger Delta "incredibly blind that they refuse to see what they don't want to see" and divert all the blames on the woes of the region to the Nigerian state.

Comparing Development in Relation to Resource Allocation to the Niger Delta

Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC, 2012) official records show that from May 1999 to December 2011, the nine oil producing states collectively received N2.68 trillion as 13% derivation revenue from mineral. The records show that N2.466 trillion out of the total amount went to the six South-South states with a combined population of 21.04 million people. The 2006 Census records show that the population figure of the Niger Delta amounts to 15.13 per cent of total Nigeria's population. Rivers State has the largest chunk of the derivation funds with N777 billion, followed by Akwa Ibom State with N575 billion, Delta State N547 billion, Bayelsa State N506 billion, Cross River State N36.3 billion and Edo State N23.1 billion. Apart from the 13 per cent derivation revenues, the oil producing states also collect billions of naira from the Federation Account as monthly statutory allocations. The region also benefits from other interventionist agencies and programmes, like Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Amnesty Programme.

Comparatively, the three oil-producing States outside the South-South region which include Ondo, Imo and Abia with a total population of 10.1 million received N134.4 billion, N44.6 billion and N36.2 billion respectively, which is N214 billion of the total N2.68 trillion, within the period. Findings show that the 19 northern States with a total population of 73.8 million (53.13 per cent of Nigeria's population) got N1.5 million as 13% revenue derivation from mineral within the same period. The highest 13% mineral revenue by any region in the North went to the six States of the North-Central which received N1.09 million. The amount was shared as follows: Kwara N53,093; Kogi N44,925; Benue N32,672; Plateau N534,188; Nasarawa N363,486; and Niger N69,430. The six North-East States also got a paltry sum of N311,000 which was shared as follows: Bauchi N130,691; Gombe N144,355; Taraba N12,252; Adamawa N16,336; while Borno and Yobe States received N4,084 each. The three non-oil States in the South-East, received a total of N461,000 as 13% revenue derivation from mineral within the 12 years under review, which was shared as follows: Anambra N36,757; Enugu N212,374 and Ebonyi 212,374. In the South-

West, the five States with the exception of Ondo which produces oil, got N597,000 as their 13% derivation dues within the same period as follows: Oyo, N24,504; Osun, N24,504; Ogun, N289,972; and Ekiti N261,383. (NNPC, 2012)

The paradox of resource allocation in the Niger Delta is that the region is riddled with bad governance and corruption on the parts of government officials, both at the states and local governments. It is axiomatic that the situation would have been better than the current sorry state if government officials in the region have judiciously utilized their monthly allocations to better the lots of the ordinary people, through creation of jobs and infrastructural development of the region. This is not done; rather the jumbo monthly allocations are spent on frivolous things that have little or no positive bearings on the life of the people.

A recent Ministerial Technical Audit Committee on the contracts awarded by the Ministry of Niger Delta between 2009 and 2015 reveals that most of the contracts awarded by the ministry in the oil-rich region had no impact on the people. The report also explains that only N427 billion, representing 60 per cent out of N700 billion, budgeted for the ministry during the period was disbursed. According to the report, "The way billions of naira is mentioned in construction projects value in the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs has become so banal that before long, it is believed that they are likely to shoot up to trillions of naira, though the values do not appear realistic vis-à-vis the value added to the region through such contracts." (FGN, 2015, p. 13)

Using three dimensions of Education, Health and Living standards to measure Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in the Niger Delta States in comparison with other States of Nigeria, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, based on data collected between 2004 and 2014, shows that poverty level in the region is not reflective of quantum of resources received by the States in the region within the time under review (UNDP, 2015). According to the report, the Regional Averages of poverty indices show that South West has 19.3% Poverty, the South South 25.2% Poverty, South East 27.36%, North Central 45.7%, while the North East has 76.8% Poverty rates. A critical analysis of the report reveals that the data do not adequately represent the resources that were received by the Niger Delta region as shown above. The implication is that the resources that accrued from the 13% derivation, statutory allocations and several intervention programmes were not judiciously deployed by the States in the region.

The critical issue in the Niger Delta is not only the increasing incidence of poverty but also the intense feeling among the people that they ought to have done far better. This is based on the considerable amount of resources they are allowed to use at their discretion and the brazen display and celebration of ill-gotten wealth in the region in particular, most of which derive from crude oil wealth. This, to a large extent, explains why there is so much frustration, resentment and of course, hostility in the region (Akpomuvie, 2011)

Conclusion

The study explored the nexus between political intrigues of resource control and the development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which has remained a

contentious national issue. It historically traced the interventionist agencies, programmes and remedy situations employed by different administrations in Nigeria to impact development and ameliorate the poverty and suffering condition of the people of the region. The study observed that the unpleasant situation in the Delta has become pervasive and attracted critical comments from both local and international scholars and agencies. The paper reviewed the works of these scholars and took a departure by trying to unravel the mystery behind persistent crisis of development in the region. It interrogated why all the revenues and development efforts deployed to the Niger Delta region have not made appreciable impact in the region, and inquired whether the Nigerian state is entirely responsible for the development crisis in the Niger Delta area as being insinuated by a good number of scholars and both domestic and international agencies. Findings of the study reveals that elite conspiracy and corruption is greatly responsible for the poverty and underdevelopment of the region; that the volume of resources allocated to the region from the Nigerian state has not reflected on the level of development, and lives of the people. The ruling elites pursue their interests to the exclusion of the intended communities and beneficiaries in the region.

The study therefore recommends that, as in as much as true fiscal federalism should be practiced by the Nigerian state, greater attention of the elites and people of the region should be on the transparent and accountable deployment of the resources accrued to the region, particularly from the revenue derivation formula of the Nigerian state, to guarantee competitive growth and development with the other regions of the country.

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