

Niger Delta Report:
Ethnic Nationalities to
Protest Non-
Implementation in Abuja



OGONI STAR

VOICE OF NIGER DELTA PEOPLE

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INEC Recruitment: Police Assault Applicants

... As Graduates Keep Vigil at PH Office

Plans by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to fill existing vacancies in readiness for the forthcoming national elections in 2011 seem to have hit a stumbling block.

This follows as crisis, chaos and confusion that trailed the exercise after trouble broke out between men of the Nigerian Police Force drafted to the INEC office and applicants in Port

MOSOP said the project not only has serious implications for Ogoni environmental security but also has vast implications on the people's food security

Harcourt.

The applicants, made up of mainly graduates, besieged the Port Harcourt office of the Commission, accusing its officers of being high handed and bias in the recruitment process.

Our reporter gathered from some of the applicants who spoke on conditions of anonymity that although INEC had given wide publicity to its advertorial calling for application from

members of the public, the Commission had deliberately refuse to publish the full list of those shortlisted for the job that were to be interviewed.

The Commission rather devised a means of conducting secret interviews before wind of the happenings spread to applicants which was the reason why the applicant's protested peacefully before INEC officials called in the police to disperse them with

horsewhip and teargas.

Others told Ogoni Star that the INEC officials only allow those they know access into the premises for the interview.

They furthered that for three days they have not taking their bath, and they have been keeping watch at the INEC office, because after they were deceived that there was no interview going on in the commissions premises, they later

discovered that the Commission went ahead to conduct interview sessions by 8pm penultimate Monday.

The protesting applicants said they were calling on the National Assembly and the Federal Government to investigate the on-going recruitment exercise by INEC.

However, when contacted on the issues, INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioner for Rivers State, Barr. Austine Okojie, who rather chose to address the over 5,000 protesting

applicants outside the Commission's premises, said opportunity was opened for everyone that applied for the job to be interviewed, but he however pleaded that his staff be allowed to go home as it was already late.

He furthered that applicant's should go home and take a good night rest as it was unwise for them to be passing the night outside the Commission's premises.

Ogoni Star reliably gathered that the electoral body is seriously occupied with the task of engaging more hands in a bid to boost its staff strength in readiness for the 2011 elections.

MOSOP Petitions UN over Planned Military Barracks in Ogoni

and food sovereignty, cultural autonomy, economic security, job security and would definitely impact their struggles to reduce emissions.

The Ogoni group's petition was presented to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

9th Session at the United Nations Headquarters, New York by its International Advocacy Officer, Legbors Saro Pyagbara.

The Rivers State Government had announced last year that it intended to relocate the 2nd Amphibious Brigade headquarters to Ogoni area

By Kelvin Ebiri

of the state.

MOSOP said it is saddening that whilst humanity is grappling with ways of dealing with the scourge of climate change by seeking for better means of protecting forests and embarking on forestation programmes, some countries like Nigeria are working in a different direction.

"Since last year, the Rivers State Government in Nigeria had proposed the building of a huge military barrack facility in the Ogoni territory. Large hectares of land and forests are to be seized from local people for this project, yet nothing concerning the project had been discussed extensively with the Ogoni people, our free, prior and informed consent have not been sought and no impact assessment had been done" said Pyagbara

He said despite Ogoni's protests and petitions, they have been reliably informed that the government had concluded plans to still go ahead with this project which would lead to the destruction of forests and confiscation of lands for the purpose of building the

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Shell Soldiers Murder Another Ogoni Youth

become a persistent development in Ogoni, noting that it would ensure that justice prevails in the matter.

MOSOP also faulted and described the statement credited to the JTF Spokesman, Col. Timothy Antigah as a blatant lie. It wondered if someone running away from danger spot can ever be shot from the front rather than the back, arguing that JTF has just succeeded in telling the world again that it was paid to execute some shady deals in Ogoni Land base on its

military facility, in flagrant violation of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples particularly articles 3, 26, 30 and 32 of the Declaration.

Pyagbara pointed out that the Niger Delta inhabited by a large belt of indigenous communities is also home to the country's stretch of mangrove forest. According to him, Nigeria has the third largest mangrove forest in the world, and the largest in Africa, covering an area of approximately 105,000 hectares.

The Niger Delta, which is the home to the largest proportion of the mangrove forest in the country, according to him, is currently reported to be the most exploited in the world based on Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO, of the United Nation's report in 1997.

"Recent satellite-based study on the Niger Delta has found that between the periods 1986 to 2003, over 21,000 hectares of the mangrove forest in the region has disappeared. The study was conducted by Nigeria's National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) in conjunction with the University of Missouri in the United States," said

Pyagbara.

He explained that mangrove forest depletion and disappearance, which is as a result of several human-driven activities, especially, the massive oil pollution in the Niger Delta, is not only a threat to the people's collective survival but also a threat to the climate.

MOSOP said there is at present no known law and strategies of biodiversity conservation covering mangrove forest protection in Nigeria. Yet, the forest remains one of the greatest assets of indigenous peoples and their lives and wellbeing are tied to the wellbeing of their land and forests.

"There is no doubt that in the coming years, our forests are going to be under increasing focus and discussions as we grapple with the effects of climate change and the realisation that our forests hold some of the keys for mitigating the impacts of this catastrophe", Pyagbara declared.

MOSOP urged the United Nations to prevail on the Nigerian government to develop a coherent policy on mangrove forest protection and rejuvenation in line with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

They particularly appealed to MOSOP not to relent its effort in seeing that justice prevail in the matter.

It would be recalled that since 1993 when the Ogonis embarked on a non-violent protest against Shell's activities in their area, beginning with the shooting and killing of Mr. Friday Agbarato at Deeyor community in Gokana, Shell guards have killed thousands of Ogoni youths including Mr. Barinaadaa Keeloo of K. Dere, and the most recent the killing of Mr. Bariara Vurasi Lemon.

NDE to Partner Local Councils on Youth Empowerment

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has expressed its willingness to enter into partnership with individuals and local government councils willing to empower the youths in their constituencies and local government areas.

NDE Director of Training Services, Port Harcourt Office, Engr. John Nwachukwu, stated this during the orientation ceremony for training in The

National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) in Port Harcourt.

He said while over 3,000 youths are to be trained at present under the scheme, the NDE will appreciate the creation of more chances for youths yet to be trained through the provision of funds and sponsorship of training programmes by Local Government Councils, Senators or even other government agencies as the Federal Government alone

cannot cater for the training of all the youths in the country.

Engr. Nwachukwu said the programme is targeted at solving the unemployment problem in the country.

He encouraged the youths to be dedicated to learning their chosen trade rather than just been interested in the stipends that will be paid to them during the training as the opportunity must be well utilized.

Gokana People Lament Torture by Soldiers

The People of Kpor, K-Dere and B. Dere Communities of Gokana Local Government Area have expressed their worry over the continues torture of their natives and other road users by men of the Military Joint Task Force (JTF) stationed on the Kpor/Dere/Mogho road.

Concerned natives who narrated their experiences to Ogoni Star Correspondent said situations where passengers and commercial motor cycle operators were asked to onboard and walk on foot for about 400 meters at the JTF mounted road block in front of the Gokana Council Secretariat at Kpor was worrisome and needs to be checked before it gets out of hand.

A Commercial Motor Cycle Operator (Okada

man) who gave his name as Friday Barida, said while he is not disputing the fact that the presence of the JTF was for security in the area, the idea of people on boarding their bikes before crossing the check point is another form of torture used by the military to punish the Gokana people as it was not obtainable anywhere in Rivers State, not even in Jos, Plateau where hundreds of people were recently slaughtered in a religious crisis.

Others who spoke under conditions of anonymity accused the Gokana Local Government authorities of been the brain behind the unfair treatment meted out to the road users particularly, the people of Kpor and Dere Communities.

They furthered that

there is no crisis in Kpor, or Dere Communities and wondered by even elderly men and women, including nursing mothers and pregnant women will be treated so unfairly by the soldiers.

"Is this what the military want to do in Ogoni if they are brought here?" the angry Okada riders asked inquisitively.

They said they are calling on the Federal and Rivers State governments to order the dismantling of the roadblock as there is no state of emergency in Gokana.

When Ogoni Star reporter visited the scene Sunday evening road users were seen coming down their bike before passing the check point.

The Local Government Chairman could not be reached before filing in this report.

Shell Soldiers Murder Another Ogoni Youth

- MOSOP Faults JTF Claim

Soldiers hired by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to protect its staff working at well 4, Dere community have murdered another Ogoni youth, Mr. Bariara Vurasi Lemon.

Ogoni Star reliably gathered from an eyewitness account that Mr. Bariara Vurasi Lemon, aged 20, an indigene of B.Dere Community was shot dead at noon Tuesday April 13,

2010 at Oil well 4, Bomu Oilfield operated by SPDC.

Ogoni Star Correspondent gathered that Mr. Bariara Lemon was among a group of B.Dere Community youths engaged at the "well corking and killing" project site by SPDC workers and was given some food items to share to other youths.

Trouble was reported to have started when a minor disagreement among the

youths on method of sharing the food packs attracted the attention of the armed guards who swooped on the youths, tortured some of them and in the process, while attempting to run away from the soldiers brutality, Mr. Bariara Lemon was shot dead by the soldiers.

Community sources also told Ogoni Star that Mr. Lemon's corpse was immediately picked up and

taken to an unknown destination by the soldiers.

The community people wondered why the soldiers had to shoot into the midst of the youths if they have no hidden agenda to mercilessly kill the Ogonis, the source queried.

Meanwhile, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) has condemned the killing of Mr. Bariara Vurasi Lemon by a team of soldiers attached to some staff of Shell Petroleum

Development Company (SPDC) working at well 4, Bomu oilfield in Gokana local government area of Rivers State.

MOSOP, which said it received with utmost bitterness the news of the shooting and killing of another Ogoni youth, Mr. Bariara Lemon, a School Certificate holder, in a statement issued and made available to Ogoni Star, said it views the incident as callous and cruel.

The Ogoni apex

organization which expressed worry over the reckless manner at which Shell's sponsored soldiers have continued to kill Ogoni people, said it is calling on the government and other relevant authorities to ensure that the culprits do not go unpunished in the case of Mr. Lemon as experienced in several other previous cases.

MOSOP, in the statement, also called on other rights organizations and the international community to rise against these actions that have

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Niger Delta Report: Ethnic Nationalities to Protest Non

Implementation in Abuja - Set Up Action C'ttee

Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta and other stakeholders have resolved to embark on a mass protest in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja demanding the full implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta.

This resolution was contained in a communiqué issued in Warri at the end of an Ethnic Nationalities' Awareness Conference on the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta organized by the Movement for the Survival

of the Ogoni People, MOSOP.

The ethnic groups in the Niger Delta had noted with dismay, the non implementation of salient recommendations of the Ledum Mitee led committee which they said represent a

credible road map for resolution of the Niger Delta crisis.

The conference observed that there was need to urgently fashion out a credible framework to pressurise the various levels of government to act on the report.

For the success of the Planned Day of Action in Abuja, the Niger Delta Ethnic Nationalities had urgently set up an ethnic Nationalities' Representative Forum Action Committee principally to work out modalities for the protest on the implementation of the TCND recommendation.

The conference therefore called on each Community Based Organization (CBO) and ethnic groups in the region to thoroughly sensitize their respective grass root on the significant aspects of the report and the need to pressurise respective governments towards the implementation of the TCND report.

To this end, the conference appealed to MOSOP to further reproduce and distribute a simplified version of the report to the various groups

in the area and to other key stakeholders in the country.

In very strong terms, the conference urged various groups not to relent in carrying out viable and practicable advocacy programmes for the implementation of the reports as well as charging each nationality group, Faith based organization and social group to undertake to disseminate the content of the report to all members of their community as well as sensitizing them.

While acknowledging MOSOP's efforts in reproducing and making the TCND Report available to the various peoples in the region at the grassroots, the forum also commended the Ogoni Movement for such laudable initiative and Cordaid for the support in mass producing the report.

On the Amnesty programme, the Niger Delta Ethnic Nationalities Conference called for a reorganization of the current post-Amnesty programme of the Federal government for an effective Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation to accord

with International Standards.

It would be recalled that in its quest to make this report available to peoples of the region and to galvanize various groups to advocate for the implementation of the TCND report, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, commenced its sensitization and awareness initiative with a Civil Society organization roundtable discussion and Ethnic Nationalities Conference on the report in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom.

While participants for the Warri Conference were drawn from Delta, Edo, and Bayelsa State, the Conference in Uyo had participants from Cross River and Akwa-Ibom.

Speaking to our correspondent, the MOSOP officer in charge of the programme, Mr. Young Kigbara said the next conference will be held in Port Harcourt Rivers State where participants will also be invited from Bayelsa, and Rivers State.

Another Shell Major Pipeline Fire Ravages Ogoni Farm Lands

- MOSOP Calls for urgent Clean Up, Relief Materials

Following a massive pipeline fire which ravaged the Trans-Niger-pipeline in oil bearing communities in Gokana area of Ogoni land, Rivers State last week, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, has called on Royal Dutch oil giant, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to urgently commence thorough clean up of the sites.

The Movement, while strongly condemning the cause of the incidents, blamed the company for their delayed response to the inferno.

It therefore, charged the company to take responsibility for the damages by paying compensation to all affected communities.

MOSOP emphasized that whatever the cause of the fire had been, the company should urgently commence the process of providing relief materials to the affected communities.

MOSOP Environment team that visited the incident site reported that the fire engulfed a vast area of arable land, forest

reserves, economic trees etc in the affected communities of Bomu Oil Field.

"The inferno which started on Tuesday also caused series of spill into farmlands, forest area, and in the mangrove areas, while no fewer than seven local engine boats were destroyed, according to close sources in the communities, although no life was loss to the raging fire", the team said.

Spokesman of Shell in Nigeria, Mr. Precious Okolobo, while confirming the incident to newsmen, said 'there were several leaks and two major fires on a section of the Trans-Niger Pipeline located at Bodo West and Bomu Oil Field in Gokana local government area, Rivers State.

To this effect, he said the multinational company stopped the feeding of the pipeline with crude to forestall further damage.

The affected pipeline, which passes through Ogoniland, conveys crude oil from Shell's flow stations and other locations outside Ogoni to the Bonny terminal in Rivers State.

Already, sources told the newsmen that a Joint Investigation team had been set up with members drawn from Shell, Department of Petroleum Resources and the Rivers state Ministry of Environment.

Our team who again visited one of the sites last Saturday said they met the Shell team moving their equipment from the area after putting off the fire.

They however said the experts only put off the fire and stopped the flow of the crude without proper clean up of the spill point as huge quantity of the spilled crude oil still fill the site.

They wonder why the company only showed interest in making sure crude oil flows for its production to commence but pay less attention to the state of the environment and plights of the people.

Meanwhile, MOSOP has stated that it will not keep a sealed lip at any attempt by the company to treat issues of compensation and thorough clean up of the area with less concern.

MOSOP Activist, Peter Ite Goes Home

The remains of Late Mr. Peter Deekor Ite, of Bianu Bangha town, Nyokhana District of Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State have been laid to rest.

Activist Peter Ite who until his death was a member of the Ogoni Teachers Union (OTU) and Human Rights Campaigner, was buried at his home town, Gbarabari village, Bianu Bangha town on Saturday April 10, 2010.

It would be recalled that

late Peter Deekor Ite, a staunch MOSOP supporter died on Friday 9th October, 2009 in a ghastly auto accident on the Bianu-Beerri bridge.

MOSOP members predominantly OUT and other sympathizers were at Ite's burial in his home town to give him the last and befitting honour.

In its message at the burial, MOSOP expressed deep pains over the demise of Mr. Ite whom it described as one of the most

committed and spirited.

Speaking for the movement, the General Secretary, Moses Damgbor, noted that Mr. Ite has made significant sacrifices to the struggle, recalling that he served as one of his last contributions as a member of the MOSOP electoral committee that conducts the election that usher in the current MOSOP leadership.

"Ite is someone we cannot forget so soon because he made marks that would remain tall in our minds and conscience", Damgbor remarked.



MOVEMENT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE OGO NI PEOPLE, USA (MOSOP-USA)
P.O. BOX 607113, CHICAGO, IL 60660, 773.262.6869

Hon. Rotimi Amaechi
 Executive Governor of Rivers State
 Feb. 19, 2010

Your Excellency, Sir:

OGONI DECRIES MILITARIZATION

Ogoniland is about to be rounded-up by Nigerian soldiers, once again! The Ogoni people are decrying excessive military presence in their communities. Yet, the government is about to force a relocation of another military cantonment to the Shell-shocked land. This is part of the all-too-familiar calculated provocation of the Ogoni people in order to instigate chaos, to justify the deployment of soldiers to the area. But the Ogoni people have resolved to be committed to the principles of nonviolence. No antidemocratic blanket cover on freedom of expression will stop the Ogoni people from our trademark peaceful protest rallies and protest correspondences with friends and organizations around the world. This expansive militarization of our society has to stop. This is another part of the scheme to facilitate a forceful resumption of oil operations in Ogoni. And it will not work!

The demands in the Ogoni Bill of Rights call for addressing the unfair norms in Nigeria's national character, which practically and constitutionally marginalize the minorities to the fringes of political powers and economic status. The compensation and royalties denied the Ogoni people for the resources extracted from Ogoni and siphoned to other parts of the country for development while Ogoni suffers the consequences of reckless oil operations, and remain in abject poverty, have not been remediated. The polluted Ogoni environment had not been cleaned-up. The conditions under which the Ogoni people may consider a resumption of oil operations in the area have not been negotiated. A State, within the Nigerian federation, in which Ogoni will manage its own affairs have not been considered. The inhuman, heartless and barbaric criminalization and subsequent conviction and execution of innocent Ogoni people, including Ken Saro Wiwa, have not been addressed.

On the rise in Ogoni, however, are redundant military checkpoints at every nook and cranny, where soldiers extort money from law abiding motorists and inflict huge physical and psychological holdbacks on the social and economic lives of the people, while raising the specter of an invasion hysteria on the minds of the local population who are still being hunted by dreadful memories of previous military butcheries of the Ogoni people.

With utmost insensibility and disregard to the plight of the Ogoni people, the Rivers State Governor, Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, had unilaterally chosen to ignore the adverse issues of overcrowding across Ogoniland by proposing a relocation of the military cantonment in Port Harcourt to Ogoni. The population density in Ogoni is 2400 persons per square mile. The area is only 402sq miles inhabited by an estimated one million people. The Ogoni people have been massacred and raped by Nigerian soldiers. Their communities had been raided, looted and consigned to ash-heaps of debris on the orders of the government. Ogoni children, mothers and wives were raped under the watching eyes of helpless fathers and husbands; fathers and husbands, who were, themselves, murdered thereafter, by Nigerian cold-blooded soldiers. Our entire generation of leaders were either lynched or judicially murdered by the Government of Nigeria because we demanded a fair share of the proceeds from the oil that is mined on our soil. The unprofessional, unethical and inhumane practices of Nigerian military personnel, who are

never reprimanded for these grotesque crimes, still hunt the psyche of the Ogoni people at the glimpse of a soldier.

We, the Ogoni people, do not have the land or the willingness to accommodate another military cantonment in Ogoni. There are; a Naval Base, and a Police Academy in the area, and pockets of military and other security posts all over Ogoni-land. There are redundant military checkpoints at every half a mile in Ogoni, extorting money from law-abiding motorists and inflicting physical and psychological strains on the social and economic lives of the people. Our land had been encroached upon for multiple Oil projects and oil installations. The only reason the government wants to relocate another military camp to the area, irrespective of the obvious logical odds, is because of the plot to launch a forceful resumption of oil operations in Ogoni without negotiating a fair and acceptable standard of operation with the owners of the land.

Since 1990, when the first copy of the Ogoni Bill of Rights was presented to the federal government of Nigeria, the longing for peace in Ogoniland had remained an elusive nostalgia. The Government is currently plotting another instigation of chaos and violence in Ogoni by proposing a forceful acquisition of land for a military cantonment in an area that is already mottled by starvation and preventable deaths because of a deplorable economic adversity and lack of farmlands for crop cultivation.

The Ogoni people had exemplified a culture and tradition of nonviolence in the face of unremitting deprivation, repression and autocratic practices by the government of Nigeria for fifty-two years. We will continue to uphold the tradition of nonviolence because it is the responsible and civilized approach to our just and fair struggle against internal colonization in Nigeria.

In the spirit of peace, fairness and support for a continuous adherence to a peaceful resolution of the rather agonizing situation in Ogoni; we call on the people of Nigeria, the government of Nigeria, the United States, the European Union, United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, and all communities and peoples of the "free world" to call on Nigeria to stop another militarization of Ogoniland-to avoid another round of government sponsored chaos and mass killings in the area.

The government of Nigeria and prospecting oil companies need to negotiate the terms, conditions and standards of oil operation in the area, to enable a peaceful resumption of operations that have both a legal license and a social license from the people of the area. Relocating military cantonments designed to cow the Ogoni people to submission while oil is forcefully drilled on our soil will only lead to one outcome: chaos and disarray, which will end up generating another mass killing of genocidal proportion in Ogoniland. We are tired of dying and tired of uncertainty. We are also tired of being dominated and oppressed in our homeland.

Our fifty-two years commitment to nonviolence had only been rewarded with gruesome atrocities committed against the Ogoni people by Nigerian military. If the Nigerian authorities continue to misconstrue nonviolence as weakness, it will come a point when desperation will breed dissent-and the Ogoni people will rather choose to die defending their homeland for coming generations than being slowly annihilated by successive Nigerian authorities.

We need help! We do not want another military cantonment in Ogoni. And we do not want another round of killings in Ogoniland.

Signed:

Chief Stephen Kpea, Chairman, MOSOP USA Central Working Council

DumBari Tsaro Deezua, Secretary, MOSOP USA Central Working Council



COALITION FOR JUSTICE IN THE NIGER DELTA

95 Ogbunabali Road, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Cojund Flays Marginalisation of Most Ethnic Nationalities in

The Niger Delta by the FG

The Coalition for Justice in the Niger Delta (COJUND), a body of ethnic nationalities and civil society groups in the delta region, expresses concern about certain developments in the Niger Delta, which if not checked could reverse the gains in recent times. It is in this light that we welcomed the announced meeting of the Acting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan with ex-militants at the Presidential Villa, Abuja. Coming at a time when there have been growing concerns relating to observed lack of progress pertaining to the post-amnesty programme and consequent disturbing responses, COJUND further considers the step as timely.

However, we note with grave concern that almost all the repentant militants invited to the said meeting with the Acting President seem to

come from one single ethnic group in the Niger Delta. We reject any suggestion that the ex-militants come from only one ethnic nationality in a very heterogeneous region like the Niger Delta.

Our disappointment with the current development is heightened when taken against the backdrop of a trend in recent times when almost all key appointments in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), community representation on all the sub-committees of the post-amnesty project, nominations for current federal appointments seem to reflect a strategy to appease only one ethnic group in the region and reduce the rest to mere on-looking supporters. This approach, in our considered opinion, smacks of internal marginalization, which cannot account as a unifying message to the rest of

us at this point in time.

We want to warn that a further escalation of the present trend could test our understanding and patience to the level where we all would resort to the violent options that appear to be favoured for reward by the federal government. Our peaceful nature should not be taken for granted or seen as weakness.

The very basis of the struggle in the Niger Delta has been fiercely stated to be that against injustice and marginalization and we would want to believe that the Acting President who is no stranger to the region and her campaign for justice understands how internal marginalization could be damaging to the cause for which huge sacrifices have been made by the peoples of the region.

We want to remind our fellow Niger Deltans that since the tasks ahead are enormous, we need one

another; a united and concerted effort if we must consolidate our achievements and secure further gains. Anything capable of planting discord would not only undermine our collective resolve but would also diminish the moral basis of our struggle.

It is thus our position that the federal government should reverse the trend and ensure that the interests of all Niger Delta communities are covered and protected in its distribution of benefits. And it will be interesting to see immediate steps taken in this direction in the days ahead.

Des Alonale Laka
 President

Hossanah Jalogho-Williams
 Secretary

Chimekwa Wopara
 PRO

Amakiri Amakoro
 Financial Secretary

Letter to the Editor

Kaani Needs a Re-Union

Permit me to use your widely read medium to call on the good people of Bua Kaani in the Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State to sink their differences and think positively toward a re-union in the community. With unity there is no meaningful achievement that cannot be made and the whole area will be peaceful and accommodating for everyone.

It is therefore up to all factions, actors and actresses to bury the hatchet to give unity and peaceful co-existence a chance. Bearing in mind that nothing would be more honourable than to imbibe the culture of forgiving those who may have done you ill as such is no weakness but strength and good neighbourliness. Then, it will be refreshing should we realize that Bua Kaani which needed peace urgently at this moment is bigger than each and all of us.

Division and violence among us, and even the renaming of some parts of the community for any reason cannot be a means to solving any identified communal palaver except by dialogue.

The right time is now to be our brothers keeper where all of us must demonstrably work honestly toward the realization of a true reconciliation. Kaani is one and an indivisible entity.

Please, rethink!
 By John Bere Nkeh

The Rape Trade

Dear friends,

Amita was a sweet 9 year old girl who loved her family. One day, she was kidnapped, taken to a city far away and put in a cage. She was forced to have sex with dozens of men per day, and brutally beaten when she cried or refused. 5 terror-filled years later, suffering from sexually transmitted disease, she died from a beating at age 14.

Amita's story is about the worst nightmare imaginable, but the UN estimates that millions of women and girls are traded for rape every year -- one of the most horrific problems in our world today. The best way to tackle it is to expose the rape traders and kill their profits. In January Avaaz members voted to make this a top priority this year, so we're beginning work across the world with expert teams, local campaigners, sex workers and investigators to shut down these brutal and shadowy businesses.

Every minute this problem continues is too long. We can't bring Amita back, but every minute, two more Amitas are sold into horror. Let's stop it now -- if just 10,000 of us make a donation right now we could help stop it. Click to donate:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/fight_rape_trade/?v1

In the January Avaaz poll, almost 90% of our community voted for tackling the rape trade as a top campaigning priority for 2010. Here are the actions we are developing: https://secure.avaaz.org/en/fight_rape_trade/?v1 In the January Avaaz poll, almost 90% of our community voted for tackling the rape trade as a top campaigning priority for 2010. Here are the actions we are developing:

* Investigating and publicly shaming complicit officials and politicians in countries where official corruption is part of the

rape trade. The ads would name and shame individuals and campaign for their removal and reform.

* **Running a global day of action outside slave houses** - exposing locations across the world where trade victims are being sold and raped. This shocking violence is often going on just down the road from our homes and schools.

* **Partnering with sex work activists**, who have deep understanding of the business, to expose the violence and take on the traffickers.

* **Tracking key trade routes and blocking ships** carrying kidnapped girls and women in key transit ports.

* **Lobbying elected leaders** to make this issue a priority and use the full resources of our governments to stop it, including passing better legislation to protect and provide for the women

The Hidden Risk of a Sweet and Silent Killer

By Adedayo Osholowu

A recent study by researchers at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching hospital published in the International Journal of Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice reveals these alarming statistics. In the study, they screened over 500 subjects selected using scientific sampling methods.

The most important finding they reported were a rising incidence in diabetes in Nigeria

and that a significant proportion of the diabetic subjects were asymptomatic and undiagnosed. Put in perspective from their study they discovered that over 40% of the identified diabetics had no idea that they suffered from this life threatening and preventable condition.

The danger of non-diagnosis (and therefore non-treatment) is that it raises the risk of stroke and heart disease which could very easily escalate to blindness, kidney failure, loss of limbs and sudden death. In the rest of my article, I highlight the risks of diabetes and point out preventive actions we all must take to ensure that we reduce the burden of this preventable disease.

Diabetes or "sugar" as our people call it can most easily be described as an imbalance between sugar and insulin in your blood stream.

When the body ingests sugar, the pancreas secretes insulin to convert it into energy. When someone has diabetes, the body does not get enough insulin, either because the pancreas is not making enough of it (Type 1) or because the body becomes resistant to the insulin (Type 2). With Type 2, the pancreas churns out even more insulin, but it has little effect, leaving too much glucose in the blood stream. Eventually, the insulin-making cells in the pancreas may shut down. The symptoms of diabetes are mostly caused by the sugary blood and its effects on the body cells.

The important factor to note is that the first symptoms - including fatigue, excessive thirst and frequent urination - often don't appear until the excess sugar has been damaging

caught in the rape trade.

* **Going after rape traders** directly by publicly exposing them with WANTED billboards in their communities.

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/fight_rape_trade/?v1

Avaaz emails like this one have generated millions for other causes like Burma, climate change and Haiti. That's what it will take to stop this trade. It's not about how much we give, but how many of us do. Right now, a girl's life is being transformed into an unimaginable horror, and we can do something to stop it:

Millions of women and girls are sold for rape every year -- some estimate 2 every minute. We can save these young girls from horror. Click below to donate to Avaaz's new drive to halt the rape trade:

blood vessels for 10 years or more.

'Nothing do me'

Most patients usually will remind their doctors that "nothing do me" when asked to take a screening test to rule out a rise in their blood sugar. Diabetes can be most easily identified by conducting a test to measure the levels of glucose in the blood following an overnight fast.

The normal levels usually fall below 100 milligrams. From 100 to 125 mg/dl is considered "prediabetes" and above 125 is diabetes. Some experts think "prediabetes" should be dubbed full diabetes so that patients pay attention sooner.

It is however important to note that the most important factor in screening for diabetes is a family history of the condition. The unfortunate thing is that the fear of finding out that one may suffer from this chronic disease usually prevents people from taking the screening tests. It is also common for primary care doctors to disregard slight rises in the blood sugar on testing.

Best practices state that any slight rises in the blood sugar or related symptoms should be followed up with a full complement of tests. Most recently a different test, the haemoglobin A1C, has been recommended for screening, since the results are more clear-cut.

Managing diabetes

The treatment for diabetes is not as tedious as most people believe. In over 50 percent of cases the blood sugar can be normalised by reducing the intake of carbohydrates to reduce the amount of sugar the body needs to handle and also by performing regular exercise.

Research has proven that exercise improves the

performance of insulin by in the body cells and hence its efficiency. In some patients there would be a need to combine this lifestyle regimen with medications. Recent medical advances have created a wide range of pharmacologic agents that can be used in these cases.

The efficacy of traditional medicines

Many traditional herbal medications have gained universal appeal in the management of diabetes. In a study performed by a researcher at the Department of Medicine of the University College Hospital, Ibadan; 10 diabetic patients being treated exclusively by traditional healers were followed up at home for a period of up to 16 weeks and another group of 8 patients had a hospital-based trial of traditional anti-diabetic medicines for about 4 weeks.

The results published in the African Journal of Medical Sciences revealed that most of the patients reported an improvement in their symptoms and improved sense of well-being.

However, no objective improvement in the blood glucose was demonstrated. This study highlights that while there is a place for traditional herbal medications in the treatment of diabetes, the life threatening effects of the disease can only be managed with lifestyle modification and pharmacologic agents prescribed under the guidance of a health professional.

Adedayo Osholowu MD, an International Olympic Committee certified Sports physician works with a micropractice based in Lagos Nigeria.

He is also a writer and a reviewer for the British Medical Journal.

Marriage is Godly Ordained

- Rev. Vidorbu

Christians have been called upon to always see marriage as an institution that must be respected by all men, no matter their status.

A clergyman, Rev. Micheal Vidorbu made the call recently while presiding as the officiating minister during the Holy matrimony between former Miss Ziganubari Confidence Kerenwin and Mr. Popnwin Tornubari Kote at the Progressive Baptist Church, K-Dere, Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Rev. Vidorbu said broken homes and divorce after marriage are caused by the lack of respect for the institution by those who go into it without considering or taking cognizance of the fact that it is an institution ordained by God.

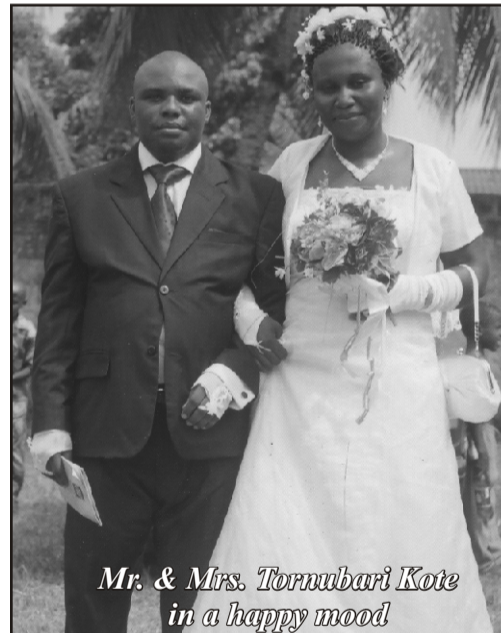
He furthered that getting involved in extra-marital affairs was a total disobedience to God's Command, a thing he said has made some couple's incur the wrath of God.

The man of God encouraged the newly wedded couple to always seek the face of God in their day to day living so as to benefit from His blessings.

In a chat with Ogoni Star Correspondent, the groom, Mr. Popnwin Tornubari Kote, who is also the Personal Assistant to the Special Adviser to the Rivers State Governor on Parastatals, said

he was thankful to God for making his marriage occasion a successful one.

Those that graced the occasion includes the parent of the bride and the groom; Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Kerenwin and Mr. David D. Kote, Hon. Batom Mitee, Special Adviser to the Rivers State Governor on parastatals, Rev. B. Loomaop, Apostle I.I.L. Kerenwin, of the Apostolic Church, Pastor Isaac Gbarabe, Pastor J.K. Deekor, Engr. Feegalo Mitee, Mr. Felix S. Bakel, amongst other personalities.



Mr. & Mrs. Tornubari Kote in a happy mood

Poetry:

In a Gentle Pace

In a gentle pace, they run the race
Though challenges they faced in their days
Ushered in the grace to say
In a gentle pace they run the race
The bamboo stick vomits no seed
Rather fingers clenches the plastic stick
Produces brass knuckles Painted and pasted for all to read
They all gaze and dash out mouth to speak

In a gentle pace, they run the race
Though begging on a land without collateral
Where milks and honey flows to the space
In its territory are slavery staggering in so far
To drag complacent smile with stagy agony all days
Bleeding in and out, so we are badly battered

Thousands of miles came the man
Coming in a gentle pace to run the race
That succingly said one-plus-one is two not four
You are a rascal, says the blood sucking monster
Causing the stars to brighten the sky?
The mammoth crowd of nature faltered

Asking where then is our hope?
The lion roars the more ready to swallow
More foodstuff stormed the den.

Here is a perfect blood sucking monster
Moving majestically to partner with his ancestors
In a cool-hearted-hand came Mr. Naam n naani
For a father that fathers no father are farther
From the facts and fat
Where can the bombardier that bombard be found?
In a gentle peace, they ran the race
Hear oh airs, run gently for

In a gentle pace, they ran the race
In a gentle pace, slow and steady comes victory
In a gentle pace without grudge comes unity
In a gentle pace without egotism comes prosperity
In a gentle pace they run
And emerge the pace setter

By Goodnews Ledum Friday
(Don-glefpoet)
08039565765

Food For Thought

Ever wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phone?

What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?

What if we flipped through it several time a day?

What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?

What if we used it to receive messages from the text?

What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?

What if we gave it to Kids as gifts?

What if we used it when we traveled?

What if we used it in case of emergency?

This is something to make you go....hmm... where is my Bible?

Oh, and one more thing.

Unlike our cell phone, we don't have to worry about our Bible being

Disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill.

Makes you stop and think 'where are my priorities? And no dropped calls!

When Jesus died for us, he was thinking of you! If you are one of the 7% who will stand up for Him, forward this.

93% of the people might not forward this, please do if you love Jesus. God bless your day.

Helen OLUGU

Admin Secretary/Protocol Officer
BOURBON INTEROIL NIGERIA LTD.
Phone : +234 1 878 11 22
MOBILE: +234 7034000302
Email: helen.olugu@bourbon-interoil.com

Oil Development in N'Delta has Failed-Prof. Ibeanu

By Alice Onukwughu

Oil development in the Niger Delta has failed and that is why the problem of the region is multi-stranded and multi-layered.

This was the argument of Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu, Director, Institute for Development Studies, UNN, during his paper presentation at a two-day international oil and gas conference organized by the State Assembly House Committee on Energy last Thursday.

Prof Ibeanu who was speaking on the Topic: The Niger Delta and the Paradox of development: Resolving the conflicts between corporate organisations and host communities argued that

though people seem to argue that there is relative development since there are more roads and schools than the early 70's, the social situation in the Niger Delta does not reflect its contribution to sustenance of the Nigerian economy.

Arguing that the Niger Delta has been over-subscribed in terms of development, Prof Ibeanu reiterated that development is not about things people create and use, but about their capacity to create.

According to him, developmental part of reward has to do with the extent of the distribution of work and reward, adding that work of vast majority of people in the region is irrelevant to

development.

He said militancy in the region arose from the brutal restriction of the struggle of the people, stressing that prolonged agitation of the people created a vacuum which militancy fills.

Prof Ibeanu warned peace is not the absence of conflict, saying oil wealth must be distributed in ways that would be beneficial to the producers.

In his welcome address, Hon. Otelemeba Amachree, Chairman of the House Committee on Energy said the aim of the conference was to find out experiences of companies in the state so as the chart a way forward. He said theme of the conference which is

“Investing in Oil and Gas: The Experience of Corporate Organisations in Nigeria” was intended at informing oil companies of the state government's resolve to build an enabling environment for companies operating in the state.

Also speaking on the topic “Onne Oil and Gas Free

Zone: Relevance and Opportunities to the Oil and Gas industry in Nigeria”, Dr. Noble Abe said the problem of Nigeria is that of identifying its comparative advantage and using it to develop the economy.

Dr. Abe who is the MD of Onne Oil and Gas Free

Zone Authority decried a situation where about \$10-\$15 billion dollars (half of the nation's budget) is used on oil exploration and exploitation, yet only 25% is retained in Nigeria.

He, therefore, called on the State and National Assembly to come up with laws that will create wealth and development for the economy.

Amnesty International Charges Police Over Activists Assault

By Gowon Emakpe

Amnesty International, an international human rights non-governmental organisation, has called on the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to immediately start investigations into the assault and detention of three human rights activists by its officials in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

A statement by Elisabeth Vikman of Amnesty International said Isaac Asume Osuoka, Akpobari Celestine, and Ken Henshaw, all from Social Action, a non-governmental organisation that campaigns for environmental justice and human rights in Nigeria, were stopped and detained by police on 5th April, 2010, after leaving their office.

“Akpobari Celestine said he was repeatedly hit with the butt of a gun, poked with a barrel in his arms and legs and slapped in the face, as at least six armed men, including at least three uniformed police officers, forced the activists out of their car and into a white van, without asking the victims for any form of identification,” the statement read.

No reasons given

The statement said the

three men were not told why they were stopped and detained, but were taken to Olusegun Obasanjo Police Station in Port Harcourt.

“They knew who we were,” said Mr. Osuoka, one of the activists. “When we were stopped, they didn't ask for our names, they didn't ask to see a driver's licence, they didn't ask for any car documents.”

According to the statement, at the police station, the activists were refused access to legal counsel.

Mr. Celestine said he was denied medical treatment for the injuries he sustained while being detained.

The activists were released without charge around midnight, after they alerted friends and colleagues in the city who intervened on their behalf.

Police intimidation

“The excessive use of force and arbitrary detention suffered by these men must be fully investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice,” said Erwin van der Borgh, Africa Director at Amnesty International.

The clinic where Mr. Celestine sought treatment following his release, later refused to give him the

medical report that detailed his injuries. The activists believe staff at the clinic may have been intimidated by the police.

A medical report carried out in Austria, where the activists are holding talks about human rights in the Niger Delta, found that Mr. Celestine sustained several bruises on his arms and legs from the beating he received from the police.

“The government must ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without interference, obstacles, discrimination or fear of retaliation,” said Mr. van der Borgh.

“These activists have a right to an independent, impartial and competent review of complaints and, where violations are found to have taken place, to obtain redress.”

Mr. van der Borgh accused the Nigeria Police Force of committing a wide range of human rights violations with impunity, including unlawful killings, torture, and enforced disappearances. He said people are targeted for failing to pay bribes and several of them have been tortured to death in police detention.

MOSOP Reiterates Call on Govts for Transparency in Extractive Industries Operations

- Welcomes Election of African Coordinator

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, has renewed its call on governments to establish robust mechanisms for transparency in the extractive industries operations and make open all information relating to the extractive sector to the citizens.

MOSOP made this position in a statement issued in Port Harcourt in which it also welcomed the election of Mr. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara as the Regional Coordinator for Africa for the Global Network on Extractive Industries and Indigenous Peoples.

In the MOSOP statement signed by its Press Officer, Sunny Zorvah, the Ogoni Movement emphasized that its position on issues of justice and rights of the Indigenous Peoples as well as its quest for corporate responsibility by operators of the extractive industries have remained consistently uncompromised, and go beyond the shores of African Continent.

This, according to the statement informed the Movements decision to join in the signing of the Statement of Solidarity to the Indigenous People of Peru by the Global Network of Indigenous Peoples and Extractive Industries SPA, and the letter to the Canadian Prime Minister regarding the adoption of the new Corporate Social Responsibility in that country.

Realizing that most extractive resources are finite, MOSOP called for the

and policy frameworks on mining as it affects indigenous peoples on the Continent particularly on the issue of free, prior and informed consent.

While appreciating the fact that most African governments as reported have made efforts to develop new mining and mineral laws, MOSOP however regretted that serious gaps still exist as those attempts at legal reforms have not been participatory enough and the people are left in most circumstances with new laws having largely colonial footprints. These it said include the latest African mining vision, the ECOWAS Mining Code and others.

Noting that Africa is richly endowed with mineral resources, it said the colonial scramble for Africa, which was driven by economic objectives, the renewed resource scramble for Africa with the process of globalization and liberalization is endangering an expansion of extractive sector activity in the continent, especially in the mining sector yet most of these expansions of mining activities take place in the pristine forests, seas and lands of Indigenous peoples.

Meanwhile, following the election of Mr. Legborsi Pyagbara as the African Coordinator on Extractive Industries and Indigenous Peoples, MOSOP expressed appreciation to all members of the International body working on the issues, and also commended him (Mr. Pyagbara) who is its International Advocacy Officer, acknowledging that this development is a testimony of his commitments to the struggle for justice for the Indigenous Peoples across the globe.

Also stated at the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in Chemicals, Waste Management, Transport and Sustainable Consumption and productions, MOSOP called on all African States to apply United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the normative basis for all legal

The Legend has Stolen My Heart

This morning I ponder
Aggravate my heart ordeal
I must conclude
My heart! Burst!
Almost paralyzed
This is a thin out pour

This man
Stoic my freedom
Like melodies of my moonlight tales
This isn't tuition of friction
But a scarifies of honour
Today, this mind beat out of me
The ill doubt
“And away”
Wailing to know
A sap of totality
This is a cradle of simplicity

Oh! Else I dawned out
I don't mind betraying my wearied heart
This selfless I deal
Overwhelm my life tutors
Do not intrude my mood
“I believe”
My legend is here
Preparing my future

“Once I raked into myself”
I guess I'm right to him!
Once I barked
He admonished me
“Once I smile into myself!”
This strange zeal map me in
Tiling my inches of kindness
Ah! I'm here to succumb
But I know you touched my life

Now my giggle spread
Into my broad face
To clap once more
Though, forever
And your toiling years
This time is memorable
This coast of humility
Swallow my days of tumour
Because you're here
But his echoes,
Must be a lullaby to my children
Unborn
My legend
Dedicated to Barrister Ledum Mitee
MOSOP President

Composed By:
Dumka Richard Vincent

U.S Faults Nigeria's Anti-corruption Crusade, Tackles EfCC

From Laolu Akande, New York

Nigeria continues to feature under the critical lens of the United States, which has again condemned the country's human rights record in the last one year.

According to the US annual Human Rights reports released by Hillary Clinton, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) did not perform well in 2009. The US said "the EFCC reportedly singled out political opponents in its arrests and detentions of state, local, and federal government officials on corruption charges during the year."

According to the report, "the EFCC's anti-corruption efforts were largely ineffectual. Despite the arrest of several high-ranking officials by the EFCC, there were allegations that agency investigations targeted individuals who were out of favour with the government of the day, while those that were in favour continued their activities with impunity."

On the argument of the EFCC that approximately 10 former state governors were facing corruption charges, the Americans responded in the report saying, "none of the cases had moved forward by year's end."

Rights Agency Criticises INEC

Abubakar Sadiq Isah & Romoke W. Ahmad

The National Human Rights Commission's Chief Electoral Monitor, Harry Obe, has criticised the late arrival of electoral materials and INEC officials at polling units during the FCT area council polls.

He said voters, who came early were disenchanted by the situation and most of them left after waiting for a long time, adding that it caused considerable disenfranchisement.

"In many polling stations, voting started at about 12 pm and many eligible voters could not find their names in the voter's register which further disenfranchised many eligible voters," he added.

Obe observed that INEC did not take cognizance of the hot climate condition in Abuja and would have started early to record an appreciable turnout of voters.

He praised the considerable number of security agents deployed to polling units but lamented that they were ill equipped with communication as well as security gadgets to enhance their duties.

The electoral monitor commended the turn out in Kuje, Bwari Kwali, Gwagwalada and Abaji councils and said general

The report cited one notable instance: "In December the judge dismissed the 170 counts of illegal activity against former Delta State Governor James Ibori, although the judge ordered a retrial. Ibori remained free on bail at year's end."

According to the US government, the removal of Nuhu Ribadu as EFCC chairman contributed to the tainted perception of Federal Government's seriousness to fight corruption.

"The EFCC's inability to bring a number of corruption investigations to closure, the 2008 replacement of its internationally respected chairman; and the 2008 transfer of many of its senior personnel raised questions about the government's commitment to fighting corruption. During the year the EFCC was accused of using its authority to harass citizens who objected to government policies," according to the report.

The US also cited the following corruption cases:

On December 9, the EFCC arrested former Sokoto State Governor Attahiru Bafarawa, who was attending an opposition meeting to plan a new "mega" opposition

party. Bafarawa was charged with embezzlement of public funds in 2007, which he denied. Observers alleged that the arrest was an attempt to harass opponents of the ruling party.

The corruption trial of former Ekiti State governor, Ayo Fayose, had not been heard by year's end, despite a December 2008 court ruling against his request for a delay. Fayose subsequently requested an exit visa to travel outside the country for alleged "urgent medical attention." The Visa had not been granted by year's end.

Trials also remained pending in the 2008 corruption cases against: former aviation ministers Femi Fani-Kayode and Babalola Borishade for alleged embezzlement of N19.5 billion (approximately \$130 million); former Adamawa State Governor, Boni Haruna, for misappropriating N93 million (approximately \$618,000); former chairman of the NPA Board of Directors and five other NPA members for illegally awarding contracts worth N84 billion (approximately \$558 million); and former Edo State Governor, Lucky Igbinedion, against whom the EFCC was appealing a December 2008 verdict due to the light sentence he received for the alleged embezzlement of more than N3.6 billion (approximately \$24 million).

Besides, the US noted that "there were no developments in any of the 2007 pending corruption cases against former government officials."

"Even while presenting the report to journalists during the week in Washington DC, Nigeria was again singled out for international concern by the US government because of the situation in Jos, where religious violence has led to death of several innocent

people, especially Christians last week.

According to the report, which was released on Thursday, human rights problems in Nigeria in the last one year "included the abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces, including summary executions; vigilante killings; abductions by militant groups; torture, rape, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees, and criminal suspects."

Such treatment included "harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention; denial of fair public trial; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption."

The US government in the mandatory report to the US Congress added that in Nigeria "infringement of privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement," were still prevalent, while "official corruption and impunity," were still in place.

Furthermore the report noted that "domestic violence and discrimination against women; the killing of children suspected of witchcraft; female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and child sexual exploitation," were among the several human rights problems in Nigeria just as were "societal violence; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination; trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and forced labour."

The report also listed, among human rights problems in Nigeria, the "discrimination against persons with disabilities; discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and child

labour."

While conceding that "civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces," the US report blasted the security agencies in Nigeria saying "there were numerous instances in which elements of the security forces acted outside the law."

On Niger Delta, the report noted that "militant and criminal groups in the Niger Delta were responsible for numerous killings, kidnappings, and injuries, as well as the displacement of thousands of persons."

Observing however that "lead militant groups accepted the president's offer of an amnesty by the October 4 deadline, after which reports of incidents attributed to these militant groups decreased," the US insisted that "violence remained pervasive" in that part of the country.

The Boko Haram incident also featured prominently in the report, which included virtually every nation on the globe. According to the US, "from July 26 to 29, violent clashes erupted in four northern states after supporters of Boko Haram ("western education is sin"), an Islamic extremist group, launched a four-state assault on police stations and other government facilities. In quelling the uprising, security forces committed serious human rights abuses, including executions, extrajudicial killings, and widespread and indiscriminate arrests."

Under a sub section on "Respect for the Integrity of the Person, including Freedom From Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life," the US accused the Nigerian government or its agents as being "responsible for numerous extrajudicial killings, including politically motivated killings of leaders of Boko Haram, an extremist

Islamic group."

Also the report added that "during the year, the Joint Task Force (JTF), a unit formed in 2003 to restore stability in the Niger Delta and composed of elements of the military, police, and security services, conducted raids on militant groups and criminal suspects in the Niger Delta, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. Credible reports also indicated that military personnel and paramilitary mobile police carried out summary executions, assaults, and other abuses across the Niger Delta."

This year's report clearly lambasted the Nigerian police. For instance, it said: "On December 9, there was extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings by the Police in Nigeria, which documented 39 cases of security force killings and enforced disappearances and was based on interviews and research conducted between July 2007 and July 2009."

According to the report, national police were responsible for hundreds of extrajudicial executions, other unlawful killings, and enforced disappearances each year."

In addition, the annual report stated that "victims were not picked at random and, in a country where "bribes guarantee safety," those who could not afford to pay were at risk of being shot or tortured to death. The majority of cases were neither investigated nor perpetrators punished."

Commenting on the level of redress investigations, the US report stated that "when investigations did occur, they did not comply with international standards, and officers suspected of extrajudicial executions were generally sent on training or transferred to other states instead of being prosecuted."

Jonathan Promises Clear Roadmap To Boost Electricity Supply

By Martin Ayankola With Agency Report

President Goodluck Jonathan said recently in Washington, United States, that Nigeria wanted to create a clear roadmap for the development of the power, transportation and aviation industries.

Jonathan said his administration would work toward transparency. "You'll see a clear roadmap," he said of plans to develop electricity generation, transportation projects and aviation, "If we are not moving forward, you will know."

Jonathan, according to a report by Bloomberg, addressed electoral changes, violence in the Niger Delta, human rights abuses and the energy industry in remarks to a standing-room crowd at the Council on Foreign

Relations. He is visiting Washington to take part in President Barack Obama's summit on nuclear security.

"Today as a nation, we are stable and moving forward," Jonathan said. In the year before planned 2011 elections, Nigeria's domestic focus would be on electoral improvements, delivering peace to the oil-rich Niger Delta, work on terrorism threats and efforts to improve Nigeria's international image, Jonathan said.

"We can hold elections that are credible," Jonathan said. "It gives me hope."

Nigeria's electoral commission would be critical in ensuring the fairness of next year's vote, he said.

According to him, those not performing well in the

National Electoral Commission will be removed and "we will appoint fresh blood" if necessary.

Jonathan said Nigeria was exploring natural gas wealth and looking into two new energy areas, coal-fired turbines and a long-term plan to develop nuclear energy.

The development of nuclear power would be an eight- to 10- year endeavour, he said. "Nuclear power is not the one you just wake up and generate," he said.

Jonathan said he had not yet appointed a minister for power and would lead that portfolio himself. "It is one of the greatest challenges we have, the power sector," he said.

Blackouts are a daily occurrence in Nigeria, where

demand for electricity is almost double the current supply.

Jonathan met with Obama on Sunday, an encounter the Nigerian leader described as warm and "quite fruitful." Nigeria is one of the largest suppliers of US crude-oil imports, according to Energy Department data, and the two countries also cooperate on counter-terrorism issues.

Recently, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and the Secretary to the Federal Government, Alhaji Yalale Ahmed, inaugurated the US-Nigeria Bi-National Commission to cooperate on governance issues, the Niger Delta and related security concerns, energy and investment, and food security.

Jonathan Must Probe Funds Allocated To Post-Amnesty Committee -Briggs

By Sola Adebayo

How do you evaluate the amnesty initiative of the Federal Government and lately the post-amnesty programme?

I need to be very clear when I explained this; I have been known to have said the amnesty programme has failed. I am also known to have said that the only thing that has succeeded in this whole process is that government made a call for people to come out and lay their arms down in order to give dialogue and government an opportunity to bring development to the area. And for them to thereafter go through the processes of rehabilitation and re-integration. Now to that point the process of bringing arms out was successful but then it was successful because the people who were approached to bring arms out actually accepted the offer. So in that aspect the success actually belonged to the people who gave up their arms. For me as a person that is where this whole thing stopped. The process of rehabilitation and re-integration should have commenced after the arms were handed over and the people that came out of the creeks should have been moved into the so-called camps that are still not functioning. They should have been moved into camps for counselling which is the logical and proper protocol of doing this type of thing.

Why was that not possible?

It was not possible because it was handled by the wrong people. The Chairman of the Amnesty Committee, Maj.-Gen. Godwin Abbe (rtd.), obviously has never participated in a process like this before. And with all due respect to him; he was not in a position to make it successful. You can also look at it from the angle of not having the correct protocol to actually go through the process. He can be held responsible for actually frustrating the post-amnesty process which should have taken off at the point of handing over guns and rehabilitating the people after which they were re-integrated into the society. But he was not able to do that. The committee was not able to succeed because it did not go through the right process. It was on record that I said from the beginning that the programme will not succeed. And that was why the request for extension of the deadline for the amnesty stage was made in Oporoza, Warri



President Goodluck Jonathan

South West Local Government Area of Delta State because I definitely knew that after the laying down of arms, there would be a gap because nothing was on ground. The camps and training schemes were not ready up till now. If anybody says that they are there, that person is not telling the truth.

Don't you think Gen. Abbe may not be responsible for the failure you claimed? Perhaps, the problems may be as a result of other factors like logistics?

Definitely we were told that the initial budget was N50bn, but then we were told that it was later increased after a lot of people, including myself kicked against it because I could not see the justification in releasing N50bn. If N50bn is to be released, we might as well put it in the development of the Niger Delta.

If you are responsible for a project such as we have with the amnesty project, in which a committee was set up and the former Minister of Defence was the chairman of that committee, if anything about it fails, the bulk stops with him. He is to be held responsible and for me I hold him responsible

for the failure because he was the chairman of the amnesty process as it was constituted then by the President, Umaru Yar'Adua. From whole process of collecting money to put the process on the move, bringing the people out and re-integrating them, till when President Yar'Adua left the country because of ill-health, there is a question to be asked on how the money was spent. This is because we have seen these people protesting on the streets of Niger Delta that the money was not disbursed to them.

Did you notice any sign of fraud?

What I can say categorically is that there are complaints by the people who are supposed to have been paid money every month up till about January/February by their calculation and from the end of October 2009, we started having issues from Bayelsa State and I personally was at a time on television explaining how I actually encountered some of these crisis points along the East/West Road. And some complaints that came to me from the youths in Bayelsa State regarding non-payment of money and even in Rivers State, where there is a camp in Alua with about 180 people.

What are the signs of failure by the re-integration committee?

The failure is the fact that the young men that came out of the creeks are on the streets, even recently there was a demonstration in Edo State and the grievances of the demonstrators is very clear apart from the success of the laying down of arms.

Do you enjoy the support of the ex-militants and other stakeholders in the Niger Delta in your clamour that the Abbe-led committee be probed?

Most Nigerians that I have discussed with on the amnesty process including ex-militants said a large sum of money was committed into a process that obviously has not succeeded

Abbe as the chairman of the committee is the one who has said the amnesty has succeeded. The beneficiaries, the supposed forgiven militants' are saying that it has not succeeded. The beneficiaries are demonstrating in Edo State and other parts of the Niger Delta. Why did they not even go and ask them why they are demonstrating? The Acting President should ask the committee to tell Nigerians how the money was spent.

News

Jonathan Becomes President

Following the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, former Vice-President and Acting-President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, has been sworn-in as the substantive President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

President Jonathan was sworn-in about 9.30am local time Thursday May 6, 2010 by the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Aloysius Kistina-Alu, in Abuja, Nigeria's capital to fill the gap created in the Presidency by the death of

Late President Yar'Adua.

Reports have it that Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua whose depreciating health condition had forced him out of the Presidential Villa for some months, died about 9pm local time on Wednesday May 5, 2010 at the age of 58.

Yar'Adua had on November 23, last year following a heart ailment traveled to Saudi Arabia to seek for medical attention and for over three months nothing was heard from him amid concern about

the power vacuum created at the Presidency until the National Assembly as a matter of necessity voted his vice, Goodluck Jonathan as Acting-President.

Yar'Adua's rumoured and unconfirmed return into the country amid tight security and darkness via the Presidential wing of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja, in an air ambulance remained one issue that troubled the nation and the presidency in particular, as even the Acting-President

had no knowledge of his return and was denied access to see ailing Yar'Adua, until the news of his death on May 5, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

Newly sworn-in President Goodluck Jonathan in his maiden address to the nation while pledging the support of the government and people of Nigeria to the Yar'Adua family during this period of trial, prayed God for the repose of the soul of his late boss.

He said he will ensure a total commitment to

good governance, electoral reform and the fight against corruption which he said would be pursued with greater vigour.

President Jonathan stated that efforts at ensuring the sustenance of peace and development in the Niger Delta, as well as the security of life and property around the entire country would be of top most priority in the remaining period of the present administration.

The President reassured Nigerians of governments commitment to improve on the socio-economic situation in the country through improved

access to electricity, water, education, health facilities and other social amenities would continue to be given the needed emphasis and furthered that youth unemployment and workers welfare will also be given priority.

Meanwhile in fulfillment of his earlier promise to restructure the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in line with his commitment to electoral reforms, President Goodluck Jonathan have appointed Mr. Solomon Soyebi as the new Chairman of INEC.



Devastating site of a recent Oil Spill in Gokana, Ogoni Land

Ogoni Children's Cultural And Fundamental Rights Council Oppose Military Base

By Ben Wuloo Ikari, (Founder and Executive Director of OCAFAC-USA)

The Ogoni Children's Cultural and Fundamental Rights Council (OCAFAC USA) joins other meaningful Ogonis, non Ogoni groups home and abroad to oppose the Rivers State Government's proposed imposition of a deadly military base in Ogoni. We have reasoned that investing in a trained police force (already stationed in the area) with the respect and protection for human rights is the feasible and acceptable option to a military base. Military bases are not instruments for job creation and other quality life providers Ogonis need to support their children at the moment and in the long-term.

The state government should therefore invest in a matter of urgency in job creation, electricity, simple pipe borne water supply which have been a mirage for more than 50 years of false promises. The state and Federal Government should invest in hospitals, children emergency rooms or clinics, recreational parks and other sustainable infrastructures and not a deadly military camp. OCAFAC views the planned relocation of said military base or cantonment otherwise known as Bori Camp, which was originally located in Ogoni after the Nigeria/Biafra civil war as an affront, insult and threat to the existence of the Ogoni children.

Ogoni children had suffered and still suffering

untold hardship, trauma and post traumatic injuries and stress from the havoc unleashed on them and their parents by the Shell Oil paid military of Nigeria. They have not forgotten the intimidation, rape, burning of their homes, extortion and killing of their parents, sibling and friends. The Shell, Abacha, Dauda Musa Komo, Paul Okuntimo's, etc. led military activities, crimes against humanity and genocide of 1993 through 1996 are not lost on these children.

They are appalled by the insensitivity of the present Nigerian Government, which allows "Governor" Chibuike Amaechi to further the aforementioned repressive and deadly agenda against the Ogoni children. Children are meant to be the most valued and protected group in any society.

The battered Ogoni children who need treatments, counseling and rehabilitation for defects resulting from the inhuman military actions are denied their rights to treatment and a new life. A military base will worsen their situations and force them to endure dangerous psychological, psychiatric and other health conditions inimical to their development and growth.

No one can become an adult without passing through the developmental experiences of children. That is, no children no adult! Children are our pride; the pride of the world, hence the leaders of tomorrow and

should be accorded adequate services and protection in all ramifications. Ogoni children deserve proper upbringing through government support to parents. They deserve equal opportunity and qualitative education; they deserve to be properly invested in, cared for, inspired and motivated instead of being threatened by the ubiquitous presence of soldiers who have proven to be enemies. Ogoni children like any children of the world must not be forced to suffer physically, psychologically or otherwise.

No child on earth deserves any form of ill treatment. Children do not deserve the treatment forced down their throats by government when their nationality is constantly boxed, disrespected, exploited, raped and polluted. They do not merit the challenges resulting from the government or military brutalization of their parents, sibling, loved ones and friends. In short, no child should be made to become hungry, uneducated, nor should they have a sense of bleak future. Children's rights are clearly written out and protected by international covenants or treaties and must be respected by the Nigerian Government.

They merit adequate and qualitative health care services. Ogoni children, like all children on earth deserve the best from their family, neighbors or neighborhoods, friends, institutions and especially government which

has the constitutional duty to create an environment conducive for their growth, health and protection. Ogoni children deserves to be treated with respect, dignity, consideration, love and understanding. They do not deserve to be occupied by the Nigerian Armed Forces, which has demonstrated that neither they nor their parents, etc. matters. They have been repeatedly shown an unwillingness or inability to be protected. OCAFAC USA therefore call on the Federal, State and Local Governments, and relevant national, international governmental and nongovernmental bodies (such as Amnesty Nigeria, Civil Liberties Organization, Human Rights Africa, Amnesty International, United Nations, African Union among others) to ensure the protection and adequate investment in, and development of the Ogoni and all other children around the globe.

Relocating a military base which will further devastate them is not one of the measures needed for their development at the moment considering their ugly and unfortunate experiences with the military institution in Nigeria. Nigeria is not at war with Ogoni therefore relocating a military base from the state capital (Port Harcourt) to Ogoni, which government may have defined as a dumping ground is crass and preposterous. Ogoni children and people's fears are real and must not be

undermined but respected. Positive developments and relationships must be planned or ensured to allay these fears that are well founded and not inflate them with another military threat. Ogoni deserves development like Port Harcourt as of right, not to mention the fact that it sustained the nation with its oil resources for more than 35 years. How long shall it continue to be getting nothing back, but death and a degraded environment?

Finally, we call on all Ogonis at home and well meaning people of Rivers State and the nation at large to protest this planned relocation aimed at exposing the children and their parents to dangers such as molestation, rape, extortion, harassment and death. They have witnessed this before and do not want to revisit such despicable scenes. Ogonis are especially asked to vote against Amaechi in the forthcoming elections, if at all Nigeria will have the grace to exist, vote fairly and freely against the usual imposition of public officers and rulers. There is no reason the Ogoni electorates should support the election of someone of Amaechi's caliber for a continuous stay in office. His administration is obviously illegal as he did not contest any election but use the backdoor to impose himself on the state.

A vote against Amaechi's bid to implement this policy is a vote for democracy, good governance, accountability, respect for the state and its people contrary to what

obtains today.

Meanwhile, the people of Ogoni have unanimously stopped Shell and other oil companies from stealing their oil/gas resources and ruining the environment in collaboration with the federal and state governments.

A plan to relocate this diabolical military base to Ogoni might not be unconnected with the people's refusal to allow oil extraction without the implementation of the nationality's demands as prescribed in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR), and against government's gimmick. Consequently, a vote against Amaechi will stop the imposition of the military base which motive could be to prepare grounds for the forceful resumption of oil exploitation in Ogoni.

Military institution is a federal government business, but Amaechi is the person (according to the Rivers State Secretary to government) who accepted to bear the relocation and development of the new site's cost. He is therefore the one forcing the project on the already battered Ogonis, but also reported to have completed plans to relocate the University of Science and Technology from Port Harcourt to the Obima environs-where he comes from. In his thinking only his people deserve education, but Ogonis deserve death by the brutality and guns of the unprofessional military. OCAFAC oppose his mischievous moves and demands educational and other positive and growth-based project instead. This is proper for the Ogoni children, parents and nationality.

Ogoni Monarch to Confer Chieftaincy Title on British Humanitarian

Gary Foxcroft a British Humanitarian and founder of the Stepping Stone Nigeria, (a child right young and dynamic charity that work with grassroots partner community organization to protect, save and transform the lives of disadvantaged children in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria) will be conferred with a chieftaincy title of Mene Vure I of Bodo.

This was the pronunciation made by the Menebon Bodo HRH King Felix Sunday Bebor Berebon during the 2009 Xmas Carol Community procession made by Bebor Int'l Model Nur/Pri. School, a missionary leading kindergarten educational institution located in Bodo and with an extension

campus at Bane, Ken Saro Wiwa home town. King Bebor said the conferment is in recognition of the activist contribution towards the continuous kindergarten educational growth of Bebor Bodo and the Ogoni Nationality through the provision of Bore hole, and Scholarship to the less privilege as well as the rehabilitation of the school, especially the funding of an annex of the school by the Noami foxcroft Coekery Centre named after Gary's wife also located at Bodo City.

Earlier Rev. Moses Nyimale Lezor an ordained missionary teacher and founder of the school through an address read by KpooBari Vikina a teacher in the school has presented a live goat and a local gown to the Menebon in council as a

Christmas gift to the newly reconstituted members of the Bodo chief's council. He further appeal to the king to grant them permission in order that they will erect signpost along the Bodo water ways, so that marine drivers will take precaution in order to minimize the high rate of accident by speed boat drivers plying the Bodo/Bonny water ways.

The Christmas procession which took the over one thousand pupils round the 35 villages of Bodo ended at Saint Andrew's Anglican Mission where the Bebor flag of knowledge a Book which is a collection of poems, music, rhymes and essay on Ogoni and the Niger delta cultural heritage and civilization edited by the school founder was presented to a sea of people who came from all work of life for the end of year ceremony.

A 32 year-old man, Abraham Kalu who allegedly sells vulture meat as chicken to unsuspecting members of the public has been arrested by the Police in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The suspect was arrested by the Police on a tip-off by traders at the mile 3 slaughter in Diobu area of Port Harcourt where he was seen catching vultures.

Our reporter gathered that some vultures numbering six, were found in his bag when he was arrested.

The suspect told Policemen that he started the filthy business three months ago, when he moved into Port Harcourt from Ohafia town in neighbouring Abia State on completion of his apprenticeship under one Maxwell, who is also engaged in a similar business near the Army Barracks in Ohafia and Obinze in Abia and Imo states respectively.

The suspect said he relocated to Port Harcourt

Selling Vulture as Chicken! Seller Arrested in Port Harcourt

because his boss (Maxwell) had told him that there are more vultures in Port Harcourt, with an attendant potential bigger catches and higher profit.

Kalu who said he is an indigene of Ndioji in Arochuku Local Government Area of Abia state shocked the police officers at the mile 3 police station when he narrated how he catches the vultures by rubbing snuff on fresh meat to make the vultures dizzy and too weak to fly away after eating the meat.

He said after the catch, he would dress the slain vultures and inject a chemical into them to instantly clear their offensive peculiar odour.

Although, he had earlier told his interrogators that the dressed vultures were

strictly sold to native doctors who use them for rituals, he could neither name such clients nor explain why he had to dress and inject the dead vultures with chemicals before selling them.

On how he has been able to evade arrest before now, the suspect said people believed him each time told them that the vultures were for native doctors.

According to him, a dressed vulture is sold for between N500 and N1, 000 depending on the size and location of the transaction.

However, police sources said a thorough investigation into the matter have commenced, but advised members of the public to be cautious of what they consume.

It was once said that the worth of a man is defined or measured by the value of his content *not the size of his frame or more so outward appearance*. (Emphasis is mine). That is why some diminutive size people have become some of the world acclaimed heroes and or celebrities, coordinating and controlling men, women twice their physical attributes. You may be wondering the reason behind the choice of the title especially when our focus is on increased political awareness towards improved positive, civilized political participation. It has increasingly become necessary that we discuss some neglected but salient issues that impairs and erode the worth of our individual values. How we set priorities and upon what we set our priorities matter in this circumstance. I may be wrong, but you may observe with me that most young people of our generation misplaces priorities so much that a lot are concerned with what impression their look have on people.

No doubt, our continent, country, region, ethnicities especially Ogonis are blessed with very handsome and beautiful people. Perhaps because we are endowed with the resources of life that reduces our level of lack of food especially, we are blessed with warless conflicts that would have cost us our conveniences and make us look hollow and haggard. At every gathering of our people I see God's creative artistry in both boys and girls that can compete for pageants any where in the world. I see physiques they wear effortlessly which people spend serious money to attain in very expensive gyms all over. I see complexions and skin texture that glow yet were not treated to sophisticated cosmetics. I see body contours that amplify the best of cloths and fashion in all its elegance. But like Ecclesiastics the preacher would say "*all is vanity*". We need to realize that without quality content every container is worthless and not better than a piece of garbage, talk less of the volume of noise it can make.

Handsome yes! Beautiful yes! But what value can you place on your self? If you were a piece of merchandise displayed for sale, how much will you worth in a competitive market? These questions call for reflection. Some of us are apt to complain that there was nobody to sponsor us in school. Some that had some kind of sponsor but failed along the way will claimed that they lacked advice. Like the Bible would say *we are inexcusable*. Our fore fathers struggled hard to create the value of Goodwill that some of us enjoy today. It may not all have been about wealth of money and bequeathed estate but the sacrifice to train our fathers out of nothing and in the face of daunting economic challenges went along way to input a content in the family upon which some of us are adding values. Like I said earlier, we are inexcusable more because of the numerous opportunities that abound now that was not their in their time. Information sharing which is a key to knowledge acquisition and by extension economic power is done with ease now. All we need to do is to set our mind on adding values by all legitimate means. Our people say an adage that *every*

GenerationNext Agenda

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



Handsome Or Beauty And Values

little effort at rowing the boat makes an impact on the boat. In your boat of life what effort are you making to row it? other wise you may have been stagnant.

I may be disappointing the fans of this column that had poured in commendations and indicated willingness to join in our campaign for conscious political participation. In the last edition we declared the commencement of a campaign titled **Our Vote Must Count**. This column will not renege on its avowed commitment to create awareness and conscientize the eligible voting public to place value on their vote. And in search of tips that could improve the campaign, *we discovered that no more value can be placed on sensitive political issues and the society than the worth of the value of individual citizens that make up the society*. There is the likelihood to under price oneself if one do not know his or her worth. The essence of the campaign is to bring the eligible voting public to the awareness that *their vote is their currency with which they trade for better governance*. America today is a typical example. The teeming black populace where disenchanting with American racist democracy and displayed weak participation in previous elections. Yet were politically aware and conscious that they have the power to change things. All they were waiting for is the right instrument for change. This came in our brother and their black son, Senator Barack Obama.

Here in Africa, Nigeria, Niger Delta and indeed all the LGAs in Ogoni we have the power to change things for the better. Rather than murmur, grumble or device wicked means to show resentment and disapproval of the political leaderships in place we need to utilize the power of our votes in negotiation and electing trusted and credible leadership. In doing this, **basic steps** need taking.

1. You must be eligible to vote by ensuring that you are registered and that your name is in the voters register. It is a civil right.
2. Be aware of the political timetable or calendar and

3. consequent events pursuant to the election.
3. Shop, assess and be convinced on the credibility, capability and track record of a suitable candidate irrespective of the party.
4. With recourse to enabling legal permits, organize fund raising dinner to make available resources for both campaign and possible litigation in the event of subversion of mandate.
5. Develop personal and group campaign organizations that will plan and strategize early enough in conjunction with choice party of the candidate for the choice candidate within the ambit of the enabling electoral law and procedure so that his or her candidacy is not jeopardized.
6. Mobilize eligible and registered voters to be present at the pooling centers and also at the collation centers till election result is declared.
7. Mobilize and sensitize co supporters with mapped out civilized and legitimate strategies to defend their collective mandate. Etc

The outline of political actions listed above can not be understood and appreciate by people of low virtue and weak value. The odds are overwhelming and understandable. Literacy level is a factor and in addition to that the political antecedents that characterize Nigerian politics have seriously eroded the confidence of the public in the process. This informed the lackluster attitude of especially the elite public towards politics. Most technocrats who can fend for their immediate families do not want to have any thing to do with politics. They consider politicians as intellectual failures and social misnomer who want to take the short cut to a fulfilling life. They consider politics to be so dirty that, to them, even the most respected political representative is not better than the recruited political thug from the motor park in judgment and approach to issues. This notion is so deep seated that it may only take aggressive campaign like we have embarked on to change. I am optimistic that when credible, accountable, trustworthy and transparent technocrats and elites of the society begin to declare their stake in politics, it will certainly arouse the needed interest and checks requisite for effectual governance.

I emphasized in an earlier discourse that when we are careless about who eventually emerges as a political leader or representative, our collective destiny also tows the careless path. His representative capabilities become ours, his policy endorsements becomes ours and his opinion becomes our opinion. This is what political representation means. If we must dictate the tone of governance, then we must pay the piper through voting decisions. Truly speaking, there is a fear of the majority. If only we concert resolves we can change things for the better. Add value to yourself and the society by valuing your votes. Once again let me remind us that **Our Vote Must Count** if the desired change must be achieved.

For the Record

MOVEMENT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE Ogoni PEOPLE (MOSOP)

6 Etionahia Close (By Kia Motors), off Olu Obasanjo Rd., PortHarcourt; Rivers State, Peace and Freedom Centre, Bori - Ogoni
P.O Box 10162, Port Harcourt, Tel/Fax: 234-84-233907, 230250; e-mail: mosop@phcalinkserv.com

COMMUNIQUE OF THE NIGER DELTA ETHNIC NATIONALITIES' AWARENESS CONFERENCE ON THE Report of the TCND REPORT HELD AT THE HOTEL EXCEL, KM1, REFINERY ROAD, WARRI, DELTASTATE ON THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2010.

A one-day Ethnic Nationalities' Awareness Conference on the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta [TCND] organized by the **Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People [MOSOP]** was held at Hotel Excel, KM 1, Refinery Road, Warri, Delta State on the 29th of April, 2010. The following communiqué was issued:-
After exhaustive discussions on the various issues raised in the report: The Conference observes as follows:

? That it acknowledges MOSOP's efforts in reproducing and making available the TCND Report to the various peoples in the region at the grassroot, and also commends the organization for such laudable initiative.

? the non implementation of the salient recommendations of the Niger delta Technical committee which represent a most credible road map for the resolution of the Niger delta crisis for the Niger Delta groups and need to urgently fashion out a credible framework to pressure the various levels of government to act on the Report;
The Conference thus resolved as follows:

? Urgently set up an Ethnic Nationalities' Representative Forum Action Committee to work out modalities for a day of Action on the implementation of the recommendations of the TCND Report which should be held in Abuja.

? Calls on each community based organizations (CBOs) and ethnic groups to sensitize their respective grass roots on the significant aspects of the report and the need for the people to pressure the respective governments towards the implementation of the TCND Report, which is recognized as the most credible basis for the resolution of the Niger Delta issues.

? Calls on MOSOP to further reproduce and distribute a simplified version of the Report to enable the Ethnic communities in the region to sensitize all their members.

? The Forum called for a reorganization of the current Amnesty programme for an effective Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation to accord with international best practices.

? The forum also calls for a strong and practicable advocacy for the implementation of the TCND Report and calls on each nationality group to undertake to disseminate the content of the report to all members of their community as well as use our Faith Based Organisations and social groups to sensitize the people.

S/N Signatories

- 1 Chief (Dr) Mamamu SY [Chairman INC Western Zone]
- 2 Barr. (Chief) V.B. Bamuza-Mutu National Legal Adviser INC
- 3 Comrade Ugbobi Peters
- 4 Agbor Uzezi
- 5 Efe Ideh
- 6 CAPJ Amos I.J.
- 7 Mr. Paul Bukuwa
- 8 Madam Fuludu Mary
- 9 Mrs. Ogeh Agnes
- 10 Amerika A. Ebiotu
- 11 Osakwuni Tessa U.
- 12 Hyacinith Nduizuokwu
- 13 Ndubuokwu Festus
- 14 Barr. B.D. Ekpese
- 15 Achimota Dickson
- 16 Prince John D. Egbe
- 17 Tari Dadiowei
- 18 Beatrice Sikpi
- 19 Ambah Binaebi
- 20 Dorgu Fortune Tari
- 21 Alagoa Morris
- 22 Chief (Comrade) Nengi James
- 23 Doutimiye Ogbofa
- 24 Ledum Mitee
- 25 Dr Sofiri Joab Peterside

Plans to share petroleum wealth were meant to bring peace to Nigeria's troubled oil province. But Daniel Howden finds that an arms amnesty is failing and the Delta remains a powder keg

It is a little after dark in Port Harcourt and the electricity comes on long enough to illuminate a football match on the forecourt of a petrol station. For spectators, the young players have a line of parked cars waiting for a rumoured delivery of fuel the next morning. The dim light shows the exhaust fumes of passing traffic and a game that's as enthusiastic as it is shortlived. After five minutes, the lights go out.

Within a 200-mile radius of the capital of Rivers State there is a higher concentration and larger reserves of sweet, easily refined crude oil than anywhere else in the world. And yet the forecourt friendly gives a glimpse of much of what has gone wrong in the Niger Delta: a toxic cocktail of unemployment, fuel shortages, pollution, poverty and power cuts.

These are what people mean when they talk about the "underlying causes" of an armed uprising that halved production in Africa's oil giant and eventually prompted a much-vaunted and now failing amnesty.

According to its own statistics the Nigerian government has spent 8.6trn naira (£37bn) to disarm and rehabilitate Delta militants whose attacks on oil installations, kidnappings and bombings hobbled the energy sector and moved world oil markets. The amnesty, which has cost 2.7m naira per militant, according to upper estimates of the number of fighters, is now due to enter a second phase costing the same amount again.

A series of recent attacks, culminating in a multiple car bombing at the site of peace talks in the Delta's Bayelsa State last week claimed by the powerful Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend), have left many here asking where the money went.

Part of the answer is supposed to lie about 30 miles outside Port Harcourt at Aluu, one of the half dozen amnesty camps where the young fighters who emerged from the creeks to lay down their weapons are supposed to be starting their new lives. A rundown series of outbuildings with a rusted sign advertising its former existence as an agricultural college, Aluu is home to 300 surrendered militants. It's guarded by a handful of bored soldiers tasked with keeping journalists out and militants in. But in the stifling heat they manage neither.

The camp's de facto leader is a tall and powerfully built man who calls himself Prince Wisdom. Formerly second in command to Dokubo Asari, he was among the most senior militants to take part in the amnesty. And he's not happy with the results. "Nothing is being done up to this day," he says, sitting in the back of a car parked at a safe distance from the camp. "The boys are not being rehabilitated. There is no water and no lights in the camp."

His "boys" receive a monthly stipend of 10,500 naira but nothing else. Many of them have tired of the charade and left. Promises made to him personally have been broken, he says angrily, including a deal to relocate his family.

Before the 29 year old became a prince he was Jihad Amacribe a junior officer in the army who deserted after the execution of Delta activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. The militants are not criminals as the government calls them, he insists. They fought because of the "deprivation" and "because nothing is done for the Niger Delta" which produces more than 95 percent of the country's export earnings.

Only 120 of his boys have remained at the camp, the others have drifted home or back to the creeks where many of their weapons were hidden rather than handed in. "You can't take someone who was licking sugar and give him salt to lick and expect him to be happy," he warns.

While complaining of asthma and death threats from his erstwhile boss, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, Prince Wisdom is running out of patience: "If they don't settle me I will use my last blood to fight them. I will destroy a lot of things."

Among the key architects of the amnesty was then-spokeswoman for Mend, Annkio Briggs. She shuttled back and forth between the capital Abuja and the militant camps for months. Sitting in her house in the back streets of Port Harcourt she's unequivocal in saying that the amnesty has failed: "The issue of the Delta and the financial crisis when oil production went under 1 million barrels a day made the government offer the amnesty."

Looking less like a militant and more like a veteran flamenco dancer with blood red nails, shoes, belt and hair scraped back, she shouts above the din of a tropical rainstorm drumming the roof. "There wasn't insecurity because the people of the Niger Delta wanted insecurity; it's because of neglect, abuse and looting of the people's resources."

She says she believes the government intended to use a rejection of the amnesty as a pretext to unleash the army and "declare war" on the people of the Niger Delta. The ceasefire has "called their bluff" and exposed false promises about

The Curse of Oil Still Stalks Nigeria Delta

infrastructure, jobs and training. Once the groups had lain down their arms and a few commanders, like Mend's "Boyloaf", had moved to Abuja, nothing more was done, she says.

"We're back where we started.

"There are more than 1,000 Boyloafs out there," she yells. "Do you think he's the only man in his community who can carry a gun?"

In her description, Africa's most populous nation is a place "where your vote can cost you your life"; a place of epic corruption where "97 per cent of the wealth is taken by a handful of people"; where "police will kill you" for the equivalent of 50p.

"Violence is not the core of the issue, it's a symptom. It's the only way to get attention. We've warned the government and the international community that this won't go away. The Niger Delta is a powder keg of nuclear proportions."

Across town in his crumbling office overlooking the rusted rolling stock of the defunct colonial railway, Ledum Mitee offers a living link with the peaceful protests of the past.

Ken Saro-Wiwa and the activists who were hung under the dictator General Sani Abacha in 1995 were friends of the veteran lawyer who now heads the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The amnesty, he says, is just "patronage and corruption".

"Just drop your guns and we'll give you some cash can't be a substitute for a peace process."

Slumped over a fraying couch, he sounds tired. "You always ring the bells, say this will have consequences and no one listens." The oil companies claim there is now peace and cite increased oil production as evidence, he says. "They've just bought some time. People's lives have not improved and they are saying 'we have dropped our guns and you are getting more revenue and we are getting more misery'."

Solutions are not necessarily as elusive as they seem, he argues. "There are simple things that you can do to tie production to community benefits." He reels of a list: use electricity at oil company flow stations to give power and pump water to local communities; put royalties per barrel into a community trust fund making people allies in production.

These are not revolutionary ideas they have been written in numerous international and local reports. But this does not mean the government is stupid either. "We're not right to assume that oil companies or the government are serious when they say they want the conflict resolved.

"Once the lives of these people improve even marginally they will not buy loyalty so easily. Remember you have to break the legs of the people to sell them crutches."

Rumuekpe is one of these broken places. An hour outside Port Harcourt a once thriving community of 5,000 people is now a collection of ruins being slowly reclaimed by the dense jungle.

Only a handful of people remain, several of them camped out in the stripped down shell of what was once the town hall, the only two-storey structure still standing. In the distance a rushing sound like a waterfall can be heard where a gas flare sends a black and stinking cloud into the sky. Burning since 1967 it is surrounded by sands the colour of tar.

Walking through chest high grass towards his old house, Emeka Eke explains what happened here.

The discovery of oil in the 1960s huge deposits of it originally inspired great hopes that this modest farming community would develop rapidly. However, a policy of "divide and rule" by the companies that came to Rumuekpe, he says, eventually led to a nightmarish cycle of violence that pitched neighbour against neighbour in competition for money.

"This is where my sister was killed," says Emeka pointing to some bullet holes in the broken masonry. "She was about to have a child, her husband died too, here, in my garden."

Rival factions sprang up with the backing of oil money, locals allege, and a vicious civil war was fought. Evidence of the battle lies strewn about the place among burnt out houses. "The companies would give money and food to whichever group was winning," he says.

Throughout this period, four oil majors Agip, Shell, Total and Niger Delta Petroleum Resources have pumped hundreds of millions of dollars out of the shattered community.

Emeka is part of a residents' association that has tried to document what happened and begin the process of reconciliation and return. They estimate that as many as 200 people died in the area before the community was abandoned in 2005. An independent report carried out by the local rights NGO Social Action was unequivocal in blaming big oil for its divisive actions.

Local leaders are determined to keep their protests peaceful but admit some of their youth have left in the past to

the creeks to join militant groups. Efforts to revive Rumuekpe have been complicated by repeated large scale oil leaks that have further degraded the local environment.

The fate of Rumuekpe, while bleak, is not exceptional. Hundreds of communities nestled among the rivers, creeks and swamps of the Delta have received a similarly bitter dividend from the oil wealth being pumped out.

In many senses, the exception lies further out in Ogoniland, one of the few communities to turn its back decisively on oil. The approach to K-Dere could not be more different to the wreckage of Rumuekpe. It offers a glimpse of a different region that has been lost in the past half century of drilling. Behind his tin-roofed house, Amstel Gbarakpor feels compelled to start unloading yams on the floor to illustrate the huge changes that have taken place in the once polluted soil around the village where the pumping stopped in 1993.

"Before we couldn't grow anything without large amounts of fertiliser. Now we need no fertiliser at all," he says dusting the dirt off huge yams. A community leader who grew up during the worst of the oil abuses and mass protests against Shell he remembers the dark days surrounding Saro-Wiwa's execution.

"Because of Shell, we couldn't get crops like this" he says. "Shell was here from 1958 to 1993 and we got nothing. The only tarred road led to the oil wells."

Those wells are staying sealed for now but talks are under way to relaunch operations with another company as local feelings still run high at the mention of Shell. Despite the fertile fields of Ogoniland there is widespread support for another experiment with oil but on wholly different terms. "We know what happened before but the new leadership won't take the shit that we took," says the 48 year old.

Some remain sceptical that if Ogoniland agrees to let the oil companies back in that they will escape the conflicts that continue all around them.

Back towards the main road an ominous reminder of past atrocities rumbles in, in the form of a Shell convoy on its way to cap some of the rusting wells that are scattered through the fields of K-Dere. The truck is escorted into this enemy territory by black jeeps known as "scorpions" from the Joint Task Force the Nigerian security forces deployed so often as the oil industry's enforcers in the Delta. For all the talk of revenue sharing and peaceful partnerships for development the lead scorpion carries a different message. Above the heads of the heavily armed black-clad soldiers the legend "Warlord" has been painted by hand in white letters.

Natural Wealth: Nigerian Energy

*Nigeria is the eighth largest exporter of oil in the world as well as being the fifth biggest source of US imports, and contends with Angola to be the largest producer in Africa.

*At full capacity the industry can produce three million barrels a day but militant attacks in the Niger Delta have cut production by an estimated 40 per cent.

*In the last three decades oil has earned Nigeria \$300bn (£200bn) but the average Nigerian has grown poorer over the same time span.

*Nigeria has the seventh largest proven gas reserves in the world.

Poem

Growing Up

Waving goodbye to
childhood's sweetest
fantasies
To brace life's truest
realities
Singing!
"Though life throws me to
the brick wall
I'll never fall
I'll always stand fall
I will grow up"

I know growing this way
Gives a lot of stories to say
But you surely wouldn't
choose growing my way
The hard way
Nothing seems fair when ...
Your crunching footsteps
on the coal far
Is not a sign you'll go far
When breakfast is a pie in

your pocket
The kind you love to forget
And dinner is only a thought
in your head
Till you go to bed

No more daddy's frequent
toy gifts
And mummy's tender kiss
lifts
For those who use to have it
Now hustling and hustling
under sun and rain
With you alone to feel the
pain
When it seems impossible
to reach the top
Know it's the pangs of
growing up.

Annah Dornubari
(choicepoet)

In its quest for the Federal Government implementation of the Recommendations of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, MOSOP continued its Awareness/Sensitization Programme for Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta. Pictures below are scenes of one of the fora in Warri, Delta State, recently.



MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee making a speech at the Ethnic Nationalities Conference



Resource Person, Dr. Sofiri Peterside speaking at the Conference

Pictures below are scenes at MOSOP Inter-Kingdom Meeting held at Ebu, Eleme recently



Some Key MOSOP Officials singing the Ogoni anthem at the MOSOP Inter-Kingdom meeting in Ebu, Eleme



A Cross Section of participants at the Ethnic Nationalities Conference



FOWA Group making a presentation at the MOSOP Inter-Kingdom Meeting at Ebu, Eleme



A Participant making contribution at the Conference



Cross Section of participants at the MOSOP Inter-Kingdom Meeting at Ebu, Eleme



A Participant making contribution at the Conference