

“MOSOP and Ogoni must Survive and flourish for the sake of all of us. For better or for worse, MOSOP and Ogoniland are the conscience of this country. They have risen above our slave culture of silence; they have found the courage to be free and they have evolved a political consciousness that denies power to rogues, hypocrites, fools and bullies. For better or for worse, Ogoniland carries our hopes. Battered and bleeding, it Struggles on to realize our promise and to restore our dignity. If it falters, we die.” - Prof. Claude Ake



OGONI ★ STAR

VOICE OF NIGER DELTA PEOPLE

Vol. 11, No 1. January 22 - Feb. 4, 2010

ISSN 2006-2389

N100.00

State Creation:

Ogoni Assures Neighbours of Peaceful Co-Existence

- Calls for Genuine Oil Operator

Power Supply:

Gov. Amaechi Apologizes, Shows Solidarity with Ogoni Struggle



Gov. Amaechi Saluting the courage of the Ogoni People

TCND Report Implementation:

N'Delta Communities CSOs, CBOs to Observe Day of Action



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee

Ogoniland: Two Decades of Sustained Struggle

Ogoniland: Two Decades of Sustained Struggle *By Bisi Olaniyi*

The world over, most agitations for self expression and determination have, almost always, resulted from real or implausible cases of injustice by the establishment. When a people sense that they are being marginalised in the scheme of things or are deprived of what genuinely should have been theirs, there is always the proclivity to grumble and then protest against structural injustice. This was exactly what the Ogoni people in Rivers State did about 20 years ago when they became conscious of the excruciating suffering they were experiencing as a result of the effects of the operations of oil firms which rendered their farmlands and rivers-their two major sources of livelihood-uncultivable.

They formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) through which they championed the cause of their struggle to survive. Last week witnessed a colourful celebration of the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Movement at the 18th Ogoni Day.

Culture at its best was displayed at the well attended event as various cultural groups tried to outdo one another at the well-attended event.

Besides the cultural dances, there were live bands, masquerades, various entertaining groups and drummers, with the people dancing and singing with dexterity.

The programme was slated for 10:00 in the morning, but as early as 7:00 am, Ogoni people and their friends started converging at Birabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori, headquarters of Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State and the traditional headquarters of Ogoniland, venue of the event.

Chairs and canopies were enough for numberless guests, while the podium was elegantly prepared and strategically positioned.

A good number of people wore various designs of *Ankara* uniform and caps with MOSOP boldly inscribed on them.

Some who sold MOSOP/Ogoni souvenirs, especially items with the inscription of the late environmental rights activist, Kenule Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995) and eight others who were executed on November 10, 1995, during the regime of the late Gen Sani Abacha made brisk business.

This year's Ogoni Day revealed that the people are still united in spite of the challenges

Children, youths, women and elders from Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme, the four local government areas that make up Ogoni and their friends, participated *en masse* in the historic celebration.

To underscore the relevance of the struggle by MOSOP and the Ogoni people, the late Prof. Claude Ake had said: "MOSOP and Ogoniland must survive and flourish for the

sake of all of us. For better or for worse, MOSOP and Ogoniland are the conscience of this country.

"They have risen above our slave culture of silence; they have found the courage to be free and they have evolved a political consciousness that denies power to rogues, hypocrites, fools and bullies. For better or for worse, Ogoniland carries our hopes. Battered and bleeding, it struggles on to realise our promise and to restore our dignity. If it falters, we die."

The Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who was represented by the Rivers State Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, and the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Chief Ufot Ekaette, Rivers State Deputy Governor, Tele Ikuru, representative of Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Lee Maeba; the Chairman of the South-South Parliamentary Caucus, and the Secretary to the Rivers State Government (SSG), Magnus Abe, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), Prof. Don Baridam, and his counterpart from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), Port Harcourt, Prof. Barineme Fakae, among other eminent personalities, were in attendance at the event chaired by Chief Andrew Uchendu, a member of the House of Representatives representing Ikwere/Emohua Constituency.

Ogoni National Merit Awards were also presented to Rivers State governor and some deserving sons and daughters of Ogoniland for their immense contributions to the Ogoni campaign for justice and development. They included: Chief Fred Apere, Bishop Wellington Yobe, Chief Emmanuel Nkala and Madam Cecilia Okorie.

Governor Amaechi, while presenting the Vice-President's address, encouraged Ogoni people to keep hope alive and continue in their support for the just cause.

In his opening speech, Chairman of the occasion advised the people to sustain the non-violent agitation for which they are noted.

MOSOP's President, Ledum Mitee, who was Saro-Wiwa's cell-mate and Chairman of the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), in his welcome address, declared that "there was cause to be concerned about the frustrations over lack of any tangible post-amnesty programme that would take care, not only of the former combatants, but also other angry, but unemployed youths in order not to recede into the ugly past."

Those who have the responsibility of implementing the post-amnesty programme were also enjoined to take full advantage of the amnesty window to address the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger Delta struggle in order to consolidate the gains of the programme.

Mitee disclosed that Ogoni people had commenced a

formal request for the creation of Bori State whose capital would be at Bori. The proposed state will comprise the four Ogoni LGAs of Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme, as well as Andoni and Opobo/Nkoro councils of Rivers State, among others. This, he said, is one of the major issues in the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

Continuing, Mr Mitee said Ogoni people were impressed by the support of Ogoni sons and daughters in government to the struggle and the cooperation of their neighbours which had enabled them to cross the initial constitutional huddles.

He assured that Ogoni people would work towards good neighbourliness and accommodation on the basis of mutual self-respect with their neighbours, even in an eventual Bori State.

Mitee, a renowned international environmental activist and Port Harcourt-based legal practitioner, said the Ogoni had been struggling against injustice, represented by political marginalisation, economic strangulation and environmental terrorism.

He noted that Ogoni struggle had become a metaphor for non-violent agitation for justice, equity, democracy and corporate responsibility.

He said: "Few struggles in our part of the world have mustered such intellectual depth, survived overwhelming challenges and odds including an increasingly violent environment, yet continued to maintain its strategic purity as a beacon of hope for the hopeless, like the Ogoni struggle.

"That we have received solidarity messages for the event from 55 nations and peoples represented by the UNPO attests to the profound and unparalleled international visibility and reaches which we continue to enjoy.

"We insist that, in the absence of some urgent and significant positive change in Ogoni, it will be difficult to continue to counter the arguments of those who, over the last few years, particularly have seen the case of injustice against Ogoni as an example of why non-violent advocacy should be abandoned in favour of armed resistance.

"No time is more apt to send such positive message than now when our region is passing through a critical epoch, after the experiences of a frightening level of violence in the recent past and the present cessation of hostilities occasioned by the amnesty initiative.

"Our country must get itself from the slumbering illusion of equating peace in the Niger Delta with unhindered flow of oil and gas. As we believe that without addressing the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger Delta agitations, the seeming quiet could be but a short-lived illusion. *Culled from The Nation*

MOSOP Eleme Expresses Concern Over UNEP Visit

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) Eleme Kingdom has expressed dismay over the recent visit of some unidentified visitors suspected to have come from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) to the area.

The displeasure which was made known in a statement released by MOSOP Eleme Kingdom and signed by its coordinator Mr. Oluji Bartholomew wondered why a body with international reputation would want its name to be dragged into any shady deal if it actually wants to embark on a genuine clean-up of spill-sites in the area.

Mr. Oluji Bartholomew said MOSOP became dissatisfied with the visit of the unnamed team to Ebubu community as the people of Ebubu were never consulted nor involved in the process. The statement further read that the meeting early scheduled by UNEP to hold

by 10am on the 22nd of November, 2009 only came up by 2:00pm hours behind schedule after some prominent son's and

daughters of Ebubu has lost their patience and had left for other engagements.

MOSOP which also expressed its readiness to embrace any genuine plan by UNEP to clean spill sites in Ebubu however warned that members of the community should be considered and

carried along, having the welfare of the people in mind. The statement concluded in part that "this is why we wonder if the group that came is really from either UNEP International or UNEP Nigeria or even Shell.

He said although programmes targeted at alleviating the plights of youths in the Niger Delta has

failed it was now time for the youths to become morally sound and be ready to reject idea's and activities which contradicts moral values or are morally wrong.

The seasoned writer and guest lecturer during the ceremony also did not miss words as he repeatedly blamed the elite's and politicians for the occasional violence witnessed in the society and the retarding pace of development, lamenting that peace and Justice would have thrived in the society if moral principles were to be the basis on which major decisions by those in leadership positions relied.

Mr. Tombari Dumka Kote who in his eight page lecture text chronicled the

origin of militancy in the Niger Delta however, regretted that the sponsors of societal violence had given their own children pen and paper to study, and gave other peoples children arms to kill. He prayed the youths to reject any future plan to arm them under whatever gesture and also advised the federal government to rise up to its responsibility by engaging the repentant militants in meaningful ventures and also creating adequate employment opportunities for the youths of the oil rich region.

Earlier in his address of welcome, the president of the Liberty Group of Friends (LIGOF) K-Dere, Liberty Fulbel Noble, had thanked the St. Johns pro-cathedral

Christ Army Church K-Dere and all whom have been of refuge in different circumstances to the club for making the day a reality.

Also, a brief history of LIGOF was read by liberty, Tornubari Crimson Naador, who said the origin of the Club can be traced to a set of childhood friends who had in mind an idea of societal decency.

The occasion which also featured kingdom dance by the group was graced by Mrs. Anagionyi Mkpato, Mr. and Mrs. D.N. Naador, Snr. Catchs; Evans D. Baakel, Eric Naasi and J.B. Gbarade, Mr. and Mrs. Loveday Fulbel, and Mrs. Blessing Bagialo amongst many others.

State Creation: Ogoni Assures Neighbours of Peaceful Co-existence

As move for the creation of Bori State progresses to the level of actualization, the people of Ogoni have assured those of the neighbouring communities and other people of the state of good neighbourliness as well as accommodation on the basis of mutual self respect particularly in an eventual Ogoni State.

This affirmation was contained in an address presented by the President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ledum Mitee during the just concluded Ogoni Day Celebration in Bori, Ogoni on January 4, 2010.

Giving the assurance on behalf of the Ogoni people, the MOSOP President also said it was her fervent hope and belief that with the emerging improved relations between MOSOP activists and those in government they can achieve much for the people, for as he has repeatedly stated, it should not matter by whom but the fact that successes are scored for the people.

The MOSOP President

believes that the chances towards the actualization of their historical demand for autonomy is significantly bright, and added that if is necessary that the people start leading the struggle of democratically determining who leads, governs, and represents them as the core of the next stage of their struggle.

Mitee stated that although the quest to be granted "political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a distinct unit by whatever name called, provided that this autonomy guarantees, inter alia, political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people", was an important plank of the Ogoni Bill of Rights, but that the latest actions on that agitation which saw to the formal request for the creation of a Bori State was not without the support or their neighbours.

He therefore, acknowledged the encouraging support so far received from Ogoni sons and daughters in government as well as the cooperation of their neighbours which he noted

enabled them cross the initial constitutional huddles.

Similarly, the MOSOP President said whilst they may not have achieved all the demands in the Bill of Rights, the people have every reason to congratulate themselves that years after they blazed the trail in setting out the demands as the minimum condition for resolution of the Ogoni and by extension, the Niger Delta problems, there is now some indications of their acceptance.

For instance, on the demand for the protection of the Ogoni environment from further degradation, the UNEP environmental audit is now being launched; on the quest for the use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, the federal government has approved 10% equity for oil producing communities, and on the rejection of Shell and its bad corporate practices, the federal government announced its decision to replace the

company as an operator in Ogoni.

While wondering why the government is yet to give expression to its decision two years after, he used the occasion to appeal to top government officials at the event to assist in conveying to the federal government Ogoni people's desire to cooperate with a credible replacement for Shell.

Noting that Ogoni Struggle has become more of a metaphor for non-violent agitation for justice, equity, democracy and corporate responsibility, Mitee said its strategic purity as a beacon of hope for the hopeless has occasioned the receipt of solidarity messages from over 55 nations and peoples represented by the UNPO.

Acknowledging however that there is every cause to be concerned about the frustrations about lack of any discernable post amnesty programme for not only former militants but also other equally angry and unemployed youths, the Ogoni people called on all

authorities concerned to take full advantage of the amnesty window to address the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger Delta Struggle to prevent a relapse into the sad past.

They further said the quest for good governance and accountability in governance informed their taking the rare steps of extending the current Ogoni National Merit Awards to some government officials that have shown encouraging sparks in various aspects of governance, underscoring the point that they stand not just to condemn but to

commend when certain things are done rightly.

While appealing to the youths to eschew any temptations of being used as thugs or being engaged in violence especially as elections set in, the MOSOP leader disclose that "My Votes Must Count" campaign will be launched and called on all Ogonis who have not yet registered to go and register as voters as soon as the process commences.

According to Mitee, "any politician hoping to win our votes by other means or impose candidates on our people should better look elsewhere.



Power Supply: Gov. Amaechi Appologises to Ogonis

Rivers State Governor, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi have appologised to the people of Ogoni for the failure of his administration to deliver on his earlier promise of electric power supply to the area by the end of December, 2009.

Speaking at the 18th annual Ogoni Day Celebration in Bori, the traditional headquarters of the Ogoni people, Governor Amaechi, admitted his short comings for not keeping his words stating that his pronouncement was a sign of over reliance on the contractor handling the Independent Power Project (IPP) who told him that by December, 2009, the project would be ready and the 20,000 mega-watts of electricity needed in the Ogoni axis will delivered.

The Governor in his word's said "it is no doubt that as we stand here today the delivery date for that project has expired as today is January 4th, 2010. So I cannot assure the Ogoni people on the promise I made before now, but to appologise for the inability of the government to meet the set target."

The State Chief Executive Officer said while it is not out of place for those elected into positions of trust to apologize for their shortcoming's, he will not want to make any other promise to the Ogoni people until the lighting situation which he earlier promised is achieved as he will not want to behave like some politicians who will continue to promise heaven and earth even when they are yet to deliver on earlier promises.

He furthered that there was no going-back on his plan to make Bori another City in the state and revealed that plans are already in top gear to build one of the model schools in Bori and to rehabilitate the Bori road.

Governor Amaechi also pleaded with the Ogoni people to allow for the resumption of oil exploration in the area but promised that since the Ogoni's no longer need Shell Petroleum Development Company in the area, the state government was going to partner with MOSOP in getting a new oil company for the area for them to resume oil exploration

activities and fast track the development of the area.

The occasion which

Amaechi, also called on the people of Ogoni ethnic nationality to unite and forge a common front in the quest for the development of the area.

The Governor who made the call recently while addressing the 18th Annual Ogoni Day celebration in Bori, Headquarters of Khana local government area, said unity should be their watchword in achieving the gains of their struggle.

He advised them not to allow selfish politicians to cause disaffection among them, particularly now that the struggle was beginning to yield positive results, noting that the youths need to resist the temptation of being used by politicians to achieve their selfish aim.

He assured the people that his administration would continue to be accountable by utilizing state funds to deliver services to the people and also stated that he was already mobilizing funds for the execution of more road projects in Bori.

The governor said he has always identified with the Ogoni struggle because of its non-violent approach and had many years ago immortalized the late Environmentalist,

was also used to mark the 20th anniversary of the birth of MOSOP also had in

attendance prominent whom had returned home Ogoni Son's and daughter's to take part in the 2010 from all worth's of life Ogoni Day Celebration.

... Tasks Ogonis on Unity

Ken Saro Wiwa, by naming a building he built at Uniport after him, adding that as Governor, he has now renamed Stadium road to Ken Saro Wiwa road.

Amaechi thanked the MOSOP leadership and the entire Ogoni people for honouring him with an award, emphasizing that he does not love such recognitions but accepted theirs to prove his love for their non-violent struggle.

Amaechi, who also represented Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, said he identifies with the non-violent struggle of the Ogoni people and enjoined them to sustain the peace for the betterment of the area and the country at large.

On his part, the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs Chief Ufot Ekaette, said the Ogoni people have remained at the forefront of non-violent struggle in Nigeria and the approach has begun to yield results.

Ekaette therefore urged MOSOP to continue with the peaceful attitude for the overall interest of the people of the area and Niger Delta

region, stressing that the federal government established the Niger Delta Ministry and offered amnesty to militants to fast-track the development of the area.

The Minister said the East-West road project was progressing more in the Ogoni axis than any other area because of the peaceful atmosphere provided the contractors, adding that the Ministry is giving priority to projects that cut across the region to ensure that all parts felt the impact of government.

In his address of welcome, the President of MOSOP, Barr. Ledum Mitee called on all authorities concerned to take advantage of the amnesty to address the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger Delta struggles to prevent a re-occurrence of the sad past.

The MOSOP President, who said the chances of actualizing the Ogoni demands for autonomy was significantly bright, stressed the need for the Ogonis to continue the struggle.

Mitee appealed to youths of Ogoniland to shun the temptation of being used

for election rigging and violence adding that to demonstrate their preparedness for proper democratic representation "my votes must count campaign" would be launched in the area to mobilize the people to defend their votes during elections.

In his goodwill message the Secretary to the Rivers State Government, Mr. Magnus Abe lauded Governor Amaechi for embarking on projects in Ogoniland and thanked MOSOP for keeping the memory alive even as he urged the Ogonis to be united among themselves.

The Chairman of the occasion, Chief Andrew Uchendu, said the philosophy of MOSOP was in the blood of every Ogoni person and challenged the people to learn lessons from Ken Saro-Wiwa's life by doing the best for their people.

Highpoint of the event was presentation of awards to deserving indigenes of Ogoniland, including the Rivers State Governor.

Implementation of NDTC Reports Recommendations: N' Delta Communities, CSOs, CBOs to Observe Day of Non-Violent Action

A Forum of Ethnic Nationalities has called on Niger Delta communities, Civil Society and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to observe a day of non-violent action to campaign for the implementation of the recommendations in the TCND report.

At a one-day

Community Awareness Roundtable on the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta [TCND] organised by the **Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People [MOSOP]** held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State on the 18th of

December, 2009, the forum appreciated the leadership role of MOSOP in the Niger Delta struggle and called on organization to intensify its efforts to galvanize other less organized and exposed groups towards the actualization of the tenets of the Niger Delta struggle as expressed in the recommendations in the TCND's report.

The Forum, realizing that the Nigerian government only responds to pressure, called on Niger Delta groups should to urgently fashion out a credible non-violent pressure platform to replace the pressure of ex-militants.

The forum also called for an urgent convocation of an ethnic nationalities summit to discuss the problems of the Niger Delta within the framework of the

report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta CORDAID for its and called on MOSOP to co-sponsorship of the mass ordinate the processes towards production of the TCND report to communities and the realization of the project.

Similarly, the forum stakeholders, called on each community The Niger Delta based organizations (CBOs) communities Forum further and ethnic groups to sensitize calls on members of the their respective grass roots on National Assembly from the the salient aspects of the report region to rise to their and the need for the people to constitutional pressure the respective responsibilities by pressuring governments towards the for the implementation of the implementation of the report.

The forum also called for They also called on the a strong and viable advocacy Ministry of the Niger Delta for the implementation of the and the federal government TCND Report and calls each to consult Niger Delta nationality group to set up a communities on the design timeframe to take specific and routing of the proposed actions in their respective coastal road and not to groups. To assist the process assume superior knowledge the Forum calls on MOSOP to over matters such as this that urgently produce a simplified affect Niger Delta and condensed version of the communities.



Cross Section of participants at the Stakeholders Conference in Uyo recently

The Minister of the Niger Delta and former secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Uffot Ekaette urged the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) to mobilize other groups and ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta region to adopt the non-violence strategy of

Mobilize Other Groups, Ekaette Tells MOSOP

the Ogoni People in their quest for economic and political emancipation.

Then minister stated this while addressing over 10,000 Ogoni's and other Niger Delta people during the 2010 Ogoni day celebration in Bori. He said the call have

become necessary after a personal understudy of the Ogoni Struggle by him which today yielding positive result following the non-violent approach used y MOSOP in pressing home it's demands over the years.

Chief Uffot Ekaette

further stated that if MOSOP can make other Niger Delta groups understand the need on why they should adopt the non-violent approach, and all the groups come together to present a common front, their voice will become more vocal and their demands can

be addressed by the government with ease.

The minister, who is also from the Niger Delta region said it was now time to abandon arms struggle for the non-violent approach of MOSOP, as the president Umaru Musa Yar'adua's

administration is committed to addressing the issues that led to the Niger Delta crisis. He said with the peace now enjoyed in the Niger Delta, the federal government is set to commence more mega projects across the region soon.

Leaders and people in authority in the Niger Delta region have been asked to be prepared and always be ready to do the best for their people. The call came from Chief Andrew Uchendu, Chairman of South-South Caucus of the National Assembly while addressing the crowd at the 2010 Ogoni day celebration

N/Delta Leaders Urged to Emulate Saro-Wiwa

in Bori, penultimate week.

Chief Uchendu, who acknowledged Ken Saro Wiwa as a personal friend, said there is nothing much the late environmental rights activist, social crusader, poet and playwright would have done that will be more

appreciated than setting the pace for the non-violent struggle of MOSOP to liberate his people from political and economic marginalization and other social injustices.

He furthered that without doubts in mind, the

idea of liberating his people from the shackles of poverty as presented to the Ogoni's by Saro-wiwa, backed with a good leadership made it possible today that 99% of Ogoni's have the idea of MOSOP in their bones. Chief Uchendu therefore urged other leaders of thought and

people in authority in the region to emulate Saro Wiwa by always doing the best for their people.

Chief Andrew Uchendu who also chaired the event condemned situations in the recent past where leaders in positions of trust had acquired gun's and matchets

for the youths to prosecute their selfish interest against that of the people whom they claim to lead and expressed his gratitude to the Ogoni people for sustaining the struggle despite all odds for over 18years today.

Graham-Douglas, Alamieyeseigha Oppose Return to Militancy

By Omon-Julius Onabu

Former Minister, Alabo Tonye Graham-Douglas, and ex-Bayelsa State governor, Depriye Alamieyeseigha, have urged youths and people of the Niger-Delta to resist the temptation of returning to violent agitation to settle issues affecting the region.

The duo said this at the grand reception for outgoing President of the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Dr Chris Ekiyor, weekend, at Patani, headquarters of Patani Local Government Area of Delta State.

They stressed the need to take steps to arouse more patriotic feelings, particularly in the youths, who have been increasingly pushed to a point of despair, owing to certain unfavourable political manipulations and constitutional inequity in Nigeria.

Graham-Douglas also lamented the way the

protracted ailment of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and subsequent long hospitalisation abroad has been manipulated for political advantage.

He, however, described the amnesty programme as the most pragmatic initiative of the Federal Government and commended youths of the Niger-Delta for their

cooperation, adding that the greater task lie in embracing and imbibing the "intellectual struggle," now required for the Ijaw and the entire region to remain

relevant in the scheme of things in Nigeria.

In his own remarks, Delta State Governor, Emmanuel Uduaghan, commended the people of

Patani and the entire Ijaw for recognising diligent leadership and commitment to peace at all times, which Ekiyor epitomises.

Jonathan urges N'Delta Leaders not to Comment on President's illness

By Sola Adebayo

Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan may have asked leaders of the Niger Delta to refrain from commenting on President Umaru Yar'Adua's illness and the controversy over Yar'Adua's failure to make him an acting President.

A reliable source in the Presidency told our correspondent on Monday that the position of Jonathan informed the seeming silence of the Niger Delta on the debate on the issues.

It was gathered that Jonathan particularly contacted the Leader of the Niger Delta Leaders, Elders

and Stakeholders Forum, Chief Edwin Clark, and other key leaders of the oil-rich region not to lend their voices to the national discourse on the constitutional provisions on the ascendancy to the Presidency under the present circumstance.

Our source said that Clark had declined to be part of the ongoing national debate that Jonathan should take charge of the administration of the country on the strength of the position of the vice-president.

Jonathan, an Ijaw man from community in Bayelsa State, allegedly took the action to correct the

impression that he was sponsoring his kinsmen in the Niger Delta to facilitate his ascendancy to the Presidency.

It was also gathered that Jonathan believed that some persons in the Presidency loyal to the ailing President could capitalise on the views of his kinsmen to misrepresent him before Yar'Adua in the event that he recovered and returned to his duty post.

Investigation further revealed that Jonathan was guided by the fate of the former Secretary of the Government to the Federation, Mr. Babagana

Kingibe, who was removed for allegedly being assertive.

Our source said, "The Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, has contacted all notable Niger Delta leaders to lie low and not participate in the ongoing national debate that he should take over the leadership of the country in the face of the continued absence of his boss, President Yar'Adua, from the country due to illness.

"The vice-president did not want the hawks loyal to Yar'Adua to misrepresent him in the case that he returns as President. The VP is not oblivious of the fate of Kingibe.

"That is why Jonathan

personally called Chief Clark and other leaders of the Niger Delta not to talk in the media on the state of the health of his boss and the calls by some prominent Nigerians, asking Yar'Adua to write the National Assembly to recognise him as acting President."

Efforts by our correspondent to speak with the spokesman of the Vice-President, Mr. Ima Niboro, failed as he did not responded to telephone calls and text messages sent to him on the development.

But one of the media aides in his office said that Jonathan took the action in order not to further heat up the polity.

Students Urged to Be Agents of Community Development

The annual students' week celebration of the Kegbara Dere Tertiary Students Union (KEDTESU) which commenced December 29, 2009 came to an end with a call on students to be more studious and help in the development of their community.

The week-long event organized by the student body under the leadership of Mr. Tudor D. Fulbel, in collaboration with the Kegbara Dere Town Council which has as its theme "Restoring the Lost Glory of

Kegbara Dere via Peace and Education", featured peace rally, environmental sanitation, public seminar, schools debate, football match and cultural display amongst other activities.

With participants drawn from a wide segment of the society, some eminent scholars and academicians including Mr. Nendo Gawa, Professor Ben Naanen and Mr. Evidence Zorgbara took centre stage during the programme.

Speaking on the topic "How Youths can Motivate Development", Mr. Nendo

Gawa, a professional journalist and media consultant gave both present and future imperatives as the solution. He said the present imperatives includes education, growing the right attitude and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) while the future imperatives according to Mr. Gawa, includes self-consciousness, enterprise development, voluntary social services, mentoring and political participation.

In his lecture on "Education and Community Development", Professor

Ben Naanen, the eminent professor of History and Diplomacy, University of Port Harcourt, said Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with the provision of e-library and the avoidance of money sharing as it propels violence are some of the many solutions towards education and community development.

In a related development, Mr. Evidence Zorgbara, while speaking on the topic "Youth Restiveness, Education and Community Development" top dignitaries including,

without much digression from other speakers' opinion said the solution was for youths to cut off degeneracy, get hybridized, key into government programs, increase their propensity to invest and save, increase their empowerment potentials and through harnessing economic viability and mineralization.

The celebration which was drawn to an end penultimate week with a thanksgiving service at the First Baptist Church K-Dere, also had in attendance some

Ledum Mitee, MOSOP and UNPO President, Mr. Godswill Bornu, Hon. Batom Mitee, (Special Adviser to the Governor of Rivers State on parastatals), Rev. A.K. Nordu, Dr. Meedubari Nordu, senior lecturer with the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State and Hon. M. Dumiye.

Others include Chief J.M. Kunamon, Chief Goni Gberetee, Chief David Fulbel, and Elder Jonathan Kerenwin and other members of the community governing council.

A Charismatic Christian Youth Outfit called and known as "Sii Christian Youth Assembly" has been inaugurated in Sii town, in the Babbe Kingdom of Khalga Rivers State.

The Christian Youth body which has representatives/membership from all the Churches across the whole communities of Bua-Sii, Kugba-Nama-Sii etc. was formally inaugurated on the 2nd day of January 2010 at The Ascension Apostolic Church, Ebia-Sii.

In his statement the Chairman of the occasion, Hon. Lekia S. Deeyah advised the new officers and

those present to have trust/faith in God especially by serving Him. He particularly used himself as an exemplary beneficiary of those who have trust/faith in God.

In another development, the Guest-speaker of the day, Rev. Saturday N. Gbarayege in his spiritually motivated message: "THE APPOINTMENT OF MEN OF VALOUR OVER GOD'S BUSINESS", asked the newly elected youth leaders to be steadfast in serving God and humanity. He used some portions of the Bible especially Gen. 39:5 that if

they work hard, that God can bless their families, communities/society, generation, etc, as he did for Egypt through Joseph.

Rev. Gbarayege also cautioned the new leaders and members that as far as they have decided in serving God, that they should not deviate from the task, otherwise it shall be punishable by God, and referred this to Acts 6:1-15.

In his handing over, the outgoing Chairman caretaker/electoral committee, Bro. Barile Miikue thanked members for

supporting and working with them, praised God for making the assignment given to them realized and promised to be still working with the new executive for the growth of the body.

Then in his presentation of address, the newly sworn in president, Bro. Bright Biekara on behalf of the exco/members thanked God for his mercies, kindness and grace which sustained the members and Sii communities right from its formation in January 2008. President Biekara also thanked God for some

patriotic charismatic citizens of the soil who had set the model for Christianity in the land. Among whom are: Rev. Gibson Bumaa, Rev. Baridor Ziidee, Pst. Barr. Sunday Williamson, etc.

The president also used the medium to appeal to all and sundry to use their positions of trust to assist the youth body in order to afford a complete Musical/Evangelical Equipments through which the body can preach/evangelise to their fellow youths and the public against all sorts of youth restiveness, hostage

taking/kidnapping, cultism etc. Bro. Bright Biekara also appealed for empowering them through job opportunities, scholarship, skill acquisition programmes, etc.

In his vote of thanks, the Chief host, Hon. LeBari Torue expressed appreciation to God for the existence of the Christian organization in the community and also thanked the participants for their support.

The occasion featured among other things, choir rendition, Divine message, and swearing in of new officers.

Niger Delta : FG Explains Sharing Formula On 10 % Equity

The federal government has given an insight on how to distribute the 10 percent equity from the proposed Incorporated Joint Ventures (IJVs) proceeds with international Oil Companies to Niger Delta Communities.

The Special Adviser to the President on Energy Matters, Dr Emmanuel Egbogah said the proposed 10 percent equity to the oil producing communities will be handled by a trust fund company to be set up soon by government.

He said: "It will not be run by government, politicians or the city council, a trust fund will be set up to be managed by the selected people in the communities who will be able to assist them manage the wealth prudently".

Speaking to newsmen in Abuja yesterday, Dr Egbogah said the 10 percent Equity is entirely different from the 'failed' 13 percent derivation to the oil producing states.

According to him, if the 13 percent derivation is working perfectly, the country will not be at its present mess.

The adviser who is also the initiator of the package said the rest of Nigerians will also get their own share in the oil wealth under the new arrangement, saying 9 percent equity out of the IJVs

with the international oil companies excluding Shell IJVs will be made available to the rest of Nigerians to subscribe. For Shell Petroleum Development Company (SDPC), Egbogah said only 4% will be made available to Nigerians and 10% for the communities.

He said interested Nigerians will acquire stake

by subscribing to shares of the IJVs from the stock exchange, stressing further that no single Nigerian will be allowed to own more than .01 percent of the shares, in order to stop rich persons buying all the shares.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Committee on the Modalities for the Involvement of Host

Communities in the Ownership of Petroleum Assets commenced its assignment last week.

Minister of state for Petroleum Resources Odein H. Ajumogobia said the federal government set up this committee to expeditiously deliberate on examining the constitutional, institutional and legal

framework for effecting host communities participation, determine the definition of "host communities" for the purpose of benefiting from the proposal and to examine the level of, and mechanism by which, equity would be acquired by host communities including funding and to make appropriate recommendations to

Government amongst others.

The Minister who is also the Chairman of this Committee stressed that its membership would be expanded to include relevant government agencies, community leaders/traditional rulers and representatives of the militant leaders for an all inclusive engagement.

Ex-Militants Strike: Asuu Demands Compensation

The Federal and State Governments have been called upon to without any further delay pay adequate compensation to lecturers of the University of Port Harcourt who lost their properties during the protest embarked upon by ex-militant in Choba last year, 2009.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) made the demands in a letter written to Governor Chibuike Rotimi Ameachi of Rivers State and made available to newsmen.

ASUU President Professor Awozie Ukwachuku, said its members should be paid the compensation following the losses suffered by them during the protest including the loss of personal properties which is now making the lecturers

experience an untold level of hardship. He appealed that the compensation be paid without much delay as it will be unfair for the government not to compensate the affected persons even when it is evidently clear that they were no partakers in the protest but victims of circumstance.

It will be recalled that repentant militants camped around the University community in Choba Port Harcourt had sometime later part of last year went on rampage disrupting both business and academic activities in protest of what they described as the refusal of the Federal Government to pay them their allowances and fulfill other promises made to them in the amnesty plan. The aggrieved ex-militants who also accused the Federal Government of denying them

good and adequate accommodation had also raided offices and female hostels in the Choba campus of the University of Port Harcourt, raping female students and looting properties worth hundreds of thousands of Naira.

In a reprisal manner, the

students of the ivory tower also embarked on another protest to the government house Port Harcourt, to protest against the activities of the ex-militants and their continued stay at the rehabilitation centre provided for them by the government on the University campus.

The institution was temporarily closed down in a manner analyst described as too negative for the growth of education in the country.

ASUU said the compensation which should be on humanitarian grounds will enable its members to gain a new lease of life.

Poem

Let the unborn children
Sing the songs from the
Dark world of their mother's
wombs
For a day that had woven
wounds
Of never-vanishing scars in
our hearts,
Black bleeding lacerations by
Swastika and sickle of a
Regime reeked of blood and
blood.
A day to rigorously recall
The struggle with pride
Live an eagle soaring high

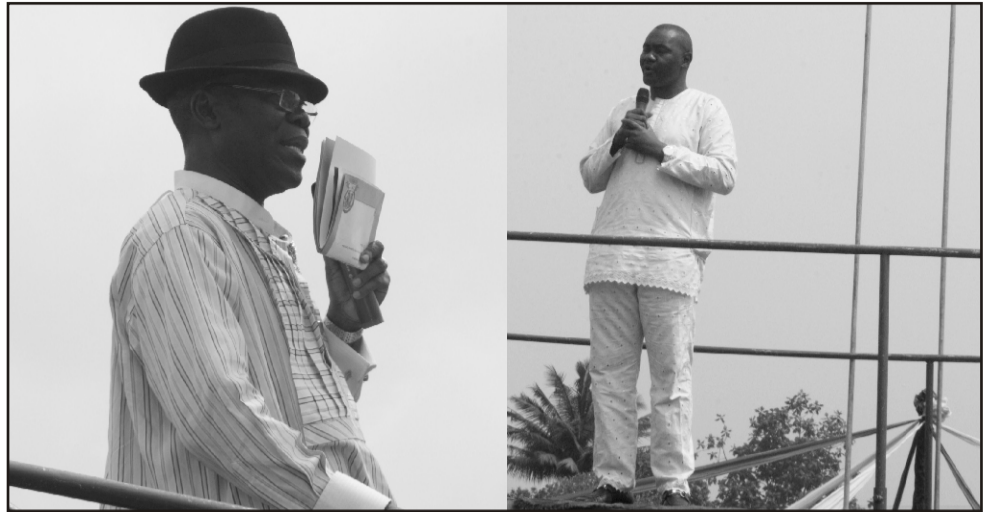
Ode to Ogoni Day

across
The smiling skies and nailing
noises
Of this wavy world.
O let this pregnant child-
Let this unborn son sings for
the
Day of its birth when the
Heroes from their glory
graves
Shall wave their hands and
Smile the smiles of sorrow,
The smiles of victory,
With aureole heads

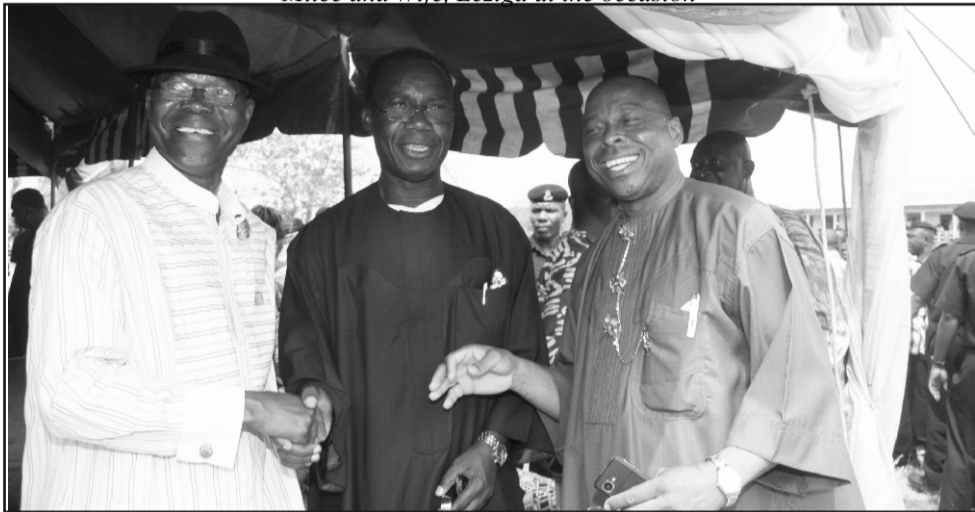
Proclaiming their courage to
Have held so hot coals of the
Hottest of fire to a stream of
ice.
Sing! Dance!
Play! Prance!
An unborn child of Ogoni
Day, extricating us from
agony.
Precious Dumka Bie
University of Education
Port Harcourt
07030482446/predumb@ya
hoo.com.



Sen. representing Rivers-South-East, Senator Lee Maeba, MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee and Wife, Leziga at the occasion



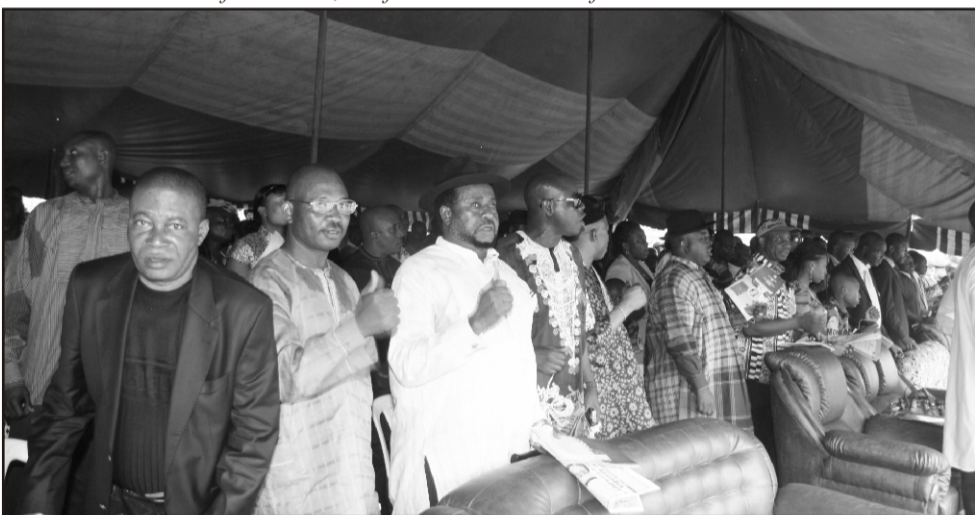
Chairman of the Occasion, Chief A. Uchendu, SSG, Hon. Magus Abe



Chief Uchendu, Prof. Baridam and Prof. Fakae at the Event



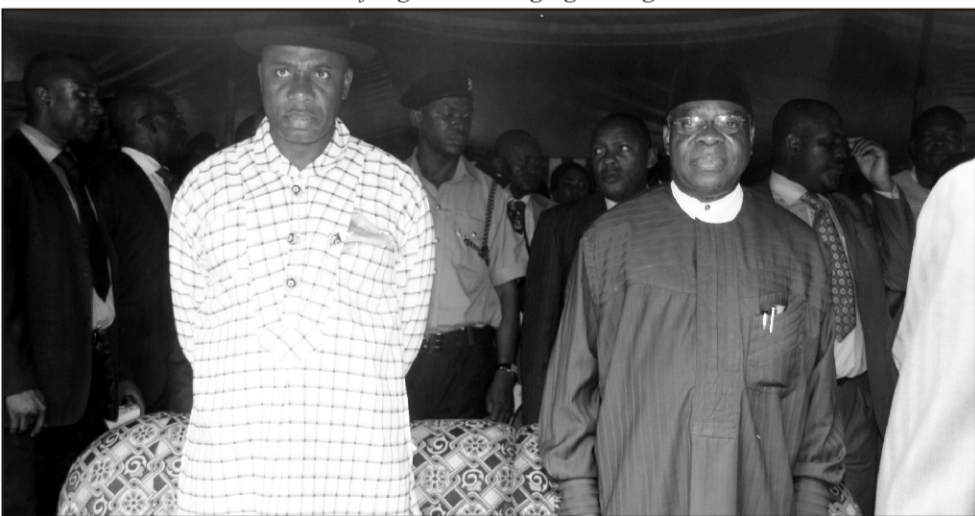
From left: Magus Abe, George Feyii, other dignitaries at the event



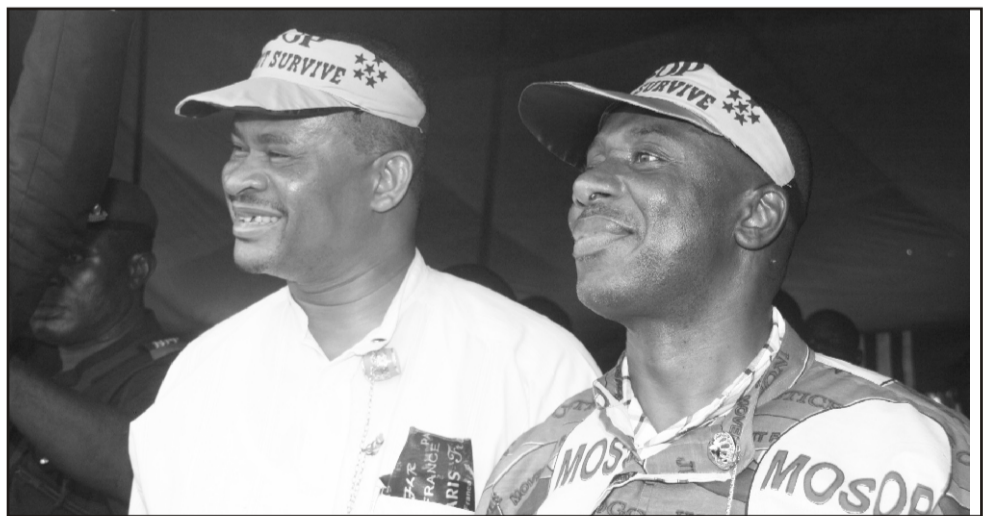
Cross Section of dignitaries singing the Ogoni Anthem



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee, NDA Minister, Chief Uffot Ekaete



Gov. Amaechi and Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Chief Uffot Ekaete at the Ogoni Day Event



Senator Lee Maeba and Gov. Amaechi

CHANGE OF NAME

CHUKWULEWENWA:

I, formerly known, called and addressed as **ONUOTU EMMANUEL NGOZI CHUKWULEWENWA** now wish to be known, called and addressed as **ONUOTU, EMMANUEL NGOZI**. All documents bearing my former name remain valid. Ogba/Egbama/Ndoni Local Government Council, Rivers State Polytechnic, Bori and the general public please note.

ONUOTU, EMMANUEL NGOZI.



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee in a handshake with Gov. Amaechi



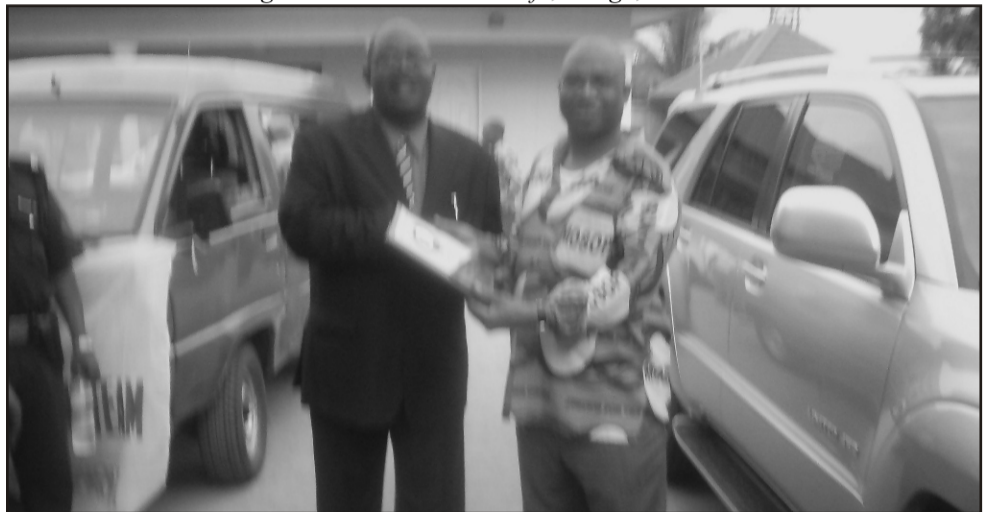
Deputy Gov. R/S, Engr. Tele Ikuru, Chief Uchendu, Prof. Baridam, Mr. Kpagi at the occasion



From right: Ledum Mitee and Wife, Leziga, Sen. Lee Maeba



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee and Gov. Rotimi Amaechi in a Chat



Representative of Edo State Governor, Comrade Adams Oshiomole, receiving ONMA of the MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee



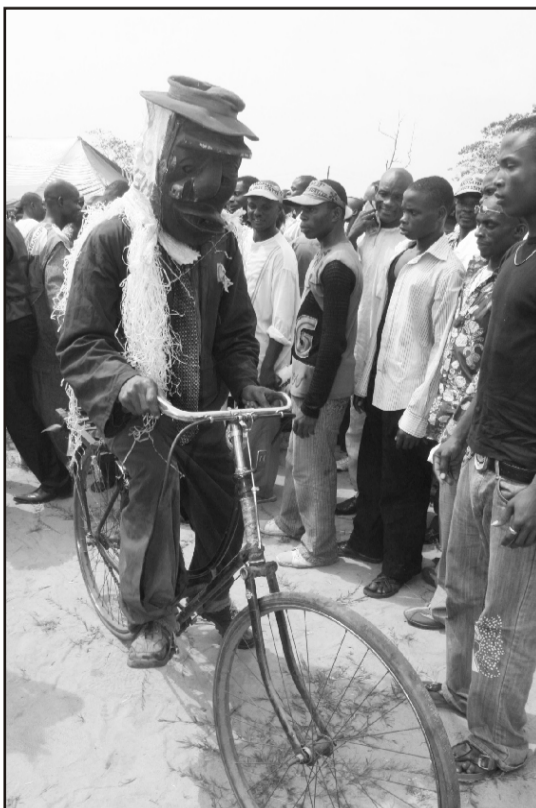
Bishop Gberegbara of Anglian Communion, Ogoni Diocese, offering opening prayer and Hon. G. Nwidam, Khana Council Boss giving vote of thanks



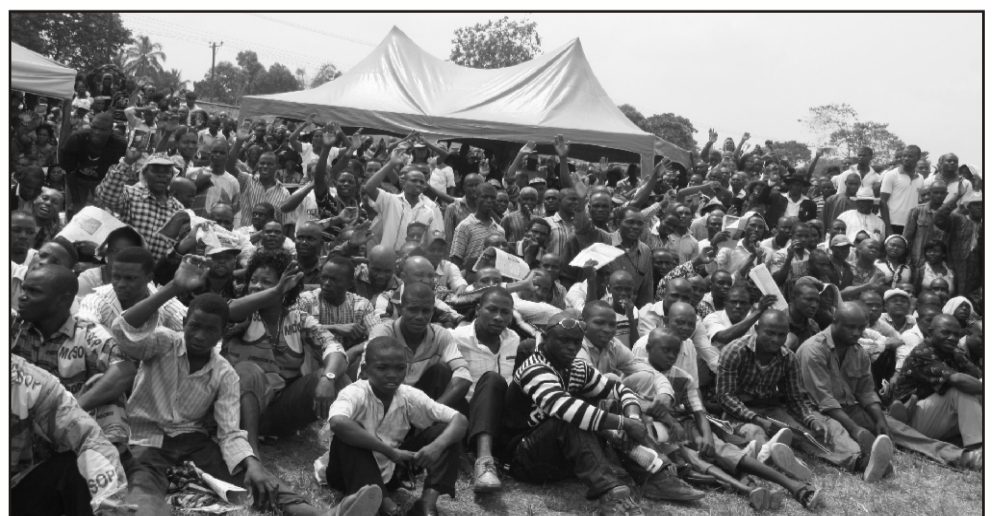
An Acrobatic display at the Occasion



Ogoni National Merit Awards Recipients



Some Cultural Troupes at the Occasion



Cross Section of the Crowd at the 2010 Ogoni Day in Bori

Amnesty Not Designed to Succeed - *Pyagbara* By Clifford Thomas

Legborsi Saro Pyagbara is the National Coordinator of the Niger Delta UPR Coalition, and the International Advocacy Officer of Movement for Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). He leads a coalition which carries out periodic review of human rights issues, particularly the economic, social and cultural rights practice within Nigeria, as a member of the United Nations. He spoke with Correspondent Clifford Thomas in Uyo, after the recent workshop for UPR Monitors in the Niger Delta region. Excerpts:

Would you say the objectives set for the ESCR (Economic, Social and Cultural Right) workshop were achieved at the end of the workshop?

Well, we just ended the workshop, and I can say that we achieved the objectives in spite that we had some serious challenges, in terms of the time we had in putting these things together. But overall, it was a huge success because looking at the dedication and commitment of participants, the quality of debate and discussions that followed and comments from participants, it really showed a crew that was well aware of where they were headed, with this workshop as their platform. To that extent, for us the organisers, we are satisfied that we were able to put together this workshop that brought to light several issues that had been put in the back-burner for sometime now. Now that these issues have cropped up again, we will step up our work as an advocacy group. It was a huge success, I would say.

Will you say militancy is part of the issues your group is advocating to eliminate?

There is structural injustice in Nigeria, and this was widely acknowledged by workshop participants. The impact is felt more in the Niger Delta as far as we are concerned.

AFTER the clamour for a bold initiative to address 50 years of neglect and despoliation in the Niger Delta, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was persuaded to set up a dedicated ministry for the Niger Delta. It was thought at the time that such a ministry would be powerful enough to remedy the crying needs of the neglected region for infrastructural development and economic empowerment of her people. There was even a suggestion that the ministry should be located within the Niger Delta region to give ready access to the people of the area. More than one year after its creation, for reasons not entirely under its control, the performance of the new ministry has been lacklustre.

On September 10, 2008, President Yar'Adua announced the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. He said that the new ministry would have a Minister in charge of development of Niger Delta area, and a Minister of State in charge of youth empowerment. The existing Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was to become a parastatal under the ministry. Yar'Adua further explained that the ministry would coordinate efforts to tackle the challenges of infrastructural development, environment protection and youth empowerment in the Niger Delta. In December 2008, he appointed Obong Ufot Ekaette, a seasoned administrator and technocrat, as the substantive Minister of Niger Delta Affairs and Mr. Godswill Orubebe as the Minister of State.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) treated the announcement with caution, saying the new ministry could be yet another avenue for corruption and political favouritism. Other commentators expressed the fear that far from facilitating change, the new bureaucracy could

well prove to be a buffer in addressing the real issues facing the Niger Delta people.

There are two issues here, namely issues bordering on the development challenge that has been imposed on what I call the geographical terrain of the Niger Delta. If you look at this critically, the initial issues out of the Niger Delta are those having to do with matters of development of the area since the colonial and post-colonial periods. It led to agitation for the Willinks Commission, whose recommendations were widespread. Since the early 1960s when oil production became an integral part of our economy, it brought its own special challenges, mostly environmental degradation. The fact that it was destroying the local economy of the people; oil with its challenges increased the state of conflict in the area. The issue of development challenge as a result of the geographical terrain of the area is there. The issue of dealing with the ecological challenges of oil exploitation in the area is there. Development has been said to be handled by various bodies put in place in the region like the OMPADEC before Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to help the oil producing communities. Then you should have another commission dealing with the geographical terrain and the development challenge; these are two different areas. But to put these two things together and make it look like you are responding to the oil bearing communities is false, because these people may want to get their oil tomorrow. Are you going to say NDDC should deal with the physical challenges alone? So part of their position has been that the government response to the Niger Delta issue has not been holistic but a haphazard arrangement. Sometimes, I sway to the feeling that they are doing something to address the Niger Delta question, and that is within that same prism that the current amnesty programme is being executed. Amnesty is not always expected as a first step; amnesty is always the last

stage of resolving a conflict. People have thought that they have issues with the government, rightly or wrongly, they took up arms against the state. Now, we have not addressed the issue that were raised that led to these things because, before militancy, there have been no violent protesters like Movement for Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, until this moment. One will be contesting the argument against the state for a long time. Now you have the militants who also took up arms against the government. You cannot jump the gun to say you are giving amnesty to people to surrender their arms.

What recommendations will you give to ensure government sticks to what you have in mind in resolving conflict and bringing development to the Niger Delta?

For now, we are at the level of minimum consent. We have the Technical Committee Report which did not even meet all the aspirations of the Niger Delta people. It provides that minimum basis for engagement with the state. So for us, the starting point is that we will go back to the Technical Committee's Report. Even the issue of amnesty, we also need a report, which is taking one step then another before you get to the amnesty. What the government has done is to first pick out amnesty from the Technical Committee Report and use. And that is what they are dealing with.

Do you then agree that the amnesty has succeeded?

For us, we do not believe that it was designed to succeed because what led to this whole crisis in the Niger Delta is that social injustice issues have been raised. Now those issues have not been addressed and you come to say you are giving amnesty. I mean there is no way it is going to last.

Niger Delta Ministry: One Year Later

well prove to be a buffer in addressing the real issues facing the Niger Delta people.

The ministry's early beginnings were inauspicious as the initial staffers were apparently not provided with office accommodation in Abuja where they insisted on staying. Eventually, some office accommodation was made available at the Abuja secretariat. Then the minister discovered that he had practically no staff to work with. He began head-hunting. A permanent secretary was assigned to his ministry in February 2009 whilst other key staff arrived later. The budget for the ministry was a puny N19.5 million - a sum, hardly enough to pay mobilisation fees for projects inherited by the new ministry.

Faced with this predicament, the minister decided to fill his time by embarking on a protracted meet-the-people tour covering all the nine states in the Niger Delta. During his visits, he met governors, religious leaders and youth organisations. In August 2009, the ministry held a job fair in Abuja. The ministry claimed afterwards that over 11,000 jobs and training offers were secured during the fair. We hope these are real jobs and not one of those bogus claims often made by Nigerian leaders in order to look good.

However for 2010 a more robust allocation of N61 billion has been approved for the ministry. It now remains to be seen to what use this money will be put. The minister seems to have in view some big projects such as the 700 kilometre Calabar-Ondo coastal road, the East West Railway

and new towns development but all these projects are still at exploratory and feasibility study stages. The youth empowerment envisaged by Yar'Adua has also still not materialised in the Niger Delta. As a matter of fact, government appeared overwhelmed when 20,000 former militants emerged from the creeks seeking rehabilitation.

The minister has been more than one year in office, but it is arguable whether any change has occurred in the Niger Delta as a result of the creation of the ministry. Whatever the reason, the high hopes created at the inception of this dedicated ministry for the Niger Delta appear not to have been realised. The region is still in a state of gross neglect, gas is still being flared, there are few schools and even fewer hospitals. The cost of living is unacceptably high. Unemployment is rife and the youths are still restive. If nothing is done, the amnesty programme brokered by President Yar'Adua could be in danger of unravelling with resumed hostilities.

We call on the minister to justify the confidence reposed in him by transforming his ministry into a change agent in the Niger Delta. He can have all the best plans for the region but if nothing is happening on the ground, his plans become mere pipe dreams. With improved funding in 2010, the people of the Niger Delta and indeed all Nigerians expect him to deliver without any more excuses.

Culled from The Guardian

The President of Bori State Movement, Senator Dr. (Gbene) Cyrus Nunieh said if the federal government creates Bori State out of Rivers State, it would soothe the wounds inflicted on Ogoni by the brutal, judicial and callous hanging of nine Ogoni sons which included the playwright and intellectual Ken Saro-Wiwa on November 10, 1995 by the federal government.

He said before now, there was the Ogoni State Creation Committee, formed to seek and demand for a state for the Ogoni people, saying that the committee successfully mobilized Ogoni people under tense situation though, and submitted its request for Ogoni or Rivers East State to

Why Ogonis need Bori State ~ Nunieh

the military government of late General Sani Abacha.

Senator Nunieh opined that the people of Ogoni, Andoni, Opobo, Nkoro, Oyigbo and Eleme ethnic nationalities have come together and agreed to form a formidable front and to request from the federal government of Nigeria a state that would be called Bori State with capital at Bori town.

The President said their coming together was informed by their contiguity and long history of harmonious relationship and co-existence for decades and the mutual benefits derivable from trade and inter-martial relationship that had been

practiced over years.

He said these communities have common features and abundant resources that would put the state ahead most of the already created states in the country.

"Bori State, if created, would be much self-sustaining as the area is economically viable and blessed with abundant human and material resources needed to advance a state. There are many functional oil wells and sufficient untapped oil and gas reserve. The rich alluvial plain with which this area is endowed will not only swell government coffers, it will create more jobs, thereby eliminating the perennial

crises in the Niger Delta".

Senator Nunieh maintained that the common belief and conviction of the communities that make up Bori State was that the different ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria should co-exist and practice true federalism and that the people that produce the bulk of the wealth of the nation should adequately benefit from it.

He said the body had used the occasion of the Public Hearing of the South-South Zonal Forum of the Senate Committee on the review of the 1999 constitution in Port Harcourt on December 15th 2009 to

submit their memorandum on the request for the creation of Bori State for the people of the Rivers South East Senatorial district which he said would alleviate the sufferings of these minorities. He said the call on the federal government to give Ogoni people a state was long over due, saying that if the federal government thought that giving a state to only Ogoni people was being tribal, it would deem it fit this time that the other tribes are also involved.

The elder statesman called on the President Yar'Adua, the Senate President, David Mark, Dimeji Bankole and the chairmen of the Senate

By Chimex Nduhuisi

Committee on State Creation and Constitution Review and all members of the National Assembly to consider the Ogoni people and all those that make up the Rivers South East Senatorial District requesting for Bori State.

He said their demand was just and would result to unity of the nation, peace in the Niger Delta and development at the grassroots.

Bori State Movement is a body accredited to demand for a state for the people of Ogoni, Andoni, Eleme, Opobo, Nkoro and Oyigbo ethnic nationalities of the Rivers South East Senatorial District of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Most Niger Delta Leaders are Corrupt, Says Activist

In the wake of the military clampdown on pro-democracy activists in 1995, Comrade Sunny Ofehe fled the country for Netherlands where he sought political asylum. His human rights activism has spanned a period of 15 years where he has been in the fore-front on the campaigns for better environmental, economical and social rights for the marginalised people of the oil rich Niger Delta region. In 2005, he founded the now famous Hope for Niger Delta Campaign (HNDC) organisation with headquarters in Netherlands. In this online interview with JOE OGBODU, the University of Benin Industrial Chemistry graduate maintains that most of the public officials in the region are corrupt.

Resource Control has become a recurring decimal in the Niger Delta struggle or agitation. How could resource control be stripped off selfish political consideration?

Resource control plays a very significant role in the Niger Delta struggle. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) has called for full control of the resources in the region. The call for resource control has led to the government raising the derivation in the Niger Delta area to its current 13 per cent. How this issue is addressed and how the Niger Delta people respond to it will determine the future of the area in relations to oil and gas.

I support more derivation for the Niger Delta only on the condition that we have leaders who can show to us how we have managed the gains of the 13 per cent derivation currently enjoyed by the Niger Delta states. So far, the use of this derivation has not reflected positively in the lives of the ordinary people. We need to see improvement and that will encourage all of us to clamour for more benefits from our resources.

The demand for resource control is not a selfish political consideration. When your region produces the resources that practically survive the whole country, that region must get the benefit that equate to their resources. My argument against the timing is that most Niger Delta leaders are corrupt. Many have faced corrupt charges and most are flaunting their wealth both nationally and internationally while their people are impoverished.

President Yar' Adua recently granted amnesty to the militants in the Niger Delta area with a view to causing a leeway to the development of the region. What is the implication of the delay in rehabilitating and integrating the ex-militants?

I personally welcomed the amnesty package of the Federal Government. It's obvious that the amnesty has achieved some fragile success with most of the militants now out of the creeks and back to normal life. This has led to reduction in the oil industry sabotage and kidnappings as was prevalent in the thick of the insurgency.

It is rather sad to observe that the progress of the amnesty package has been hinged on the presence of the President. The president has set up the committee and released funds for its

implementation. So, why are we not seeing progress? There are people within the committee who prefer to work only when the president can be around and see them because they have political ambition.

The danger of delaying the rehabilitation and integration part could lead to colossal consequences, as many of these boys might just go back to the creeks and continue the arm struggle. MEND recently carried out an attack on oil facility claiming the lull approach of the government to the process as their motivation.

The amnesty and the tackling of the core issues must be carried out without further delay. They are intertwined at that prevailing moment because you need a peaceful atmosphere to carry out developmental projects. Just as the amnesty was retrieving arms and bringing the militants out of the creeks, development should also be taking place. This will encourage skeptics to believe in the process.

Money politics appears to have come to stay. Sometimes accusing fingers are pointed at Civil Societies Organisations like your own, that their criticism of the negative features in our polity hardly goes beyond the cosmetics?

Nigeria politics have never been devoid of money. This can be attributed to the poverty in the land. It is easy to have people in government who have borrowed so much to win elections and so when they get there they will be mandated to pay back. The issue of godfatherism has also slowed down the pace of good governance. We have often heard from politicians how they have been muscled by their godfathers to split state resources at the expense of capital and recurrent expenditure. The extended family syndrome is another factor affecting good governance. The political leaders are often pulled by friends and family seeking favours that they have to go beyond their earnings to meet these demands.

The civil societies in Nigeria may have been very articulate and vocal in sensitizing Nigeria to this political ills but the government has always been undaunted in their response. In a democratic process where the civil society did not influence the outcome of elections due to the ills of malpractices and rigging, it become obvious that they will lose the power of allegiance from those elected to public office.

They often lack funds to make them more effective and autonomous in their activities. This most times derides their clout to exercise their duties as watchdogs of their public servants. When you are faced with this complexity in dispatching your duties, it's obvious that your position will not have meaningful consequence on the polity of the nation.

What level of restoration has your organisation, Hope for Niger Delta Campaign (HNDC) brought to the troubled Niger Delta region?

Hope for Niger Delta Campaign is based in the Netherlands and was founded in 2005. The aim of the foundation was to help appeal to the international community



and nongovernmental organisations to help the region with humanitarian aids. The organisation also help to sensitize the international community on the true situation in the Niger Delta as we believe that many have been misinformed in Diaspora.

The resurgence in the region from 2006 made our approach to focus more on helping to restore peace in the region. There cannot be development without peace. We have done a lot by holding conferences in the Netherlands with experts' opinion on ways of resolving the impasse. In 2008, I led a group of Americans and Europeans to visit one of the MEND camps to talk about a halt in the resurgence with one of the commanders.

We have also been invited by the Nigeria Vice President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan last year to talk about areas of collaboration in helping to attract humanitarian aids to the region. We also in that same year invited the House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Committee on the Niger Delta Crisis and the South-South Parliamentary Caucus to interface with the Dutch Parliament, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union Council in Brussels. The committees visited nongovernmental organizations like Amnesty International AI to discuss the human rights concerns in the region and also Friends of the Earth discussions centered on the environment and the gas flare in the Niger Delta.

We have been able to raise the issues of the Niger Delta on the global map with our efforts. We are bent on continuing with the same approach until sustainable peace is attained in the Niger Delta. HNDC is preparing to host an international summit on the Niger Delta in the Hague, Netherlands on the 25th and 26th February 2010. We have invited people from the government and civil society to combine with the international community to work out ways in which we can achieve some of our goals and also guarantee international participation in the ongoing process of enduring peace and development.

As part of efforts to transform the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, the federal government has organised a bilateral capacity building workshop between Nigeria and the United Kingdom. Participants in the workshop titled, "Nigeria/UK Government Energy Bilateral Capacity Building Support for the Oil and Gas sector Reforms," which started in Abuja on Monday, were asked to acquire the necessary skills to drive and deliver the objectives of the oil and gas sector reform.

In his opening address at workshop, the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Rilwanu Lukman, said the programme was very timely considering the ongoing reform in Nigeria's petroleum industry.

Industry challenges

Mr. Lukman disclosed that the idea for the programme was muted in 2008, with the UK Secretary for Energy, during which issues and challenges related to the industry were discussed.

Nigeria seeks UK support for oil reforms

By Chima Onwe

"It was there that the decision to foster a strong bilateral relationship between our two countries to address these challenges was reached," he said.

"Further meetings by focus groups identified major areas for collaboration including the ongoing transformation process in the Nigerian oil industry and the climate change Initiative."

Mr. Lukman said that the successful transformation of the British oil and gas industry, from a largely government-owned industry to a privately controlled industry, offers significant learning and benchmarking lessons for Nigeria's transformation process.

He also noted that Britain's support "Will go a long way to accelerate and sustain the success of the transformation process."

Bilateral trade

Statistics posted on the website of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, showed that the volume of bilateral trade

between Nigeria and the United Kingdom (UK) stood at £2.7 billion in the last quarter of 2009.

UK export to Nigeria stood at £1.3 billion last year. The amount is almost totally covered by oil exports of over £200 million, much of which returns as refined petroleum products, amounting to £129 million.

According to the chamber, "Nigeria has strong historical, language and constitutional ties with the UK. Nigeria is the UK's 32nd largest overseas market and 2nd largest African market for goods."

Supporting transformation

The British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Bob Dewar, who was represented by Peter West, said UK is committed to the provision of technical expertise for Nigeria's Oil and Gas Sector, in view of the importance it attaches its bilateral relation with Nigeria.

He commended the

Federal Government's efforts in promoting transparency and accountability in the transformation process.

Mohammed Sanusi

FG in Negotiation With Oil Firms on Licences

The Nigerian government is in talks with the United States oil firm Chevron and Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell over the renewal of their shallow water oil licences, an official statement said on Tuesday.

"Chevron and Shell are still in negotiations with the Federal Government...over the renewal of their expired licences," a statement by the ministry of petroleum resources quoted junior oil minister Odein Ajumogobia as saying.

The statement dispelled media reports that the renewal of the licences

Barkindo, the Group Managing Director of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, said that Nigeria had always had a constructive

bilateral relationship with the British Commission. The week-long training programme will focus on regulation and related processes.

worth two billion dollars with the United States oil firm, Mobil Producing Nigeria (MPN).

NNPC said the new deal -- which represents a modification of an existing agreement -- provides for repayment on a "cash basis," not with oil as was the case in the past.

MPN is a subsidiary of American Exxon Mobil Corporation, and the second-largest oil producer in Nigeria. A similar deal worth one billion dollars was sealed same month between the NNPC and French group Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL).

MPN is a subsidiary of American Exxon Mobil Corporation, and the second-largest oil producer in Nigeria.

A similar deal worth one billion dollars was sealed same month between the NNPC and French group Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL).

signed an oil-financing deal

After a seemingly long time, I resolved to participate and show obeisance to this year's Ogoni day. The lack luster attitude has been largely due to the behaviour of some members of MOSOP leadership, some elected and appointed members of the elite class of Ogoni and the complacency of most youth. I am glad I did. It's been long I witnessed such mammoth assemblage of a people. The privileges are many; it affords opportunity for loved ones to reunite; contemporaries at school that have lost contact for a long time see again; business deals are either initiated or concluded; friendship are contracted, strengthened or severed; sense of competition are created between the various cultural troupe and communities they represent and finally potential brides or grooms have a platform as you can see young boys and girls frolicking round about the whole place.

As I drove into Bori from my community, the colourful cultural troupes and the green leafs showing solidarity in front of vehicles gave me a feel of festivity and celebration. Earlier on I had been skeptic about the success of the day, haven been informed of the possible disruption of the day's activity by some misguided persons bent on causing division in Ogoni. Let me advice that we need to be guided by rationality or have a better part of our judgment beclouded by sentiments. We can weep sentiments on tenure durations, dominance by person(s) from a particular part of Ogoni, retained leadership and all other sellable prejudices but may also sacrifice benefits tied to the asset of goodwill acquired over the years and possibly tied around a personality. Like it or not, MOSOP leadership is no child's play. We are talking about international representation; we are talking about internationally recognized and intimidating credentials; we are talking about competing personalities at the corridors of power and importantly a personality that appeal to all sentiments.

Thank God the day was a huge success. The dignitaries were not only present but also exercised good participatory patience. This show of solidarity buttresses the fact that

The man Governor is not super human; he is an ordinary man like you and I with normal mental capacity and average physical capability and ability to work. He is only mystified by the paraphernalia of the office he occupies. The structure of democratic governance was designed to ameliorate the task and burden of governance and gave room for the three arms of government to collectively compliment the discharge of duties by the Governor. This is achieved through the timely delivery of justice by the judiciary, the enactment of humane laws by the legislature and the conscionable execution of law by the executive arm and other auxiliary agencies of government. This structure, well thought out, was intended to enhance concurrent governance; it was intended to make government omnipresent and very accessible.

These were suppose to be further complemented through the supervisions by the state commissioners and heads of others ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), Under their supervision, the MDAs are expected to be proactive in response to the needs and aspirations of the people. Every sector of the society has MDAs responsible for it and deserves unhindered attention devoid of crippling bureaucracy and unnecessary bottlenecks. Directly under the state supervision are the local government areas headed by chairmen that by replication should have similar structures as the state level and also discharge duties that will make government relevant to the rural people. We are however left to conclude by experience if these objectives are achieved.

The natural flow of responsibility, span of control and chain of authority required for smooth governance devoid of prejudice and other administrative vices seem to have eroded our polity. There is no denying the fact that sometime within the last political dispensation governance was discharged with utmost recklessness, normal administrative procedures were abused and chain of authority was brought to ridicule. Career civil servants whose duties are to ensure the sustainability of institutional structures were incessantly bypassed and due process, only a topic for media hype. It was rumoured of the sudden political relevance and king making by some persons who do not have a qualifying pedigree but could wield such powers just by being an in-law, friend, associate or even mistress of those in power so much that even the selected office holders were mere rubber stamps.

This dispensation under the able leadership of Rt Hon Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi though divinely installed is a hybrid of the good, the bad and the ugly in governance. The fact that some key players in the last dispensation are still on board is cancerous and undermines the crusade for administrative sanity been embarked upon by this administration. They have refused to shed their skin and deliberately or inadvertently display characters that smack

GenerationNext Agenda

With
Elvis Lebura Ikoma
ikomalebura@yahoo.com
+234 8033524485



Let the Embrace Be Genuine

Nonviolence approach to issues is preferable. We will recall that in the very recent past some measures largely violent were adopted by other agitators over the persistent Niger Delta quagmire. The experience by both the "militants" and harmless indigenes were not pleasant but thank God the amnesty offer came handy and has been able to douse tension that was building to a catastrophic proportion. This particular Ogoni day is epochal since it is the first formal post amnesty gathering of not just a major tribe in the Niger Delta but the fore runners of the crusade for a better deal for the Niger Delta. And as usual no stone was thrown. Even the security swagger was minimal as the audience surge on too close to the rostrum where His Excellency, Governor of Rivers State Rt Hon Amaechi made speech. It is a proof that His Excellency was at home among a non violent people.

Prior to his speech many made solidarity speeches including our own sons, whom I hope not for any ulterior motives, made prominent appearance this year. We hope that more will realize that attaining political position does not make you an enemy of your own people. We may disagree in principle over issues of social political and economic concerns but should strive to agree on matters of national

unity and collective development. We have no other ethnicity except this, therefore it only become what we make it to be. You can understand my excitement over the presence of our sons in government. Not only where they present, they also share the same canopy; made complementary speeches; painted picture of a synergy in effort towards the greater good of Ogoni and finally embraced each other as a sign of brotherhood. Beyond this however, I like to join His Excellency to pray that the embrace be genuine. With a fair knowledge of the political intrigues that characterize our politics, His Excellency suspect's hypocrisy in that show of brotherhood. Politics is undeniably a game of interest more so with the multi party structures. There certainly is bound to be clashes of interest. However, political maturity counts when politics is attended with ethics of a conventional sports tournament where the loser felicitates with the winner.

Let the embrace be genuine, Governor remarked as he mounted the rostrum. To some it may sound sarcastic or hypocritical but I perceive a sincere wish that Ogoni leadership should be united. He made a comparison with his ethnicity which has developed reasonably because of the bond of unity they have lately. This clarion call is for the greater good of Ogoni. In the same vein, I challenge the youths of Ogoni to be united. I wish all could see how political leaders under whom some of them are dagger drawn enemies embrace each other even if it is hypocritical. There are youths who in their foolishness displayed fanatic loyalty to a fatal dimension. Some even lost their lives in a bid to detonate dynamite. Today these godfathers are embracing. We have a lesson to learn there. We need not endanger our lives or put our future on the line in other to display unalloyed loyalty. If things are done right and leadership is sincere and transparent all that is required is your eligibility to vote; registration to vote; healthy campaign for candidate of your choice irrespective of the party; casting your vote on Election Day and adopting civilized strategy to defend your vote. If this is encouraged politics will be without rancor; sportsmanship will be displayed and embraces like we saw on Ogoni day will be genuine.

Until Governor Hears Of It

of the image of the immediate past administration. Methinks that until they are like biblical Jonah, cast out of the boat, efficiency may not be achieved completely. Currently Governor tends to be doing the work of most of the commissioners. They tend to discharge their constitutional duties only when Governor reminds them which in his style, does in the public.

Recently I was listening to a call in radio programme and was stunned by the number of request with a direct appeal that Governor should hear them almost on every issue. They believe that should he hear them his response will be spontaneous based on what they have seen and heard about the people governor. This is to tell how governance has been made to look narrow, personal and parochial. Must Governor hear or see all petitions for people's grievances to be redressed? Must Governor supervise Local Government Chairmen for them to perform? Must Governor pass through all impassable roads that have become the feature of most nooks and crannies of Port Harcourt Metropolis for them to be constructed? Must Governor see the length and breadth of all roads under construction to instruct for quality work? Must Governor be omnipresent to forestall the excesses of the numerous task forces who are doing more of disservice rather than service? Must Governor be every where to see the level of harassment the public suffer from the numerous siren blaring bullion van and their trigger happy escort mobile police men?

The list is inexhaustible, the number of issues that genuinely require Governors attention for daily solutions. Unfortunately, Governor has a very busy schedule and a limited time that may not permit him to do this every day even if he wished. This is the reason why he appointed commissioners, endorsed loyal people to head various LGAs and created enabling environment for the smooth implementation of budgets. This half into their tenure, only few of the commissioners have performed above average, the performance of some has been abysmal. The worst are the Local Government Chairmen who do little or nothing because their legislative houses are stocked full of stooges who also benefited by the selection process. With the conscience of this counselors bribed by that benevolence, they only grudge helplessly under the guilt of the misgovernance done to the rural people.

As much as I hate to be sycophantic, I strongly commend His Excellency, Rt Hon Amaechi for his approach to governance. He has indeed distinguished his administration and thus deserves accolades. Like every human, he may not have been perfect or performed satisfactorily but again that notion can be very subjective. Because criteria for

assessment of political performance vary, people's opinions are prejudiced by several sentiments. It becomes only rational to do appraisal with issues that are devoid of sentiments. Of the key civil sectors, he has been able to make positive impact within this few years into his tenure, of course with the help of some of his commissioners. However it is sad to note that among these disciples there are some that could not catch his vision. These ones have brought lopsided in the equitable spread of dividend.

It is very common to pass the bulk of blame for administrative failures to the executive governor but this is one administration that I wish blames will be apportioned rationally and allocated to deserving public office holders. In spite of his stance on undue interference in the implementation of the budgets of respective ministries, most ministries

have not been able to make a mark. They rather hide under the cloak of due process to defend their administrative ineptitude. Most local government leadership is the worst

Culprit. I just hope His Excellency do not give them a blanket coverage for an easy continuity in office. Because a gesture like that will definitely bring to ridicule all rational principles of life he is known for. I hear some have started warming up for second tenure, third tenure and even fourth tenure of self aggrandizement. If His Excellency will not double speak, he will stand by his earlier remark that **their works should speak for them**. In other words, they should be able to earn the electorates' mandate especially in the wake of this very recent campaign by MOSOP that "**our votes must count**".

As utopian as it may seem I am still optimistic of an era when things will work normally with very minimal supervision. Where power generation and distribution will be prompt as determined by state policy; where road construction will be done without the rigorous process of petitions and lobby; where health care delivery will not be an aftermath of an epidemic; where educational system will be giving its pride of place with prompt maintenance and sustainable policies; where the fears of the minorities will be allayed and there environment and resources treated with respect; where employers of labours will most impartially sought for competent and qualified graduates at convocations like it use to be; where the economy will be so driven that there can be what to keep every body positively busy and a host of other virtues that make any society enviable. But until then let us continue to demand accountability from our leadership. And the only way to justify our demand for accountability is to make our vote count.

Address by MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee at 2010 Ogoni Day Celebration in Bori

When on this hallowed ground we and our forebears gathered on the 4th of January 1993, at the very first Ogoni Day, to give a dramatic expression to our struggle against injustice represented by political marginalization, economic strangulation and environmental terrorism, few realized that the tinny ripples of hope we were sending would assume the huge currents of transformation across the Niger delta and beyond.

The forces of truth in the message of our struggle and the unshakable commitment to peaceful methods have so transformed both the struggle and our region that we have come to represent the conscience of the nation. That those gathered here today are not only Ogonis, but also compatriots and friends from other lands are a proud testament to the fact that ours have become more of a metaphor for non violent agitation for justice, equity, democracy and corporate responsibility. This was rightly foreseen by the late sage, Professor Claude Ake, when he succinctly stated: *"MOSOP and Ogoniland must survive and flourish for the sake of all of us. For better or for worse, MOSOP and Ogoniland are the conscience of this country. They have risen above our slave culture of silence; they have found the courage to be free and they have evolved a political consciousness that denies power to rogues, hypocrites, fools and bullies. For better or for worse, Ogoniland carries our hopes. Battered and bleeding, it struggles on to realize our promise and to restore our dignity. If it falters, we die."*

Few struggles in our part of the world have mustered such intellectual depth, survived overwhelming challenges and odds including an increasingly violent environment yet continued to maintain its strategic purity as a beacon of hope for the hopeless like the Ogoni struggle. That we have received solidarity messages for today's event from 55 nations and peoples represented by the UNPO attests to the profound unparalleled international visibility and reaches which we continue to enjoy. We insist that in the absence of some urgent and significant positive change in Ogoni it will be difficult to continue to counter the arguments of those who over the last few years particularly have seen the case of injustice against Ogoni as an example of why non-violent advocacy should be abandoned in favour of armed resistance.

No time is more apt to send such positive message than now when our region is passing through a critical epoch. After the experiences of a frightening level of violence in the recent past and the present cessation of hostilities occasioned by the amnesty initiative, there is every cause to be concerned about the frustrations about lack of any discernable post-amnesty programme that would take care not only of the former combatants but also other equally angry but unemployed youths so as not to recede into the ugly past. Our country must get itself from the slumbering illusion of equating peace in the Niger delta with unhindered flow of oil and gas. As we believe that without addressing the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger delta agitations, the seeming quiet could be but a short-lived illusion, we therefore call on all authorities concerned to take full advantage of the amnesty window to address the fundamentals of the Ogoni and Niger delta struggle to prevent a relapse into the sad past.

On our part as peoples of the Niger delta, realizing that our government only responds to pressure, we should come together to quickly replace the now happily discarded pressure represented by armed militancy with another form of concerted peaceful advocacy behind the Report of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, which I had the privilege of chairing, as the needed substitute pressure to replace the pressure represented by violence.

For us as Ogoni people, as we begin a new decade in our struggle we must retool to achieve the goals encapsulated in our Bill of Rights. Whilst we may not have achieved all the demands in that Bill of Rights,

looking back, I think we have every reason to congratulate ourselves that many years after we blazed the trail in setting out the demands in the Bill of Rights as the minimum condition for resolution of the Ogoni and by extension the Niger delta problems, there is now a grudging, even if half-hearted acceptance of them. On



our demand for the protection of the Ogoni environment from further degradation, the UNEP environmental audit, whatever its imperfections, is now being launched. For our quest for the use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, the federal government has now approved 10% equity for oil producing communities. We rejected Shell and its bad corporate practices and we were gratified when the federal government announced the decision to replace shell as an operator in Ogoni. However, our people are getting sick and tired when the same government that has failed to give expression to its decision two years after its announcement, repeatedly uses lack of commencement of oil exploitation, to deny us things. It is as well that we have an impressive of senior government officials here with whom we plead to assist in conveying to the federal government our people's desire to cooperate with a credible replacement for shell.

To achieve another important plank of the Bill of Rights which is the quest to be granted "political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a distinct unit by whatever name called, provided that this autonomy guarantees, inter alia, political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people", we have commenced a formal request for the creation of a Bori state. I must here place on record the encouraging support we have so far received from our sons and daughters in government as well as the cooperation of our neighbours which has enabled us cross the initial constitutional huddles. Let me assure on behalf of our people that we shall work towards good neighborliness as well as accommodation on the basis of mutual self respect with our neighbours even in an eventual Ogoni state. It also is my fervent hope and belief that with the emerging improved relations between MOSOP activists and those in government we can achieve much for our people, for as I have repeatedly stated, it should not matter by whom but the fact that successes are scored for our people.

As our demands for our state has crossed the initial constitutional huddles, we have entered into alliances with others for the next critical stages which would begin before the end of the month. We shall in the days ahead be calling on all our people in government and our friends especially those in the National Assembly to further demonstrate their commitment to the cause by leading and supporting the next stages of this battle. I believe that with our collective efforts we shall overcome.

As I believe that the chances towards the actualization of this our historical demand for autonomy is significantly bright, it is therefore necessary that we start leading the struggle of democratically determining who leads, governs, and represents us as the core of the next stage of our struggle. In the days ahead we shall continue with much more vigour the series of town hall meetings begun last year where elected representatives meet and exchange views with the electorate. We would have to appeal to our people to embrace the initiative as we make even hesitant steps in improving how those in political office take into account the voices of our people. Bearing this in mind and our realization that most gains of our struggle stand diminished in the absence of good governance, we have decided to focus on good governance in the coming year. There is little doubt that had all the resources that have trickled down over the years been judiciously used for the betterment of our people, a meaningful lot would have been achieved. This also is one reason that informed our taking the rare steps of extending the current Ogoni Merit Awards to some government officials that have shown encouraging sparks in various aspects of governance, underscoring the point that we stand not just to condemn but to commend when certain things are done rightly.

As a people who stood at the forefront for the struggle against military rule, we must also lead in the struggle to replace the mockery of democracy with something meaningful which will bring benefits to the lives of ordinary people. To this end, we call on all Ogonis who have not yet done so, to go out and register as voters as soon as the process commences. Following up on the repeated calls by our Governor, HE The Rt Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, that only credible candidates be supported in the ensuing elections, MOSOP will in the days ahead, be mobilizing our grassroots towards ensuring that their wishes expressed through their votes would count. In consonance with the need to demonstrate that we are prepared to struggle resolutely and relentlessly for proper democratic representation in our area, we are launching "My Votes Must Count" campaign for the mobilization of our people towards defending our votes. Any politician or political party hoping to win our votes by other means or impose candidates on our people should better look elsewhere. Recent experiences have shown that government by ordination or imposition is just as dangerous as government by organized mob.

Whilst the parties might have their criteria for determining who they present for elections, we as a people must use the general elections to send a message to the parties that they stand a risk of losing our support if they do not present credible candidates.

Let me at this time appeal to our youths to eschew any temptations towards being used as political rigging machines or being engaged in violence. You need to avoid being deceived by those who may tempt you to pollute the sacred streams of a struggle that has been maintained with huge sacrifices. We have given up a lot not just to stay up but to move up. The spirit of Ogoni that enabled us say a resounding No to Shell with success also says No to all forms of violence.

The months ahead will be more challenging and our fate and those of our children and the struggle will be determined by how we approach the

challenging situations. I have an abiding faith in the power of positive change. And I do believe that change will certainly come our way in this country. But for this to happen, few committed people in Ogoni and elsewhere in this country must step in the gap and do things differently and I know we will win. We have not come this far without a struggle and I assure you, we cannot go further without a struggle. I know we are up to the task and we shall create a model for others to follow. I wish you a happy New Year and Great Ogoni Day

ENDS/.....[PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

On Monday, January 4, 2010, the Ogoni People, under the auspices of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, Celebrated the 18th Ogoni Day, which also marked 20 years of their struggle for justice. Pictures below are scenes of major events and personalities at the occasion in Bori.



Cross Section of the Crowd at the 2010 Ogoni Day in Bori on January 4



One of the cultural displays at the occasion



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee addressing the people in Bori



From left: Chief Victor Giadom, Gokana Council Boss, Chief Barry Mpigi, Tai Council Boss, HRH Chief Baridam



Rivers State Governor, Rt Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, receiving the Ogoni National Merit Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Ogoni



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee, Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Chief Uffot Ekaete at the event



Ogoni Leaders: Lenu Kpagi, Prof. Don Baridam welcoming the Chairman of 2010 Ogoni Day celebration, Chief Andrew Uchendu, to the occasion in Bori



Prof. B.B. Fakae presenting Ogoni National Merit Award for dedicated service to the Ogoni Struggle to Chief Fred Apere



One of the ONMA Recipients for dedicated service, Mrs. Cecilia Okorie appreciating the Award



Presentation of Ogoni National Merit Award for dedicated service to the Ogoni Struggle to Chief Emmanuel Nkala