

2009 Budget

FG Unfair to  
N'Delta - *Clark*

P6

UNPO

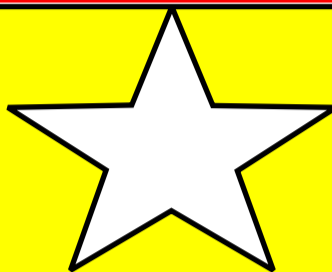
Exposes Rights  
Abuses in Nig.

P4

MOSOP Hotlines

08060299600  
08078864777  
08023230888

# OGONI STAR



VOICE OF NIGER DELTA PEOPLE



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# “2009 Ogoni Day: A Final Burial Rite of Shell” - *MOSOP*

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Gov. Amaechi and Mitee

MOSOP  
Launches  
War Against  
Kidnapping

Gov Amaechi  
Lauds Ogoni's  
Non-Violent  
Strategy

Hon Bagayeghe Provides free Computer Literacy Scheme in Ward 14 P2

## MOSOP ANTI KIDNAPPING CAMPAIGN

• MAKE OGOINI KIDNAP - FREE

• SAY NO TO:

- ***Kidnapping***
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- ***Armed Robbery***

## EXPOSE THEM!

*On event of Distress/Kidnap threat,  
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Bori: 08035515644, Eleme: 08033469180  
Gokana: 08033135309, Tai: 08056233548  
PPRO: 07034423908

*Emergency Numbers (24hrs)*

08032003514, 08059107873, 08073777717, 08073777757, 08073777787

OR

*MOSOP Hotlines:*

08060299600, 08023230888, 08078864777

## What we want Govt to do - *Mitee*

*By Kelvin Ebiri*

Aside the 25 per cent on country's economy and its derivation it political stability would be recommended for the further threatened and her oil-producing states, the Presidential Niger Delta Technical Committee also demanded that the companies prospecting for oil in the region should be made to establish an Insurance Trust Fund against Pollution.

It called for the establishment of a Community Trust Fund into which oil firms would be compelled to pay a certain percentage per barrel.

These facts were revealed by the chairman of the Committee, Ledum Mitee, in an exclusive interview at the weekend.

Mitee, leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, however warned of dire consequences should the government decide to dump the report.

Mitee projected that the

international image battered if the Government reneged on its promise to implement the recommendations of the committee.

Mitee, who expects some of the recommendations to be implemented between the next six and 18 months, has also appealed to militant groups to give the President a chance to demonstrate his commitment to the resolution of the Niger Delta conflict, which is one of his seven-point agenda.

He noted that past governments though aware of the challenges of neglect and underdevelopment facing the Niger Delta region, had displayed lack of necessary political will. But he urged the Yar'Adua administration to act on the recommendations of the committee, which he said incorporated the resolutions of

## Advertorial

### Beeri Community, Khana LGA

All sons and daughters of Beeri, at home and abroad and the general public are by this announcement informed that the Beeri people in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State have, in a general meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2008, set up a PEACE COMMITTEE to look into the causes of the perennial disturbances in the area, assess the damages done and make recommendations as to providing solutions to a lasting peace.

All aggrieved persons should please bury their hatchets, state their grievances and be prepared to embrace peace. Those with useful information about the disturbances should submit their memoranda, to reach the secretary of the Committee on or before Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

The Committee is given one month to complete its assignment. We must revamp our lost image.

#### MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Prince Andy Naka Nwikananee
2. Mr. MbaraBari Amos
3. Mr. Lekia Nwidum
4. Mr. Charles Tonbira Nwite
5. Mr. Graham Bale Tuaneh
6. Mr. Peter N. Nwile
7. Mr. Anthony D. Nedam
8. Mr. Barikpe Rogers
9. Mr. Gbaranaawae S. Kabaari
10. Mr. Gabriel Gbaraedo
11. Mr. George Pyakabaari Sam
12. Elder Warri Gilbert
13. Elder Brownson Namanee
19. Chief Letam S. Nyonaie
20. Chief Beke Nwiator
21. Rev. Dr. D. M. Nwigbarane (JP)
22. Rev. Prof. Douglas K. Michael
23. Rev. Darlynton L. Warri
24. Rev. Peter C.G. Neemana
25. Barrister Joy Yimebe Nunieh
26. Barrister Ledum Deekae
27. Hon. Dumnamene Dekor
28. Hon. Nesfield B. Nwiko
29. Hon. Letam G.A. Korsi
30. Councillor Lemii Jeremiah
31. Councillor Promise B. Fyneface
32. Councillor Deelee Deedam
33. Madam Nancy N. Leton

## Hon. Bagayeghe Provides Free Computer Literacy

*By Christian B. Gbenes*

Over 30 youths in Yeghe Community in Gokana Local Government Area have benefited from free computer literacy scheme embarked upon by the Councillor representing ward 14 Yeghe in the Gokana Legislative Assembly, Hon. Sorbari Bagayeghe.

As part of his efforts to curb the menace of youths restiveness and in recognising the plight of the less privileged youths in Yeghe Community, Hon. Sorbari Bagayeghe had on assumption of office as the councillor representing ward 14 Yeghe in the Gokana Local Government Legislative Assembly, organised a Free Computer Training course as youths empowerment scheme in Bua Yeghe community.

The scheme, which has been on for a period of six months with a total number of 33 students, trained on the various courses in computer application, including other subjects like English Appreciation and Office Practice, had a graduation

ceremony recently organised at the Nukpor Town square by Hon Sorbari Bagayeghe to honour graduans of his free computer training scheme.

Addressing dignitaries at the graduation ceremony, Hon. Bagayeghe expressed satisfaction over the success of the scheme and also assured that he will strive hard to sustain it as one of his democratic dividends.

Moreso, in areas of human development, the Gokana legislative member told the gathering that over six persons have been sent out on training in the following fields; Solar Electricity with Sotex Integrated Services, Lagos, furniture/ carpentry works, Driving and Welding.

He thus called on concerned individuals, and groups to support the scheme as he is planning to embark on another initiative tagged; "women initiative programme" aimed at women empowerment in 2009.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Mr. E.D. Gbueba,

# “2009 Ogoni Day: A Final Burial Rite of Shell” - MOSOP

The people of Ogoni ethnic nationality have laid to rest the discourse and issues bordering on possible resumption of oil activities in their area by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), thereby calling on the Federal Government of Nigeria to ensure that the new oil operator that will be given the licence demonstrably prove to them it can deliver by operating the best international corporate environmental practices.

The Ogoni people, who expressed contentment that the Federal Government has finally come to accept what they have always insisted; that Shell is persona non-grata in Ogoni, said just like they saw off Abacha, “we are here at this same place where we all declared “No to Shell” in one voice some 16 years ago, and at this hour, at this moment formally conducting the final burial ceremonies of Shell in Ogoniland.

In his speech at this year's Ogoni Day Cerebration on January 4, 2009 at Birabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori, under the theme: Ogoni After Shell”, the MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee further noted that the ceremony was not just the burial rites of corporate irresponsibility but also the celebration of the victory of non-violence as a strategy in an increasingly violent environment. “Yes, non-violence works, after all,” he said.

While disclosing that the details of the benchmarks which have been set and approved by a broad spectrum of the Ogoni people, through the Ogoni Contact Group, will be presented soon to all the authorities involved broadly, adding that the Ogonis will insist on the best international corporate and

environmental practices, to ensure “that we get a fair share of every barrel of oil and gas from our land, massive infrastructural and human development, amongst others, as the minimum expectation from any eventual new operator. “Ogonis will not accept any standards lower or like those we experienced with Shell,” he sounded loud and clear.

Mitee noted that the privilege of his election as Chairman of the Technical Committee on Niger Delta set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria was and should be seen as a testament and in recognition of the non-violent tactics the Ogoni people have championed over the years.

While reminding the people of the critical battle ahead, which is the challenges of a post Shell Ogoni, the MOSOP President warned that to weaken or contaminate the struggle at this point would be a serious mistake. He therefore urged them to summon the same spirit and determination in the remaining battles ahead.

“The struggle that remove Shell from our land was fought and won by us all and it is only fitting that all our views and opinions count in any discussion to bring a new oil operator in Ogoniland, Mitee assured, but however added that if they truly believe in the Ogoni Bill of Rights then every one must be prepared to set competition and differences aside when there is any risk that it will threaten the aspirations of the people, their children, and their land.

The MOSOP President noted that the profound international recognition and attention the Ogoni struggle had gained, undoubtedly become the reason the

Abacha regime wanted them crushed, and his election for the second term as the Chair of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation

## Gov Amaechi Lauds Ogoni Non-Violent Strategy

The Ogoni people have been lauded for opting for a non-violent approach in their struggle for justice against oppressive governments and the oil multinationals.

In his speech at the 2009 Ogoni Day Celebration on January 4, in Bori, Ogoni, as the Guest of Honour, the State Governor, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi sympathised with Ogoni people over years of neglect by previous administration and oil companies, and lauded them for sustaining the non-violent struggle.

Governor Amaechi noted however that it was time to turn a new page in history and seek new ways of development, and support government to succeed in its' efforts to develop the communities.

## MOSOP Launches War Against Kidnaping - Plans to ostracize culprits

Enraged over the spate of kidnappings and hostage-taking in the Niger Delta, especially parts of Ogoniland, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP has embarked on what it called anti-kidnapping campaign to decisively stem such elements from the area, viewing it as dangerous trend.

The Ogoni Movement in her Steering Committee meeting in Port Harcourt had received reports from the area, reviewed developments affecting the Ogoni people and their neighbours and

(UNPO), an organisation of about 50 million peoples and nations across the world.

Whilst commending the Governor Amaechi

Governor Amaechi observed that the people of Ogoni have demonstrated enough courage and determination and that if they want him to tell the Federal Government to look for another oil company to exploit oil in the area he will do.

According to him, “the interesting thing about the ogoni people is that while they were making the states, countries and the world to know about their oppression, other ethnic groups in the State, who are equally oppressed, did not,” and enjoined them to consider him a member of the struggle since he abhors oppression in whatever form.

Governor Amaechi promised to use oil money to develop Bori into a

administration in Rivers State for embarking on several roads and rural electrification projects in parts of Ogoni, the Ogoni Leader, expressing the views of the overwhelming majority of the people in saying that Governor Rotimi Amaechi will remain eternally and friend of the Ogoni people

modern city but urged youths to resist the temptation of kidnapping to attract the manpower necessary for development.

“One thing I will do before the end of our administration is to dualise the road from Saakpenwa to Kono, and again name it after Ken-Saro-Wiwa, because as you know, the Stadium Road in Port Harcourt has already been named after him,” he said.

While urging the people not to do anything that will undermine the Nigerian State, he assured them that their views would be respected on issues affecting them.

“I agree that you have been cheated, I agree that both the state and federal governments must do something to better the lives of our people”, Governor Amaechi said.

He further said

if he gives them an undiluted support in the project of the burial rites of Shell in Ogoni.

The Ogoni people also called on governments to complement their efforts through addressing the root causes of the social problems in the society; “we must balance our insistence that our youths

electricity would be provided for Ogoniland before June this year, adding that already, efforts are being made to temporarily connect the area from Afam Power Station pending when work on the Eleme Gas Turbine Station would be completed.

Governor Amaechi also disclosed that 10 primary schools were being built in each of the four local government areas of Ogoni along with four modern secondary schools, and at least 21 health centres in Ogoniland, apart from State Government taking over of the payment of Primary school teachers.

The Governor urged chairmen of the four Ogoni Councils to use the money saved from the payment of teachers salaries to execute projects that would be of interest to the people.

in such activities.

The march which started from BMGS Bori was conducted round the four Ogoni LGAs of Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme.

Wondering why Ogoni that was considered most peaceful, hostage-taking and kidnaping free-zone now witnessed beehive of these ugly incidences, MOSOP said a stop must be put to those activities carried out by hoodlums.

Reiterating its resolve not to condone any violent inclination or acts capable of causing embarrassment or that may put the Ogoni genuine and applauded

struggle in peril, the people of Ogoni warned out and out that any person(s) or family found to be involved or aiding act of kidnaping, hostage taking and related crimes will be exposed, blacklisted and published in the papers and made to face the wrath of the law as well as being ostracized from the area.

To further demonstrate her disapproval of these crimes, MOSOP resolved to carry out vigorous campaigns against hostage-taking, kidnaping and other social vices, calling on all well meaning Ogoni persons and the security agencies

# Court Adjourns N240m Suit against Shell

By Innocent Anaba

The plaintiffs had dragged Shell to court, after Shell allegedly cancelled a contract for the supply of fire arms and ammunition, entered into with the plaintiffs.

Meanwhile, the court has admitted as exhibit, several letters, documents and correspondents exchanged between Shell,

the plaintiffs and the Inspector General of Police.

The plaintiffs are contending in the 14 years suit, that it was agreed between Humanitex Nigeria and Mr V. Oteri, the second defendant in the suit, acting for and on behalf of Shell that Humanitex Nigeria company would be adequately

compensated should it succeed in getting the Inspector General of Police grant the approvals for the supply of arms and ammunition, requested by Shell at the time, which it did. According to the plaintiffs, "the approvals for the supply of arms was sought by the defendants at a time when anti-Shell sentiments was at its

highest in Nigeria on account of disruption of Shell's operations in the Niger Delta by resistance movements led by late Ken Saro-Wiwa and others who were agitating for better treatment of the Ogoni and Niger Delta people".

Meanwhile, Shell has denied any wrong doing in the suit, contending that it acted within the

law in the cancellation of the alleged contract for the supply of the arms and ammunition.

The plaintiffs contend that subsequent to the contract, Mr Oteri an official and agent of Shell by a letter dated June 24, 1994 wrote to the IGP, attaching their material requisition/purchase order and reiterated its request for the approval

of the 2nd plaintiff to the IGP in respect of the weapons upgrade and permission to import same and by an invoice dated August 18, 1994 from the first plaintiff on behalf of the 2nd plaintiff to the IGP on behalf of the defendants in the sum of \$548,798.51 was drawn".

Plaintiffs stated further that "to the surprise of the 2nd plaintiff, the 1st defendant despite the firm

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, UNPO has made submissions to the UN Human Rights Council, exposing some rights abuses in Nigeria, particularly, on the Ogoni People and other minorities.

The UNPO submissions are included in the Universal Periodic Review of Nigeria.

UNPO report also warned that the independence of the National Human Rights Council has been undermined by the removal of its head in 2006 after he criticized the state's arrest of two journalists.

UNPO also

# UNPO Exposes Rights Abuses in Nigeria

encouraged Nigeria to allow UN access to the Niger State Delta to investigate accusations of human rights violations.

The UNPO highlighted severe environmental concerns involving the oil pipeline leaks, toxins released into the air, exacerbated by the lack of meaningful regulatory mechanisms.

Further references were made to linguistic and education rights, especially of the Ogoni people who have been suffered major oppression for many years.

It noted that the Ogoni People live mainly

in the Niger Delta in South Nigeria and their population consists of more than 500,000 people organized in six kingdoms and speaking four languages. The Ogoni have inhabited the Niger Delta for more than 500 years, living from agriculture and fishing. In addition to the economic importance of nature, the environment is a central part of Ogoni religion. The conservation of the environment of the Niger Delta is therefore crucial to their survival and cultural identity. Through extensive exploitation of the Niger Delta's oil resources oil companies

and the Nigerian State have deprived the Ogoni of their right to make use of their own resources. Despite its richness of natural resources the average life expectancy in the Niger Delta is 43 compared to the national life expectancy of 47.

"On 16 October 1967, the government of Nigeria signed and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and also guarantees in its 1999 Constitution, Chapter II (15) that "discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion,

status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited".

The implementation of these commitments against all forms of

discrimination is until today gravely deficient and represents one of the major grievances of the Ogoni People", it said.

According to UNPO, "Ignoring the recommendations made to

Nigeria in 2005 by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the most recent National Population Census in

## Poetry

### My Eyes O! Lord

Crosby didn't do lullaby  
Trust me,  
I'll do one.

My eyes o! Lord  
That I may be saved  
That I may behold  
That I may be sold  
Miles away from life

My eyes o! Lord  
For distance is near  
And hills now valley;  
For minds now mine  
And riches cause bitches

My eyes o! Lord  
To run and run  
To smile and cry  
To share and covert  
To say and replay

My eyes o! Lord  
For ruler ship of this town  
In fellowship to fun and morals  
Say; lullaby to macabre unknown  
*For all lover of poetry; he that believes in the*

### Christmas Dreams

Last Christmas was postponed  
Men and women became babies  
Ladies and gents were meant  
To spend in time, dreams  
Christmas dreams

Wishing all was well  
Singing with shepherds  
Skipping gossip for worship  
This dream, This year,  
Will it hold?

When this period comes  
Blood gushes  
Pads blushes  
Bags full  
Men fool  
Victims ruled  
Our prayers this morning;  
To sleep and forget

# Tales Of Woes As Special Adviser Visits Parastatals



S.A. Parastatals, Hon. Batom Mitee

The Special Adviser on Parastatal to the Rivers State Governor, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Amaechi, Hon. Batom Mitee has commenced familiarization tour of establishments under his

portfolio. So far, five parastatals have been visited by the Special Adviser with same stories of lack of adequate government attention to ensure efficiency and expected productivity in their services.

They include, the Rivers State Housing and property Development Authority, Rivers State Television Authority (RSTV), Elenwa, Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation (RSBC), Rivers State Council of Arts and Culture, and Rivers State Library Board.

It was as though they had prayed and expected this opportunity, thanks to the wisdom and foresight of the Rivers State Governor, Rt. Hon Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi for the appointment.

But not just the appointment, but the vision of searching out a round hole in the person of Hon Batom Mitee, a critic and research oriented personality.

And to ensure the objective of the Governor to establish a second line

of communication through the office of the Special Adviser (SA) on Parastatals for the first time, besides that of the supervising ministries, does not end up a mirage, the SA, Batom Mitee, recently began a familiarization tour of all the parastatals that fall under his portfolio, starting with the State Housing and Property Authority, the Rivers State Television (RSTV) and the State Broadcasting Corporation (RSBC) respectively.

Taking advantage of the visit, the General Managers of each of these parastatals as seasoned resource managers shunned all the usual rhetorics and went straight to lay their problems and challenges before the Special Adviser.

Miffed by the ever-

rising accommodation problem in a State like Rivers, Hon. Batom Mitee, tasked the State Housing Authority to wake up to its task of increasing the stock of dwelling houses in the State, which is its primary assignment by embarking on unusual efforts (research) that could lead to possible breakthroughs.

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Governor Amaechi (2nd left), MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee and Wife Leziga, SSG, Hon. Magnus Abe (1st right), Chairman Khana LGA, Hon. Greg Nwidam



Cross Section of Participants at the occasion



Cross Section of FOWA Members (Ogoni Women)



Pupils of Bebor Int'l School Bodo making their presentation



Ogoni Artistes, dance group



Chairman of the occasion, Rt. Rev. Gberegbara delivering his speech



L-R: Gov. Amaechi, Ledum Mitee, and the Wife, Leziga



Gov. Rotimi Amaechi, and Ledum Mitee

# 2009 Budget: FG unfair to N'Delta in - Clark

By Sola Adebayo

**W**hat informed your strong views against the budget proposal by President Umaru Yar'Adua for 2009, as it affects the Niger Delta?

In the first place, as I was returning from the United Kingdom, on my way to Warri on Tuesday, I received many telephone calls from various people from the Niger Delta on the N27bn and N50bn budgeted for Niger Delta Development Commission and Ministry of Niger Delta respectively by President Umaru Yar'Adua. I could not believe what I heard that those are the amount earmarked for these agencies.

Federal Government budgeted N79bn for Niger Delta Development Commission, both capital and recurrent expenditures in 2008 and this allocation was done within the last three months. The money has not even been released to them but they just advertised the contracts. And if that is the case, one begins to wonder what is the fate of the uncompleted projects that NDDC is supposed to use the money to complete? If you voted N79bn last year and the money has not been released, how do you now vote N27bn for the same organisation in 2009? It means we are not progressing.

In addition to that, you know the Federal Government owed NDDC over N200bn for allocations not released to the NDDC. So one is asking, what do they want to do with NDDC? NDDC has a master plan for the whole region and the master plan has been accepted by the Federal Government. Do they require money to execute it? The answer is yes. And if there is no money to execute it, then we should not make noise about the intention of the Federal Government to develop the Niger Delta. We know very well that this is the first time the government in Nigeria has committed itself to the development of the region and one of the seven-point development programmes, is the development of Niger Delta. But we want to see this concretised, that is bring the money, provide the money for the management of NDDC to carry out the mandate of the commission. The current management is doing very well, but they cannot deliver without adequate funds.

This budget provision for NDDC is not realistic and our people will not accept that type of a thing. We know that the price of crude oil is collapsing but it is not a justification. This money is unworkable and it would not meet the expectation of our people.

But N50bn was also allocated to the new Niger Delta ministry?

Those who had reservations was on the basis that the ministry may not be treated differently from the other ministries like education, health, environment and so on. That was the reservation people had. But we have defended; we believe that the creation of the Niger Delta ministry is the only

answer because we have direct intervention of the Federal Government. So, we now have a minister who will now be talking on behalf of the Niger Delta. What we therefore want to say is that we know very well that the Ministry of Lagos Affairs was created during Alhaji Tafawa Balewa time. It was that ministry that developed Victoria Island and did so many other things in Lagos. And when Abuja was declared capital of Nigeria, the Ministry of Federal Capital Territory was also created. And a special provision of about one per cent of the total revenue accruing to the Federal Government was earmarked for the development of Abuja. And Abuja is only one community. We are expecting that the new Niger Delta ministry will be tailored along the line of the one in Abuja, with NDDC being part of it. That is our hope that the ministry will have education department and every department that is existing in Abuja. So, we require about three per cent of the Federation Account to be provided for the development of the Niger Delta, not just giving it N50bn. The N50bn is it for development or for setting up the ministry? If you remember that last year alone, the same Federal Government voted N400bn for security in the Niger Delta, that money will not be necessary if there is peace and development going on in the Niger Delta.

Has unanimous decision been taken by the leaders and elders of the Niger Delta on the budget allocation to the region?

The people of Niger Delta will soon meet on the budget proposal by the Federal Government as it affects Niger Delta in the 2009 budget. The purpose of the meeting is to comment on the allocations made to NDDC and the newly created Ministry of Niger Delta. Even though we are sure that the Federal Government is sincere and committed to the development of the Niger Delta, we thought we should meet to look at it if it is fair that the same Federal Government that budgeted N79bn for NDDC, both capital and recurrent expenditures last year has decided to give N27bn to the commission this year.

What do you suggest to the Federal Government on the budget for the Niger Delta?

I have been in London for the past three weeks, I am aware of the global economic recession, I am also aware of the falling price of crude oil. So whatever statement I make here, I have that at the back of my mind. So I do hope that when the economy is improved, the Federal Government will present a supplementary budget on the Niger Delta to the National Assembly for consideration because the Niger Delta problem is a national problem. It is not enough to get revenue from the Niger Delta and exploit the region, the problem of Niger Delta must be understood by every Nigerian, which they failed to realise during the National Political Reforms Conference in 2005 of

which I was the leader of the delegation from the South-South. At that time, we wanted true federalism, fiscal federalism and we also said that creation of local government should be the sole responsibility of the state government. If you want to create 100, create them but fund them. A situation where local governments are created with a view to taking money from the Federation Account should not be allowed. These were part of the cases we had in 2005 and then we said if fiscal federation was not going to be possible immediately, we want us to return to the situation of 1952/53 when 50 per cent of the derivation fund went to the region. And that was why Chief Obafemi Awolowo was able to develop the West. He was able to provide free primary education, built the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, built Cocoa House in Ibadan, built Western House in Lagos, Ikeja Industrial Estates, television stations, which we did not benefit from, those of us in the Mid-West because we were not producing Cocoa. And above all, when Mid-West region was created, the West refused to share the assets, even when I was the Commissioner for Finance in the Mid-West region, I made several trips, with our good relationship with General Adeyinka Adebayo, but he refused. That we did not contribute anything but what is happening today? They are the

*Contd. From Page 4*

## Tales Of Woes As Special ...

Batom Mitee stressed that Governor Chibuike Amaechi was very much determined to give every sphere of his administration a face-lift hence the creation of the office of SA for the improvement of the parastatals.

In his welcome address earlier, the General Manager of the State Housing Authority, Architect I.S. Cooney-Gem intimated the SA on some of the take-off of its housing projects 10 months after the loan with all the trappings of a commercial loan (interests) for the project had been collected.

The two stations are not only depending on generators all day round, but still transmit with obsolete equipments, which parts are no longer found in the market.

The RSTV is worse hit, lining up over four politically equipped

engineering and transmitting studios that had never been put to use since their installation as such technologies are completely outdated and cannot be accessed by modern engineers and technicians.

All the necessary gadgets and machines like the AVR (Automatic Video

people benefiting more from the revenue generated at our backyards than ourselves.

As a leader of the Niger Delta, have you made any recommendation to the Presidency on the choice of a minister of the Niger Delta ministry?

I don't care who becomes the minister provided he's a competent fellow, provided he's intelligent and focused and provided he's a man with a drive, who understands the problems of the Niger Delta, not just posting anybody from any other place. We do hope that with the Federal Government, it is the prerogative of Mr. President to appoint a minister, though we cannot challenge him as to who he should appoint but we do hope that the person he will appoint will be somebody who is knowledgeable.

Do you ever doubt the sincerity of Yar'Adua to develop the Niger Delta?

I am confident and I believe that President Yar'Adua has the capacity, the will power and the dexterity to carry out the development of the Niger Delta and to bring permanent peace in the area. If you look at his manifesto, the development of Niger Delta was there. We never thought that he would give us the idea of a summit with Prof. Ibrahim Gambari as Chairman. He discussed with us and when he realised our position on the summit, he gave us a committee which we asked for and dropped Gambari. Today, the Niger Delta Technical Committee has submitted the

Regulator) for the TV station are practically non-existent and presently, the RSTV operates on only one transmitter (also aged), no official vehicles for the staff and buses to convey the news crew of the stations to and from assignment venues in line with the nature and immediacy demanded of the job

Outlining the pathetic problems of her station to the Special Adviser, Ms Tador said if nothing urgent is done the RSBC will not meet up the NBC 4-year deadline to digitalize as all the equipment in use are all analogue. She also pleaded for government intervention in the areas of security and accommodation, as the station inherited from the NBC about 27 years ago is completely dilapidated, lacks modern requirements and standards for modern



Obsolete OB Van of RSBC

## Ogoni Union Launched in Bayelsa, Honours Baridam, others

Ogoni residents in Bayelsa State under the auspice of the Ogoni Welfare Association (TOWA) has concluded the celebration of the first anniversary of the body with the conferment of "Award for Excellence in Leadership", on three illustrious sons of Ogoni for their distinguished public leadership style.

The celebration which attracted Ogoni sons and daughter's from all walks of life in and around

Bayelsa State, was held in Yenagoa, the State Capital and climaxed with the launching of the maiden edition of the TOWA calendar.

In his welcome address, the Chairman of TOWA Bayelsa branch, Mr. Save Ledum Nubani, chronicled how the Ogoni Welfare Association (TOWA) Bayelsa State which is a body of Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed, the achievements of the body

which included the payment of medical bills and sponsorship of it's members in the area of skills acquisition and resolving of internal dispute amongst members.

He said the association had acknowledged some challenges that included the lack of a permanent office accommodation, employment of members and shuttle bus to ease mobility, of the associations executives.



Ogoni Women residents in Bayelsa State dancing during their end of Year Celebration in Yenagoa recently

## MEND Opts for U.S. Catholic Group as Mediator with Govt

To fast-track the restoration of peace in the Niger Delta, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has opted for the selection of Coventry Cathedral, in the United Kingdom, as a preferred mediator for any intended negotiation with the Federal Government.

MEND, reiterated that it will not release the hostages as long as government continues to hold on to one of its leaders, Henry Okah.

But two groups, Social Action and the Centre for Global Non-Violence, have condemned all kidnappings, hostage-taking and violent strategies for seeking change in the Niger Delta which has now led to the militarisation of the region by the government.

MEND spokesman, Jomo Gbomo, who gave the hint that the group was ready to disarm last week but not within the six months recommended by the Ledum Mitee-led Presidential Niger Delta Technical Committee, said Coventry Cathedral would be a preferred mediator in the event of any negotiation.

He said: "Because anything worth doing is worth doing well, or else we will be treading on the same subject again, let us remember that disarmament is trust-

related. There must be guarantees in place as well as other internationally recognised protocol for this exercise. Take Bakassi for example. If the international community had not been involved, Nigeria would have backed out of the agreements reached as the date for the hand-over drew near."

Gbomo continued: "There is a time for war and a time for peace. The war has not even begun and may not. It is in the hands of this government to handle the situation properly because as we speak, we are preparing for war."

He urged the Federal Government to accept the recommendations of the Mitee-led committee by ensuring that Okah, who is said to be suffering from a kidney ailment is tried in an open court and granted bail. According to Gbomo, if holding on to him is a strategy to arm-twist the group, the government should assume that it has failed.

Gbomo said: "The movement is designed to move on with or without an individual. Henry is a key to peace, which he initiated before his arrest. As you may know, MEND is still holding on to two UK nationals for as long as Henry is held."

The Social Action and the Centre for Global Non-violence said that the use

of force on the part of government and aggrieved people of the Niger Delta to resolve the



Members of Ga-Saa Group

## Focus on Sustainable Dev. Programmes, Mitee Charges Youth Body

Youth Organisation in Gokana, the Gokana Youth Club has been urged to direct their resources into development programmes and ventures that will endure.

Speaking shortly after being inducted as Grand Patron of the body, the President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Ledum Mitee called on members of GYC to see themselves as people whom the society expect much meaningful efforts from, adding that they should be poised to tackle the challenges of the time than playing to the gallery as must organisations' activities portend.

crisis could only breed more violence.

The group's spokesperson, Ken Henshaw in a statement made available to the press at the end of a two-

## Community Group Gets New Exco

A community based Bariduanen Gboto, Organisation, Financial Secretary; Great Ga-Saa Barivure Gaage, Organisation of Kegbara Treasurer; and Monday Dere community has elected new officers for Sunday, Promise Kpegara as Co-ordinators.

Those elected are Mr. Friday Legbara, Chairman; Ledisi Nnaa, T.A. Gboro, Chief Dick Vice Chairman; Baridon Kabari, Monday Muubana, Secretary and Kpegbara and Leelabari Bariduura Nasi, Assistant Secretary.

Others include, and Barinyima Epip and

Mitee noted that he accepted the position on the conviction that they can all work together for the actualization of some lofty ideas and initiative as presented by the body, especially in the area of peace, unity and sustainable human and structural development in the area.

The Grand Patron admonished the GYC members to focus on issues that touch lives of many people and that their noble ideas be taken to the villages, sell them to other youths who have been misled and now indulge in criminal activities.

Mitee again condemned armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage-taking and other

criminal acts that are on the ploy in Ogoni axis, urging the youth body to confront these vices before it becomes a culture in the area.

While thanking them for the honour done him, he promised to offer advices and other contributions expected of him, but reiterated, "we must rise and condemn criminal activities, we must do things that will stand us out as responsible people, and we must continue to see ourselves as brothers and sisters, not enemies."

MOSOP, he said, would work with the body if they set those charges in their agenda.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the occasion, Hon. D.K. Badom called

for unity of purpose and maturity in their actions.

Earlier, the Gokana Youth Club President, Mr Roland Gbarabe had noted that the Club has existed for nine years but not without some efforts and contributions by some spirited members and Hon. D.K. Badom, whose doors are always open to them when in need.

Mr Gbarabe explained that the courage with which GYC members have collectively subdued obstacles faced is a pointer to how determined they are to change the course of their people for good.

He further stated that as a people not deterred by the antics of their detractors, they have procured about 5000

*Contd. From Last Edition*

You are supposed to assume or actually believe that America is a perfect world, the biblical paradise, if you like. Yet, we do know that even as we accept America as the beacon for the oppressed across the globe, it is by no means a perfect society just as we cannot find anyone around. Racism or racially driven hate is one dark spot in America's history. Although in today America racism could be a two way traffic-to a much more lesser extent some blacks as a result of their past sad experience tend to harbor resentment against whites. But it is the blacks who are overwhelmingly on the receiving end.

Poor McCain, you would not envy him. The odds against this POW in this epoch making election seems insurmountable. It is simply a bad year for the Republican party and Senator McCain. As if the burden of a president with one of the lowest approval ratings in history, Or as the master himself, President Bill Clinton, would love to put it, this is not a good year to be a Republican. I was amazed to see Republican party strategists on television line up to declare that John McCain would win because he is a "maverick"; effectively disowning their own party. But an erratic John McCain seeing defeat staring him in the face ran to the George Bush swift boat smear campaign tacticians- Karl Rove and company and then lost his maverick claims. A disastrous foreign policy occasioned by an unpopular war which has alienated the country from the rest of the world and a sinking economy the Republican brand became a bad good which no one wants to touch. Little wonder Senator McCain started selling his candidacy as a "Maverick" (not a Republican). Senator Barack Obama in his own right has proved himself as a formidable candidate. But the moment I saw the Clintons-President Bill Clinton and Senator Hillary Clinton come on board the CHANGE train I knew the deal has been sealed for President Obama.

John McCain is a threat to the United States security and world peace. He is an ardent apostle of the Bush doctrine of preemptive wars. In fact, Pat Buchanan former Republican presidential aspirant was recently quoted as saying that McCain if elected president would make Dick Cheney (George Bush's war mongering vice president) look like Ghandi. This week a respondent on the CNN said watching John McCain talking about fight, fight had chill running down his spine, as he remembers World war II. Yes, John McCain is a good candidate to start World war III. But John McCain may find to his chagrin that the days when Donald Rumsfeld was bragging that America can fight three (Iraq, Afghanistan and possibly North Korea as of then) wars simultaneously. Americans saddled with two long wars with staggering casualties and close to a trillion Dollars dissipated are now war weary. They are now yearning for a leader who can go along with the rest of world and restore America's leadership position in the world.

Sarah Palin's remark "This is not a man that sees America like you and I do" is a diabolical way of questioning Obama's patriotism. Sarah Palin's remark may equally have a racial undertone. This may sound controversial, but it my studied observation-blacks in America are deemed less patriotic until they prove otherwise. Although their frustrated and angry campaign John McCain and Sarah Palin and their mob supporters have continued to question Obama's patriotism. However, generally Republicans see themselves as more patriotic than Democrats. It is even more so with black Democrats. As if the above remarks are not bad enough, Sarah Palin the darling of the neoconservative extremists added that "Barack Obama sees America to be imperfect enough----to pall around with domestic terrorists". Like CNN contributor Martin Rowland noted, the Sarah Palin declaration heralded the hate campaign against Obama. It was after these remarks that the mob crowds

at McCain and Sarah Palin rallies started calling Obama a terrorist and shouts of "kill him". John McCain says Sarah Palin has excited his campaign. Yes, she has energized the mob of the lunatic fringe of the Republican party who feels anyone who do not look like them is less American who must not be allowed to ascend to the highest office in the land. Sarah Palin defines an elite as someone who feels more important than others. The irony is that Gov. Sarah Palin who had to be kitted with \$150,000 outfits to "look good" for the campaigns does not consider herself an elite. But I have a question for her: What do you call someone who considers some citizens more American than others. That person is a bigot.

Senator Obama should win the presidential race as he trounces Senator John McCain in on all the big issues that are supposed to determine the election-Healthcare, the economy, taxes. Obama leads McCain with double digit numbers. Even in foreign policy and national security an area which McCain was thought to have an advantage Obama, has shown a better judgment and so better qualified to handle the issue. John McCain has been left behind by current realities in international diplomacy. He belongs in the past and thinks in the past. He now stands alone. Even President George Bush has left him stranded. In one of the presidential debates John McCain said Obama's decision to talk to the president of Iran a sworn enemy of Israel, is not only naïve but dangerous. And the Republicans have continued to us this as their strongest attack line against Senator Obama on foreign policy and national security. Like they have always done with every Democratic candidates, they have expanded this argument by asserting that a president Obama would be weak on national security and even soft on terrorists. John McCain's running mate Gov. Sarah Palin on the campaign stump derided Senator Obama for "refusing to use the world victory" in describing the success story of Iraq. However, General David Petraeus, the man who until recently was in charge of the Iraq would not even use the word success, not to talk of "victory" in describing the process in Iraq. In a recent interview with Newsweek magazine, The Commander of the US Central Command in the Persian Gulf General Petraeus says the general counterinsurgency guidance to his troops is "Avoid premature declarations of success". Then, General Petraeus gave his now famous remark; "The champagne bottle remains at the back of the refrigerator" (Newsweek September 1, 2008). That is to say, it is not yet time to celebrate "the Success" in Iraq.

However, what warrior John McCain who loves to own the "success" of the so-called surge in Iraq has refused to tell the world is that the "success" of the surge only came about after the Sunni insurgents have been paid to drop their arms; not just the American fire power as John McCain and George Bush would want the world to believe. This is however not an isolated incident. Records show that even as the Bush administration talks tough about not negotiating with terrorists but not resting until all terrorists in the world have been killed it is steadily executing a policy of appeasement toward rogue regimes and winning them over. Libya, the supposed sponsor of terrorism against the Western world is now an ally with the

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## Behold the 44<sup>th</sup> President

United States after the Bush administration has dangled carrots (not bullets) before Ghadaffi. And North Korea, the famed member of President George Bush's "axis of evil" has just been dropped from the United States list of terrorist nation, if only to get its co-operation on dismantling its nuclear facilities.

And then, listen to this: Time magazine in its October 27, issue reported that General David Petraeus as having suggested that the United States and the Taliban enter into a truce as the only way to end the war in Afghanistan. According to Time magazine General Petraeus was quoted as saying "You have to talk to enemies: this is how you end this kind of conflict". The ABC news also confirmed that General Petraeus has recommended a truce with the Taliban. Is John McCain listening? That the United States would even contemplate negotiating with the Taliban an ally of Bin Laden who is now harboring him. So if the Bush administration can talk with the Taliban who by their relationship with Bin Laden could be said to be partly responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks, what is wrong with talking to a rogue regime which although threatens Israel has not actually carried out an attack them or the United States?. The Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations recently bemoaned the isolationist policy of the Bush administration which he regretted has decided not to engage in talks with any country that have differences with the United States. However, according to the Syrian Ambassador the Bush administration began to make advances for talks with his country last September when Secretary of State Condi Rice held talks with his country's officials. This after Israel first held talks with Syria. So you see the United States under George Bush saying talking to the leaders of countries that have issues with Israel is a sacrilege whereas Israel itself is talking with those countries.

Talk of Israel, Republicans have perfected the act of playing politics with Israel. If an American politician fails to mention that he would protect Israel and destroy whoever speaks ill of the Jewish state he is swiftly labeled anti-Israel and so cannot rule America. You would not hear any American politician talk about reconciling Israel and Palestine; not to talk of protecting the rights (if they have any) of the Palestinian people. When President Jimmy Carter titled one of his latest books: PALESTINE: PEACE NOT APARTHEID he was attacked and labeled anti-Israel. The irony however, is that successive American administrations continue to mediate Israeli/Palestinian peace. So why should Palestine be such a "toxic" word that no American politician dare mention on the campaign stump?.

John McCain says he is the one who can keep Americans safe because he knows how to breath fear into America's enemies. However, the rest of the world, including its sworn enemies does not have to fear America. John McCain and his inept running mate Sarah Palin are reading-fear-mongering an old and outdated script from the Republican play book. They remind Americans that there terrorists around the corner waiting to launch another attack and that only a "fighter" like John McCain can protect them. Again, these folks have been left behind by current realities. Even President George Bush of late seems to have

# Still On The Ogoni Hangings

*By Leburah Ganago*

General Jeremiah Useni, a co-plotter in the 1995 murder of World renowned Environmental and Minority Rights crusader, Ken Saro Wiwa and eight of his fellow Ogoni compatriots, fondly referred to as the "Ogoni 9", recently stirred the hornet's nest when he attempted to justify the illegal and criminal act. Predictably, Jeremiah Useni's assault on the memory of the great Ken Saro Wiwa outraged the Ogoni, all of the Niger Delta and other men of conscience in Nigeria and beyond.

Dr. Reuben Abati hit the bull's eye when in his column in The Guardian of November 9, 2008, he rightly remarked that Jeremiah Useni's outburst "comes across as a predetermined attempt to rubbish Ken Saro Wiwa's memory and diminish the significance of the struggle that he championed". Dr. Abati is equally right to note that "Jerry Useni is one of those conveniently forgotten figures of Nigerian history". A clue emerges here concerning Jerry Useni's outburst - he is envious of the late Ken Saro Wiwa's larger-than-life status in the country, (even in death) in contrast to those of the Jerry Usenis who have actually been CONVENIENTLY FORGOTTEN, even as they pretend to be living. Jeremiah Useni and his co-plotters had thought they could obliterate the memory of Ken Saro Wiwa from the universe when they plotted to murder him but were shocked to see that the murder produced the reverse effect of what was intended. Jeremiah Useni is actually a walking corpse which has been done away with. No one cares if he is buried or rots away.

However, there appears to exist some people in Nigeria who do not understand why we are outraged by Jeremiah Useni's silly remarks. One of such persons is Mr. Tochukwu Ezukanma who in an article published on the New Nigerian Politics website on November 15, 2008 erroneously characterized our indignation as an act of bigotry, even as he insists that General Jeremiah Useni is entitled to his opinion, however unpopular. Mr. Ezukanma went further to assert that our protests against Jeremiah Useni's ill-fated remarks amount to gagging the retired General. Needless to note that Mr. Ezukanma's copious nonsense on the right of freedom of expression is out of point. For what is at issue here is not freedom of expression or opinion.

Let's start from the easier one: Those of us

protesting Jeremiah Useni, Professor Ibrahim Gambari and company's miserable attempts to rubbish the larger-than-life image of Ken Saro Wiwa's memory are in no position to gag them. What we are simply doing is to alert the public on their devious motives, and like Dr. Reuben Abati of the Guardian again, noted, their futile attempts to "rewrite history", turning the truth on its head and misleading generations of Nigerians yet unborn and those who might have been too young to follow the events of the Ogoni pacification. However, Jeremiah Useni, Ibrahim Gambari and company have unwittingly invited their nemesis; as their foolish outbursts and misguided attempts to rewrite one of the darkest spots of Nigerian history is going to boomerang on them. Those of us who have vowed to keep the genocide of the Ogoni people and the pacification of the Niger Delta evergreen in world consciousness are being fired up. We will now focus on exposing all those who played various roles in those gory episodes and making sure they pay for these heinous crimes; no matter how long it takes. Since our elders either for acts of commission or omission have faltered my generation have resolved to execute the Niger Delta struggle to a logical conclusion. New strategies may evolve, in dictate with changing circumstances but the central focus of our struggle will not change. And this resolve includes ensuring that all those who have played a role in the pacification agenda of the Nigerian ruling cabal are held accountable.

To Mr. Tochukwu Ezukanma and their ilk who would not understand our outrage against Jeremiah Useni, Ibrahim Gambari and co, they are now informed that these unconscionable monsters are not only expressing their opinions on the hangings but are attempting to justify an illegal and indeed criminal action which they have been party to. There is a difference between expressing an opinion on some public issues that you are not directly involved in and attempting to justify an action in which you were a participant.

Listen, Mr. Ezukanma, we have a righteous justification in our outrage against the foolish remarks of Jeremiah Useni. Ken Saro Wiwa and his eight fellow Ogoni compatriots were unjustifiably murdered not for committing any crime, not to talk of murder, but for daring to bring to world consciousness the open

robbery of the Niger Delta oil wealth and the genocide being committed in the region. The ruling military junta and their collaborators who murdered the Ogoni 9 were fully convinced that they committed no offense and that they could not sustain the trump-up charges of murder against them in any court of law. This was why a contraption of a military tribunal was conceived to illegally convict innocent men. If the Abacha military junta and Shell oil company thought they had a case against Ken Saro Wiwa they would not have recruited and bribed witnesses to give false testimonies against him. Of course, some of those procured false witnesses later defected and recanted their testimonies while confessing to being bribed. Legal authorities the world over have concluded that Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were illegally tried, illegally convicted and illegally executed. Talking of rights, aren't the Ogoni 9 entitled to their right to a fair trial in a matter of life and death? This very crucial right was denied them by a blood-thirsty cabal bent on silencing a most informed critic.

Professor Ben Nwabueze (SAN), an indisputable authority in constitutional law and constitutionalism in Nigeria emphatically argued that the conviction and execution of the Ogoni 9 were illegal and had no basis in law. And Michael Birnbuam (QC) of the British Bar and Article 19, who observed the trials noted that the trials breached both Nigerian and international law.

Also, the United Nations, Fact Finding mission to Nigeria in 1996, in its reports observed inter alia: "The Special tribunal that tried Ken Saro Wiwa and others had no jurisdiction to do so because the tribunal itself was constituted in violation of section 1 of the Civil Disturbances (Special Tribunal) Act of 1987. The Act says that if the president forms the opinion that a civil disturbance or commotion has been committed, he must constitute a special investigation committee whose report would determine if a special tribunal would be constituted, and who will be arraigned before it. No investigation committee was set up by General Abacha before the Ogonis were arraigned before the tribunal, a clear violation of the Act". On the strength of this violation of the Act, the UN team concluded that "the trial of Ken Saro Wiwa and the others was null and void." (Tempo, May 30 1996). Consequently, the UN Fact-finding mission recommended among others, compensations to be paid to the families of the Ogoni 9.

In a paper he presented on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the hanging of the Ogoni 9, in 2000,

Government to pay up the outstanding debts (about N300 billion) it owes the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with the belief that the Commission will be better placed in delivering on its mandate.

The recommendations, all said, emphasise the point that the Niger Delta region, just like all other past committees have observed and recommended, deserves more than a passing attention by any government at the centre. That it cannot be treated like just any other zone in the country because of its strategic importance to the economy of the country and the hazards the people of the region suffer from crude exploitation there.

The recommendations are far reaching as they accommodate most of the agitation of the people of the region over the years.

As said, most of the recommendations have been made in the past but were never implemented, a probable reason why the crises in the region have continued to linger, and indeed worsened in dimension and sophistication.

That explains why Mitee rightly noted that

## The Niger Delta Technical Report

The Niger Delta Technical Committee which was set up last October has submitted its 3-volume report to the Federal Government. The 46-member committee headed by Mr. Ledum Mitee, a minority rights activist, was set up to consider how to solve the problems of the region, which in recent years, have had dire consequences on the peace and finances of the nation. While inaugurating the committee, Vice President Goodluck Jonathan had charged the committee to "collate" the reports of all previous committees on the Niger Delta and make practical recommendations to the Federal Government.

Although the Vice President had thought the work of the committee would be brief and thus gave it ten days within which to submit its report, the committee, evidently did far more than that.

From the content and direction of the recommendations, the Mitee committee must have had a good x-ray of the problems faced by the region as well as proffering practical solutions.

One major recommendation of the committee

is the advocacy for the open trial and granting of bail to Henry Okah, the leader of a militant group now being prosecuted for treason. He was accused of gun running and has since his arrest been subjected to secret trial. The committee believes that given the exacerbation of the Niger Delta violence, most of which are a protest over the arrest and trial of Okah, the option of granting him bail has become very expedient.

Another recommendation of the committee disclosed during the presentation of its report to Government is that the derivation fund paid to Niger Delta States be increased from the present 13 per cent to 25 percent, just as the federal allocation to the states in the region be increased. Additionally, the committee believes that the creation of Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) where 2000 jobs will be provided in each local government council in the zone, will keep the youths meaningfully busy and away from the temptations of militancy.

The report further urged the Federal

The problems of the Niger Delta have remained in the consciousness of Nigerians and the international community as one loud example of neglect, exploitation and induced poverty in a developing country. The inhabitants of this region from which the bulk of Nigeria's wealth comes have rather poor infrastructure. There are no qualitative schools and hospitals, very few good roads and bridges, and no jobs for youths in the area. Their traditional means of livelihood, subsistence agriculture and fishery, have been decimated from years of oil production without safeguards in the face of irresponsible gas flaring.

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua when he assumed power in May 2007 included the question of the Niger Delta among his seven-point agenda. In truth although not much has been achieved in all seven areas the deteriorating situation in the Niger Delta and the loss of revenue and lives have compelled urgent government action. Accordingly President Yar'Adua recently constituted

## New Hope for the Niger Delta?

a committee on the Niger Delta to come up with a report on how to address the problems of the Niger Delta. It was to be a compendium of all previous reports on the subject.

On December 1, 2008 the Ledum Mitee-led Presidential Niger Delta Technical Committee submitted its report to President Yar'Adua. The major highlights of the committee's recommendations include:

\* An increase in derivation from the present 13 per cent to 25 per cent and dedication of additional revenues largely to new infrastructure and sustainable development of the region

\* Open trial and bail of accused militant Henry Okah

\* Completion of the East-West road with spurs to the coastline

\* Payment of outstanding statutory funds owed to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)

\* Creating a disarmament and rehabilitation process for militant

youths in the Niger Delta

\* Establishment of a Youth Employment Scheme (YES) capable of employing at least 2000 youths in every affected local government area

\* Free primary and secondary school education

\* Establishment of a Community Trust Fund

\* Oil companies' provision of insurance against pollution

The committee further recommended a six-month period of immediate confidence-building measures by government during which it hoped violence in the Niger Delta will begin to reduce. In his response President Yar'Adua thanked the committee for a job well done within a short time. He promised to study the document and implement those recommendations that can be implemented in the spirit of cooperation between government and the people of the Niger Delta.

But there does not appear to be much that is profoundly new in the committee's recommendations. We said it before that what the Niger Delta needs is not more reports as whole libraries have been written about it already but the political will to aggressively go after solutions. However, if it takes the report of the technical committee to jolt the government into action, then we support the effort. It should be borne in mind that the Niger Delta is one of the seven-point agenda of President Yar'Adua when he assumed office nearly two years ago. During that period, nothing much has changed in the Niger Delta, instead a low-level insurgency and criminality have overtaken the region. The threat of militancy in the Niger Delta is real and if not checked could spread to other parts of the country.

When President Yar'Adua decided to establish a Ministry of Niger Delta, many applauded the initiative but unfortunately two months later there is neither a Ministry nor a Minister of

## Clark, MEND warn FG Against Dumping N'Delta C'ttee's Report

*By Emma Amaize*

Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND); former Federal Commissioner for Information, Chief Edwin Clark; and activists in the Niger Delta say the protracted Niger Delta crisis may be over next year if the Federal Government summons the political will to implement the three-volume report of the 45-man Technical Committee on the Niger-Delta, headed by Mr. Ledum Mitee, which was submitted to President Umaru Yar'Adua, December 1.

In separate interviews with Vanguard, Chief Clark, MEND spokesman, Jomo Gbomo; Delta State chairman of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Mr. Oghenejabor Ikimi; and development activist, Mr. Joel Bisina, said implementation of the audacious report should begin without much ado, warning that leaving it to gather dust in government archive like was done to previous reports on the region, would spell real danger.

According to MEND, "yes, we are satisfied that the TC (Technical Committee) has been bold to lay its card on the table in spite of pressures to do otherwise. Now, the ball is in the court of the Yar'Adua administration to show to the world that it is ready for peace."

It also welcomed the recommendation that its presumed leader, Henry Okah, should be given an open trial and be granted bail, but on the recommendation for 25 per cent increase on derivation, the militant group said the posture of the committee sounded beggarly, and, therefore, unacceptable to it.

"We are not okay with that recommendation. It is like begging someone for your inheritance. If someone steals your inheritance you take it by law or by force. The region wants true federalism in all its ramifications and that includes fiscal federalism.

The TC, we understand, did not want to rock the boat, but we do not owe anyone an apology to demand for the rights of the Niger-Delta people and as such, the MEND rejects the Mephiboseth mentality of the TC," he stated.

On his part, Clark said: "The demand by the committee for the increase of the derivation from the minimum of 13 per cent as contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to 25 per cent is most laudable, as it is indeed a re-affirmation of the demand by the entire delegation from the South-South under my leadership to the National Political Reform Conference, which took place in Abuja between February to June, 2005 and the 25 per cent, we demanded, should be increased to 50 per cent within a period of five years.

"This was aggressively rebuffed and opposed by other delegates particularly those from the three geo-political zones in the North and the South-West who decided to impose 18 per cent on the Conference.

These led to our historic 'walk out' from the conference. Even the 18 per cent approved by the conference has not been implemented, particularly when it is realized that such an increase does not require any constitutional amendment.

"The former President, Chief

Olusegun Obasanjo, failing to realise his desired goal for setting up the conference decided to dump the conference report at the National Assembly, which had earlier opposed the setting up of the conference from the initial stage.

We do hope that our President, who is sincere and committed to the improvement of the Niger-Delta, will definitely have the political willpower to approve the recommendation of the committee", he said.

According to him, "the committee's suggestion of a six-month disarming process for militants in the region, bail, open trial and negotiated release for the MEND leader, Henry Okah, who is currently on trial at Jos High Court, Plateau State, is a confirmation of my constant appeal to the Federal Government for the release without any condition or an open trial to alert Nigerians of what is involved in the trial of Henry Okah."

Applauding the committee for strongly advocating the replacement of active military forces with civil forces to maintain law and order in the region, he said, "this courageous and remarkable recommendation by the committee has been my stand.

I am consistently appealing to the Federal Government to avoid confrontation between the military and the militants by replacing the military with the police and other law enforcement agents.

A situation whereby the military mounts road blocks instead of the police is unacceptable. Niger Delta is part of Nigeria and should not be an occupied territory by the Nigerian Army."

Chairman of the Delta CDHR, Mr. Ikimi, told Vanguard: "The Federal

Government should without delay start implementing the recommendations proffered by the Mitee-led Niger-Delta Technical Committee, as same would go a long way to further douse the tension and restiveness within the region.

"We welcome the recommendation of the committee granting amnesty to all Niger-Deltan militants willing to be rehabilitated, including the leader of the MEND, Mr. Henry Okah.

"We accept the recommendation for an increase in the derivation from 13 to 25 per cent to fast track development in the region, though we prefer total control and management of our resources and true federalism as opposed to an increase in derivation.

"We also support the committee's recommendation that the Federal Government should release all outstanding allocations due the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for the development of the region.

"We also accept the

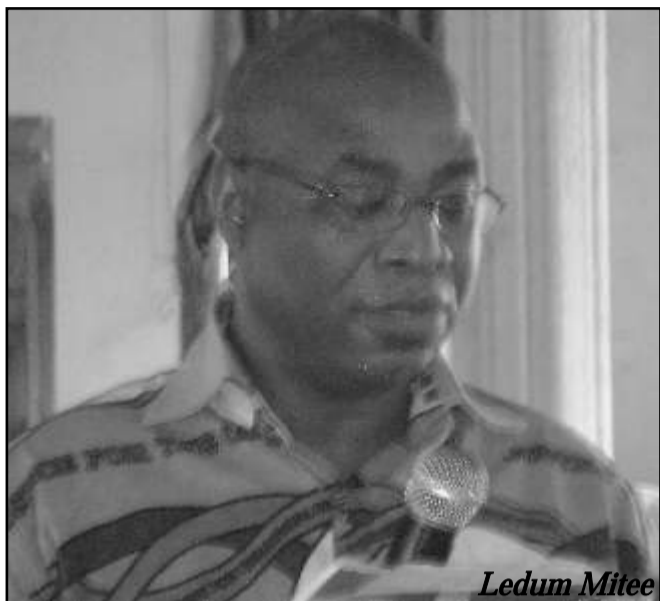
### Change of Name

I, formerly known, called and addressed as MISS WISDOM LEGBARA S. now wish to be known, called and addressed as MRS. CHRISTIANA S. DORGBAA.

All documents bearing my former name remain valid.

Rivers State Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education (UBE), please note. MRS. CHRISTIANA S. DORGBAA

## Ogoni Day 2009 Statement By Ledum Mitee, MOSOP President



Ledum Mitee

This year's Ogoni day is a special one. To have the anniversary of a struggle that has undoubtedly been blessed by God on a Sunday must be something special indeed. From its beginning and at every turn, we have always dedicated our struggle for justice to God. The God of justice has never failed us. By His blessing, even when no one gave us any chance, we have been able to survive great odds and project the image and profile of our people the world over to the extent that every single Ogoni should be proud to be a part of a small ethnic nationality that is now a metaphor for non violent change around the globe!

All through the course of the struggle, our cling to hope, our faith and abiding spirit of courage kept us steadfast and enabled us reap some very important but divinely inspired victories even when no one gave us a chance. I salute the indefatigable spirit of Ogoni that has enabled us score some of the most outstanding victories even against the odds.

The profound international recognition and attention which our struggle gained, undoubtedly one of the early successes of our campaigns, became reason the Abacha regime wanted us crushed. Not only did we prevail over that repressive regime, but have consistently built on the international recognition and attention with the result that today, I representing you, now chair the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), an organisation of about 50 million peoples and nations across the world including Tibet, Taiwan, Somaliland etc committed to non violent strategies for the resolution of conflicts. These are proof that even in the midst of the clangs of arms and violence around, we can beat our chests in satisfaction and say, Yes, non violence works after all!

Furthermore, after over a decade of Shell trying to find a way around MOSOP and the will of the Ogoni people and after years of dithering, the Federal Government finally came to accept what we have always insisted: that Shell is persona non-grata in Ogoni. Thus just like we saw off Abacha, we are here at this same place where we all declared "NO TO SHELL" in one voice some 16 years ago, and at this hour, at this moment formally conducting the final burial

ceremonies of Shell in Ogoniland. This is not just the burial rites of corporate irresponsibility but also the celebration of the victory of non-violence as a strategy in an increasingly violent environment. Yes, non violence works, after all!

Whilst awaiting the final nails from the Federal Government of the Shell's coffin, let us recall the poignant prediction of Ken Saro-Wiwa when he declared in his final words at that infamous show trial that:

*"Shell is here on trial and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The Company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war that the Company has waged in the Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war be duly punished."*

Dead true to this prediction, just two months ago, a U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, United States of America passed a judgement insisting that Shell must face trial on the role it played in the condemnable murder of our heroes. This judgement, if for nothing, is further testament that no matter the strains of the length of time involved, our non-violent peaceful resistance remains the best option for our enduring struggle against the forces that continually seek to oppress us.

As we are all aware, recently the Federal government set up a Committee to help proffer a road map for the resolution of the Niger delta problem. The privilege of my election as Chairman by members of that Committee drawn from the 9 states of the Niger Delta is and should be seen as a testament and in recognition of the non violent tactics we have championed over the years. 'Yes, non violence works after all!'

These once-in a lifetime successes which must not be given up easily belong to all of us-heroes of the struggle, who, for our better tomorrow, suffered yesterday and must be prepared to offer our determined best today. This is your victory

To weaken or contaminate our struggle at this point would be a serious mistake. We must therefore summon the same spirit and determination in the remaining battles ahead.

2009 is also a year in which the Ogoni people must make greater efforts to distinguish ourselves by making greater efforts to help ourselves and lead by example. We must take every opportunity to encourage the contributions from our own people who know the difficulties we face. It is my firm belief that with our characteristic resolve we shall meet these challenges. This requires those of us who are leading to come closer to those being led, and those being led to insist that we will not be led astray.

One critical battle, which we must brace ourselves for in the days ahead is challenges of a post-Shell Ogoni. The struggle that removed Shell from our land was fought and won by us all

and it is only fitting that all our *views and opinions COUNT* in any discussions to bring a new oil operator in Ogoniland. It is to this end that we have spent the months working with a broad spectrum of our people, especially the Contact Group, collating views about best practices in community, company and government engagement in the extractive industries. To all our friends from home and abroad who heeded to our call for comments and shared their experiences and perspectives with us, we say thank you. The benchmarks, approved in our previous Congresses, the details of which we hope to present soon to all the authorities involved broadly indicate that Ogonis will insist on the best international corporate and environmental practices, that we get a fair share of every barrel of oil and gas from our land, massive infrastructural and human development, amongst others, as the minimum expectation from any eventual new operator. Let us sound this loud and clear; Ogonis will not accept any standards lower or like those we experienced with Shell and the onus is on the would-be operator to be chosen by the Federal Government to demonstrably prove to us they can deliver those best practices.

We must, however, be reminded that the lessons from our past, and from every freedom struggle internationally, is that as you show signs of success in your cause this is when opponents and malicious authorities will intensify their efforts to divide people of common fundamental belief against one another. So today if we truly believe in the Ogoni Bill of Rights then every one of us must be prepared to set competition and differences aside when there is any risk that it will threaten the aspirations we have for our people, our children, and our land.

History will judge the success of our struggle by what we could accomplish and not by whom or through which group it was accomplished. Together we can achieve enough to satisfy all our need but not our greed. Let us think it out, not fight it out, turn to each other and not on each other in the abiding conviction that although there are some missing blocks in our march, there is a solid foundation upon which to build.

As we march ahead in the tasks ahead, we must realise that we cannot do it alone. We need the help of our friends and government. Whilst commending the present administration in the state for embarking on several roads and rural electrification projects in parts of Ogoni, we would plead for your Excellency's support in the activity witnessed today-the burial rites of Shell in Ogoni. I think I express the views of the overwhelming majority of our people in saying that you will remain eternally a friend of the Ogoni people if you give them your undiluted support in this project.

One other battle we must confront with determined vigour is to ensure that our non

# Photo Scenes



On December 19, 2008, MOSOP conducted Election of Officers into offices of her National Secretariate. Below are Photo scenes at the election venue in Bori.



Chief Gbarakoro casting his vote during the MOSOP Election in Bori



Contestants for Office of MOSOP Sec. Gen, and some Election officials confirming votes



Cross section of Ogoni voters, declaring the President unopposed



Eleco Chairman, Dr. Nwaranwa addressing potential voters

## Tour of Parastatals in Rivers State

Cries for Government concern fill the air as Special Adviser on Parastatals to Rivers State Governor, Hon. Batom Mitee commenced familiarization visits to establishments under his portfolio, recently. See Photos below:



S. A. being conducted round facilities at the Rivers State Television Authority by the General Manager, Tonye Ekong



General Manager of Rivers State Broadcasting Cooperation, Ms Medeline Tador, showing transmission facilities to the S.A., Hon. Mitee



Hon. Mitee explaining Govt intensions and encouraging the Director, Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture, Alabo Author Willie Pepple (Snr)



Hon. Mitee explaining issues with the Director, Rivers State Library Board, Deacon Godwill Bereweriso and other Management Staff