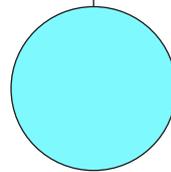
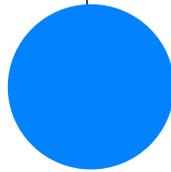
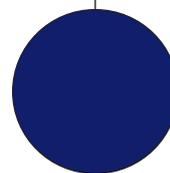
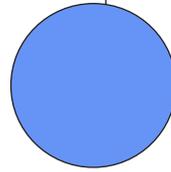
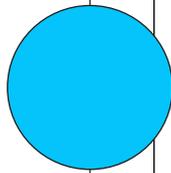
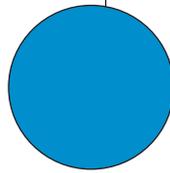
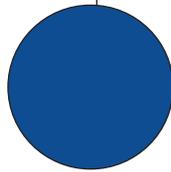
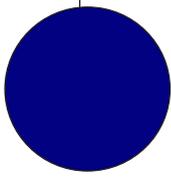
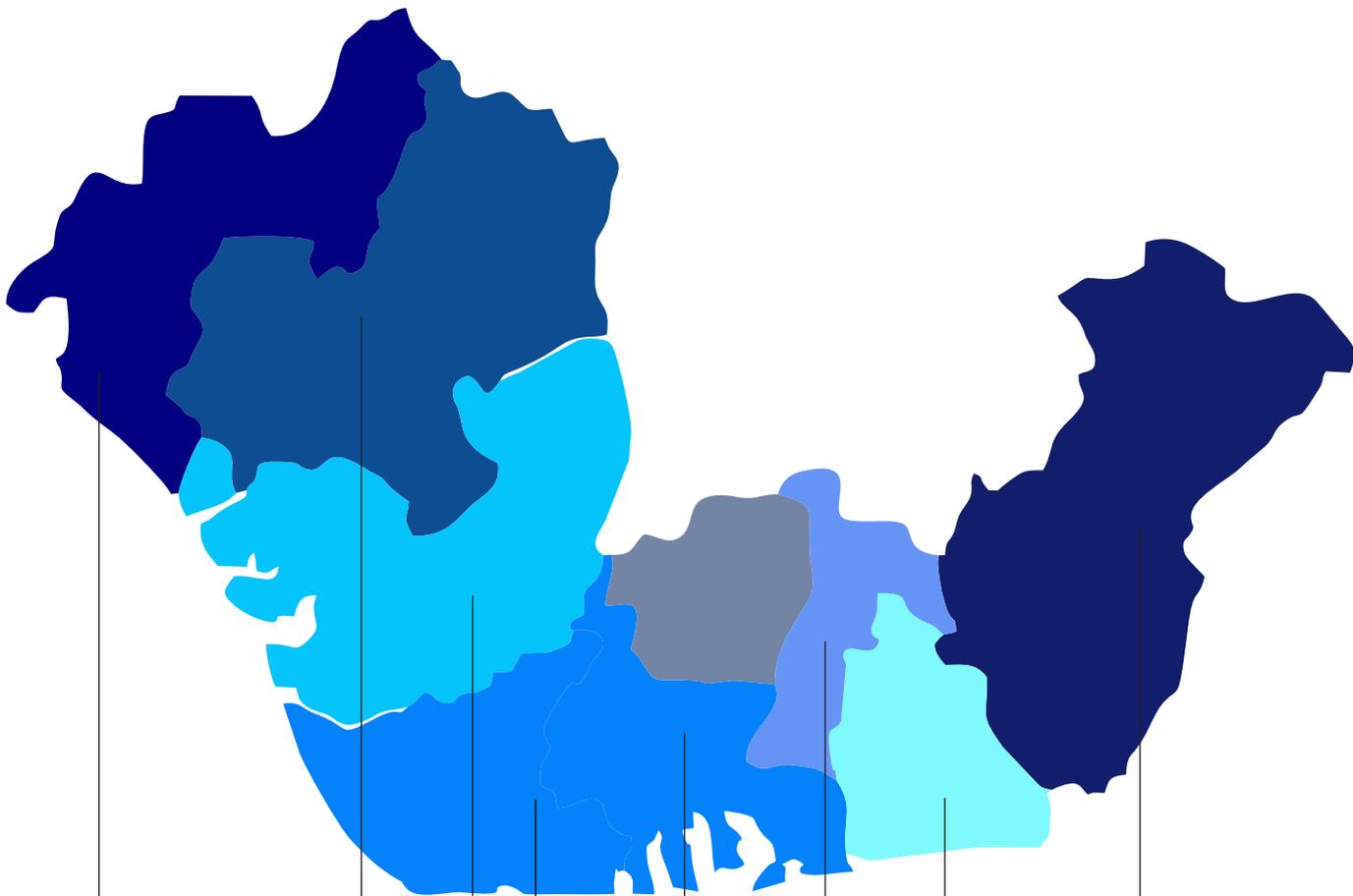


DELTA DILEMMAS:

Buhari and Nigeria's South-South Zone



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la Démocratie et le Développement





02

Introduction

The oil rich Niger Delta region has been a policy and political challenge to successive administrations in Nigeria since the 1960s. Between 1999 and 2015 it featured prominently in the policy priorities of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This has not been the case with President Muhammadu Buhari, whose election to office in 2015 was based on an overarching promise of 'change', with a specific focus on tackling insecurity, corruption and youth employment.

There was no clear-cut policy agenda for Nigeria's Niger Delta region at the beginning of President Buhari's administration in 2015. But the challenges that made the Niger Delta a policy priority to previous governments remained much the same as they always had. The oil industry continued to be the main source of public revenue for the Nigerian government. The development deficits that contribute to armed militancy and protests by ethnic minorities in the region, also persisted. Oil industry induced environmental pollution remained an everyday reality. And the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) initiated by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to facilitate the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of armed militants in the Niger Delta was ongoing

and the infrastructural and human capacity development needs that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), had identified, remained unfulfilled. As a result, President Buhari inherited a development and security conundrum in the Niger Delta.

While his administration was able to maintain a passive approach towards the region in its first year in office, it was subsequently forced to respond to issues in the region following the outbreak of violence involving the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), a new militant group that emerged in 2016. The NDA carried out 60 attacks targeting oil industry infrastructure in 2016. These attacks, which threatened the security of Nigeria's oil industry and the accruing revenue, the mainstay of public revenue base, made the Niger Delta an urgent policy and political issue for Buhari's government.

The militant activities by NDA led to a dialogue between the Federal Government of Nigeria and stakeholders in the Niger Delta region. The Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), on behalf of an array of different groups in the Niger Delta, presented a 16-point demand to the federal government on 1 November 2016:

THE SIXTEEN DEMANDS

03





16-point agenda

7 Big Wins

environment and security,
infrastructure interconnection,
capacity building and
economic empowerment.

The presentation of the 16-point agenda led to the creation of two main policy frameworks. The Strategic Implementation Work Plan (SIWP) for Development in the Niger Delta (2017 - 2019) and the 7 Big Wins of the Federal Ministry of Petroleum. While SIWP was focused mainly on the Niger Delta, the 7 Big Wins, initiated by the Petroleum Ministry, had only one “big win” dedicated to the Niger Delta. This was focused on environment and security, infrastructure interconnection, capacity building and economic empowerment. In the absence of any clear election manifesto commitments, the outcomes of the SIWP and elements of the 7 Big Wins, both policy initiatives of the government, provide a useful framework to assess President Buhari’s performance in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region since 2015.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN Nigeria's Niger Delta

01

CESSATION OF MILITANT HOSTILITIES.

In August 2016, negotiations between the Buhari administration and stakeholders in the Niger Delta led to cessation of militant activities by NDA. This cessation occurred in the context of sustained funding for the PAP. Legal processes against key militant leaders in the Niger Delta, such as Government Ekpomopolo (Tompolo), considered a witch-hunt by many residents of the region, were also stalled. The government has continued to engage in extensive discussions with armed groups in the region through state governors and regional stakeholders such as PANDEF.

02

SUPPORT TO THE NIGERIAN CONTENT DEVELOPMENT MONITORING BOARD (NCDMB).

The Buhari administration, through NCDMB, has contributed to the development of the local oil industry in the Niger Delta. NCDMB has invested in the development of a small scale (modular) refinery in Bayelsa State. An important dimension of this investment is that it was made into a company predominantly owned by an individual from the Ijaw ethnic group in Bayelsa. Reinforcing a perception that the Ijaws, an ethnic minority group located in the oil rich Niger Delta, are increasingly becoming a part of the oil industry; a sector that they feel they have been historically marginalised from participating in. The NCDMB also completed construction of its 17-storey office complex in 2020. This complex is a significant infrastructure investment in Bayelsa; a state that is known for its lack of federal infrastructure.

03

IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NDDC.

Early in his administration, President Buhari gave priority to improving the administration of the NDDC. Initiatives have been taken to address the endemic corruption that has plagued the institution since its inauguration in 2001. A forensic audit, which is still ongoing, has been complemented by the appointment of an interim management structure to drive reform. Overall, there is a perception that the new NDDC administration has focused mainly on small and medium scale infrastructural projects across communities in the Niger Delta in line with its mandate.

04

ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION.

President Buhari's administration committed itself to sustaining the Ogoni environmental clean-up initiated by the previous administration. The HydroCarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), established under the Federal Ministry of Environment, has sustained its work in Ogoniland. Under the Goodluck Jonathan administration, HYPREP did not receive funding and was unable to carry out any substantial work. This changed under President Buhari as his administration provided legal backing to HYPREP and appointed a Governing Council. However the promise of more funds has not been matched in reality. The government has released only \$10 million for the clean-up, whilst the estimated amount needed could be as high as US\$1 billion.

Shortcomings

01 | ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION CONTINUES.

While President Buhari's administration has committed itself to sustaining the Ogoni environmental clean-up, a similar commitment to the environment has not been demonstrated in other parts of the Niger Delta. Oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region have continued to experience oil industry induced environmental pollution that destroys the flora and fauna of the area under President Buhari's administration. The health consequences of this oil related environmental pollution abound across communities in the Niger Delta. Water sources in these communities are contaminated and local communities, especially in rural areas where people depend on fishing and farming for livelihood, hold legitimate grievances against the federal government and oil companies operating in the area. President Buhari's administration has not taken necessary steps to ensure the extension of a comprehensive clean-up of the polluted environment across the Niger Delta beyond Ogoni area. Even in Ogoni there are problems, with accusations that the efforts have been politicised and corrupted.

02 | SELECTIVE ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN.

Corruption is one of the main challenges that has undermined the delivery of public service and development in the Niger Delta region. While anti-corruption efforts have been a key focus of the Buhari administration there has been minimal impact in the region. Petitions against corrupt political officer holders - past and present - continue to gather dust at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Without addressing the problem of corruption, development will remain a mirage in the Niger Delta region.

03 | UNENDING PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY.

President Buhari's administration inherited the PAP for ex-militants in the Niger Delta from previous administrations. This programme was designed to facilitate the DDR of people belonging to armed groups. Since its inauguration, the programme has paid a monthly stipend of N65,000 to each of the 30,000 persons enrolled in the programme. While the programme has succeeded in reducing the number of attacks against the oil industry, this reduction in violence and instability, as shown by the outbreak of violence in 2016 involving the NDA, depends on the continuation of the PAP. Recognising that the programme's objective of reintegrating ex-militants had not been achieved, President Buhari's administration extended it in 2015 but without undertaking much needed reforms or providing a clear timeline as to when it will end. Prior to the administration of President Buhari, the federal government had invested about N400 billion in PAP. This funding trajectory has been sustained under President Buhari. Despite the continued flow of funds, the PAP has been characterised by misplaced project priorities, including investments in physical infrastructures such as training centers, which were not a part of the programmes original mandate. It also been the subject of corruption scandals under Buhari's watch, with two administrators he appointed, the subjects of ongoing probes and legal processes. There is no clear indication that the government has a clear strategy for the successful reintegration of ex-militants and eventual termination of PAP. With no end in sight, it has become a drain on scarce public funds.

Shortcomings

- 04** | **CONTINUING INSECURITY IN THE NIGER DELTA.**
- Although there has been a significant reduction of insecurity targeting oil industry infrastructure, this does not imply that the security situation in the Niger Delta is resolved. In fact, insecurity targeting people living in the Niger Delta has significantly increased since President Buhari came to office. In 2019 there were 416 violent incidents that resulted in more than a thousand deaths in the region. In 2018, there were 351 incidences of violence which resulted in 546 deaths. Inter and intra communal violence, cult violence, crime, land disputes and electoral violence are responsible for these incidences of violence in the Niger Delta. While these may seem unrelated to the oil industry, the struggle for the control of rents from the oil industry within communities play a crucial role in fueling violence in the Niger Delta. These communal and micro level conflicts often evolve to events that threaten wider oil industry security.
- 05** | **NEGLECTED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NIGER DELTA.**
- The reconstruction of the East-West Road, that links all states in the region, is critical to the development of the Niger Delta. This reconstruction has been ongoing since President Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007). However, work on this road has not progressed under President Buhari's administration. Investments in the building of seaports in the Niger Delta is also a key infrastructure demand of regional stakeholders. The full operationalisation of the seaports in Port Harcourt, Calabar and Warri will contribute to private sector growth and wider economic benefits for the region but there has been little, or no progress recorded in this area. Popular perception among people of the Niger Delta is that failure to pay specific attention to the provision of critical infrastructure in the Niger Delta reflects a North-South divide in Nigerian politics. This divide, it is argued, places the oil producing South - South region at a disadvantage in the politics of infrastructure provision in the country.
- 06** | **LACK OF A COHERENT POLICY PROCESS FOR THE NIGER DELTA.**
- While President Buhari's administration developed SIWP, there have not been sustained efforts to implement various elements of the plan. This failure of implementation has contributed to the growing distrust of the federal government in the Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

Contrary to the anti-corruption focus of the administration, Niger Delta issues have been managed through processes that are entangled in corrupt practices. Governance in the Niger Delta has not seen any significant shift since Buhari's emergence as President of Nigeria in 2015. Security and stability in the Niger Delta are still maintained using the same patronage and transactional means adopted by previous administrations. There is an urgent need for President Buhari's administration to take concerted efforts to address the challenges of peace, security and development in the Niger Delta. This can be achieved if President Buhari's administration take the following steps:



IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION WORK PLAN.

President Buhari's administration should revisit and implement its SIWP to address the urgent issues in the Niger Delta. This will be a short-term approach but will give the administration much needed credibility that can support discussions targeting longer-term reforms.



SECURITY SECTOR REFORM.

There is an increasing demand for security sector reform in Nigeria. It is recommended that specific attention is paid to the Niger Delta in these proposals. President Buhari's administration should work with state and local governments to develop a community-based security system that does not prioritise ex-militants in the Niger Delta.



FINALISE THE FORENSIC AUDIT AND COMPLETE THE PROJECTS INITIATED BY NDDC.

President Buhari's administration should expedite action on the ongoing forensic audit of NDDC. The finalisation of the forensic audit should be accompanied by a sincere anti-corruption policy for the NDDC. President Buhari's administration should also mandate the NDDC to complete all existing ongoing projects. 70% of contracts awarded by NDDC are ongoing, with just 12% completed. A moratorium should be placed on the award of new projects by the NDDC until these numbers improve. President Buhari's administration will meet a significant demand of stakeholders of the Niger Delta if NDDC is able to complete all relevant existing projects and terminate projects that are deemed irrelevant or fictitious.



IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT ACROSS THE NIGER DELTA.

President Buhari's administration should, as a matter of urgency, release funds for environmental remediation in the Niger Delta. In addition to the provision of adequate funding, there is an urgent need for President Buhari's administration to reform the law backing the creation of HYPREP to extend beyond Ogoni land. This change will enable the institution to work across different communities polluted by crude oil in the Niger Delta.



REFORM THE PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAMME (PAP).

President Buhari's administration should reform the PAP in line with achieving the overarching objective of the programme - the reintegration of ex-militants. One way this can be done is by applying the concept of layering. This process will allow the government to implement gradual reforms without a sudden termination, which is likely to lead to a recurrence of violence and escalation of insecurity involving ex-militants. Any reform process will need to be carefully managed.



COMPLETE THE EAST WEST ROAD.

President Buhari should mandate the Ministry of Niger Delta to fast track the completion of the reconstruction of the East West Road.

