

Sustainability in community development Micro-Projects Programme 3 (MPP3) in Niger Delta region of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate factors militating against the sustainability of development projects executed under the Micro-projects Programme 3 (MPP3) and how to mitigate such factors in some locations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The multistage sampling technique, comprising cluster, purposive sampling, and systematic sampling methods, was adopted. A questionnaire schedule, In-depth Interview (IDI), and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides were used for data collection. The data analysis was based on 1,574 questionnaires, which were duly completed and returned. Eighteen FGDs and twelve IDIs were conducted. Analysis of quantitative data was done using SPSS Version 22. Boreholes water, markets, health centres, generator house, and staff quarters were the projects executed under the MPP3, in the study communities. The projects were mainly unsustainable especially as a result of inadequate community involvement in the execution of the projects in the study areas. Recommendations were made on the need to involve social workers in MPP3 and other development programmes so as to attain sustainability in these development initiatives.

Keywords: sustainability, micro-projects, community, development, Niger Delta

Introduction

The need for sustainable community development is a global concern, but it is a peculiar issue to the developing nations. In 1992, 178 heads of states met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to reaffirm the declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which was adopted at Stockholm in 1972. The earth Summit adopted the Agenda 21, a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century (Australian Government [AG], 2008). The first principle of the Rio Declaration reflects an anthropocentric view of sustainable development, placing human beings squarely at the heart of sustainable development considerations (Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future [SFSF], 2011). The recognition of 'humans being at the centre' of decision making spurred many international efforts to accelerate human development and lift countries out of poverty, or indeed eradicate it (SFSF, 2011).

However, most developing countries had attempted several sustainable community development plans before the Rio declaration. Nepal, for instance, started her first development plan in 1956, since then till 2006 Nepal has completed ten development plans in a long period of almost fifty years (Srivastava, 2008). Also, India commenced her first development plan in 1951, and until 1990 India has completed seven

development plans (Vasani, 2014). The Nigerian government also had adopted various community development initiatives. These post-dated the colonial era and the 'Rio declaration' of 1992. During the pre-colonial era community members always met to prioritize their needs, and implemented solutions to such needs through personal and joint contributions by local structures (Veta, 2012), such as the council of chiefs, youth, women, elders etc. in the various communities (Imhabekhai, 2009).

In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, some efforts were also made to enhance community development. In 1958, during the colonial epoch, the Wilkins' Commission was established. The purpose of the commission was to recommend strategies for the development of the region and it yielded the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board in 1961. Unfortunately, the board was short-lived by the upsurge of the Western region's political crisis of 1962. Then, in 1967, the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority was set up to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region. Thereafter, in 1980, the Presidential Task Force was established to curb youth restiveness in the region. In 1992, further effort to develop the region was made with the establishment of the Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). Unfortunately, this commission could not make any laudable impact before it was scrapped in 1998. The lack of political will to address this fundamental issue by subsequent boards/commissions led to the resurgence of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta Region. In 2000, the federal government launched another development commission known as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to address the developmental issues of the Niger Delta region. The commission resumed work in 2001. The commission is bedeviled with corruption, inadequate funding, inadequate monitoring, and evaluation of projects and poor participation of beneficiary community members (Adekola and Victor, 2016; Isidiho and Sabran, 2015). In 1999, the European Commission (EC) an agency of the European Union (EU) became interested in opening up the communities in the Niger Delta region. Thus, in 1999 the European Commission established two Micro-projects Programmes (MPP3 and MPP6) for the development of the nine states of the Niger Delta Region. The MPP3 is to serve Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states, while the MPP6 is to serve Abia, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Cross River, Imo and Ondo states. This study is focused on MPP3 and the sustainability of some of the projects.

Sustainability in community development projects has been the focus of many studies because of the belief that when projects are sustainable, the living standard of the people the project is meant for will be improved. Apkomuvie (2011) in his study on breaking barriers to transformation of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, revealed that it is not sufficient for the government to provide infrastructure for the people of the Niger Delta region, rather, they should be allowed to participate in decision making on issues that affect their lives, to enable them to realise their potentials, build self-confidence, live a life of dignity and self-actualization. He further noted that the government should involve host communities in its developmental agenda to achieve sustainable development in the region. In other words, participants in such a development process would gain new knowledge, ideas, and strategies for improving their existing local initiatives in the region. Also, Ogueri (2010) in his study in Rivers

state noted that the involvement of the communities, especially youths, not only in selection but also in the execution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes of Odidi-Forcados gas link pipeline projects enhanced sustainability. The results further showed that the youths were proud to be part of the process through the Project Management Committee (PMC). Another study conducted in Delta state by Ofuoku (2011) revealed that projects that were funded solely by community members, NGOs, and those that are counterpart-funded by community members were highly sustainable than those solely funded by the government. The study concluded that when the people are actively involved in projects, they see them as their property and as such guard them jealously.

A study by Enefiok and Ekong (2014) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria found that despite government huge expenditure in the provision of affordable and portable water in the rural communities, lack of maintenance, lack of community participation, lack of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders, political factor, inefficient monitoring, and poor attitude towards public property were the factors that affected sustainability in water projects in the study area. Ogueri and Nnadi (2010) in their study revealed that challenges, issues, and facts facing participation of multinational oil and gas industries, in implementation of sustainable community development projects, include mismanagement of project funds, low execution capacity, lack of political will, insincerity on the part of project beneficiaries, Nigerian governance system, and strategies employed which created conflict among communities.

This study is anchored on the top-down model which has roots in the early British movement of the Victorian/Edwardian period, late 19th century, and 20th century. The top-down industrial development model initially dominated the developing world after the Second World War (Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, & Sleight, 2012). The top-down process can be described as the planned coordination of intentions and actions to achieve specified outcomes imposed by a central authority. In the top-down model, top management specifies its long-term goals, intentions, and means before actions in the form of a plan, and elaborates the plan detail as possible to translate it into collective actions with a minimum discretion left for development targets (Burgelman & Grove, 2007). This model guided the study to ascertain whether residents in the beneficiary communities' allowed professionals to provide leadership and services that supported externally created development plan, and/or whether residents in beneficiary communities' were given the chance to analyse their situations and problems and to help design solutions that would lead to more appropriate development strategies. This can also lead to more sustainability in MPP3 community development projects in the study areas.

MPP3 community development projects in the Niger Delta Region has been the focus of many studies. For instance, Arugu and Ogedi (2018) investigated the impact assessment of the European Union micro project programme in Nigeria. Also, Okoni (2012) tried to assess EU-Micro-projects Programme (EU-MPP) in selected communities in Akwa Ibom State. Ebipre, Eniekezimene, Edem and Ariye (2015) did an appraisal of the European Union-Nigeria micro project programme in Bayelsa state while Nkwocha and Onyekwere, (2009) looked at the impact of European Union

micro-projects programme in water and sanitation on rural communities of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Finally, Tinubu, Arokoyu and Lawal, (2019) studied the distribution of micro-project programme and relative poverty incidence across Nigeria south-south vegetation belts. In all these studies, assessment of sustainability in community development micro-projects programme in the Niger Delta region and the need for social workers intervention is still lacking. To bridge this gap in knowledge the following research questions will be investigated; (1) What are the development projects executed under the MPP3 in the study areas?, (2) How sustainable are the projects implemented under MPP3 in the study areas?, (3) What are the problems militating against the sustainability of MPP3 projects in the study areas?, and (4) What suggestions can be proffered that could enhance more sustainability of MPP3 community development projects in the study areas.

Materials and Method

Research design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. “It involves observations of a sample, or cross-section, of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time” (Babbie, 2010, p.106).

Study area

This study covered nine communities in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states, namely, Zarama-Epie, Angala-Owei-Gbene, Odoni, Otor-udu, Adonishaka-Ebedei, Emevor, Elibrada, Nwebiara, and Obodhi. The rationale for the inclusion of the three states in which MPP3 operates in the Niger Delta Region, was to ensure adequate coverage to determine the types of projects executed and the sustainability of the MPP3 community development projects in the areas.

Sample size

The sample size for the questionnaire was statistically determined to be 1,736 using

Taro Yamane’s (2011) formula:
$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$
. In addition, 144 members of the

selected communities participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), while nine community leaders and 3 MPP3 officials were interviewed using in-depth interview guide.

Sampling procedure

The multistage sampling technique, comprising cluster, purposive sampling, and systematic sampling methods, was adopted in this study. These gave equal opportunity to every element to be included in the study. The nine existing senatorial zones in the three states were adopted as clusters. In other words, each of the senatorial zones formed a cluster. Then, areas that benefitted from the MPP3 community development projects were purposively selected. One local government area was purposively selected from each of the senatorial zones. Thereafter, one community was purposively chosen from each of the selected local government areas, thus making a total of nine communities. Furthermore, 1,736 respondents on whom the questionnaires were administered were selected using systematic sampling technique. Only adult members

of the study population between the ages of 18 years and above from the selected communities were included in the sample. This ensured that the sampled respondents were knowledgeable enough to provide reliable and useful information for this study.

To reach the respondents, a route was purposively selected based on its nearness to MPP3 community development projects in each of the selected communities. Using the systematic sampling technique, every other household in each building was chosen, and two eligible respondents were selected until the required 195 respondents were attained. Thereafter, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select one interviewee, from each of the nine communities, for the IDIs. These included knowledgeable individuals (opinion/community leaders). In addition, three IDIs were conducted for three principal officers of MPP3 in the three states. Thus, there was a total of 12 IDIs.

Also, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select the participants for the FGDs in the nine selected communities. The participants were of the same sex, which constituted a homogenous group. This was to allow for the free flow of unbiased discussions. Two FGDs were conducted in each of the nine selected communities. One of the sessions was for males and the other session for females. Thus, a total of 18 FGDs were conducted with each session made up of eight members. The interviewees and participants for the IDIs and FGDs were those who were not chosen for the administration of the questionnaire.

Research instruments

In the study, the questionnaire, IDI guide, and FGD guide were the instruments for data collection. The questionnaire was the major instrument for quantitative data collection, and it was in two sections. The first section covered respondents' demographic data, while the second section covered knowledge of MPP3 community development projects. The questionnaire was other-administered. This enabled the participation of persons with formal and without formal educational background, and for the high return rate of the completed questionnaire. On the other hand, the in-depth interview guide and the focus group discussion guide were used to gather detailed qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative data from the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The data analysis was based on 1,574 questionnaires, which were duly completed and returned. Analysis of quantitative data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22). Descriptive statistics, such as simple frequency distributions in the form of tables and charts were used. The qualitative data from the IDIs and the FGDs were analyzed by going through the field data to identify and select concepts, idioms, and expressions that respondents used in describing the phenomenon under investigation. This led to a better understanding of how the people, themselves, assessed the community development projects executed under MPP3 in the study area.

Results

Type of community development projects executed

All the respondents, FGD participants, and the IDI interviewees maintained that they were aware of the existence of MPP3 in the study areas. On the types of community development projects executed under MPP3 in the communities, the result is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Type of Project(s) benefited from MPP3 (n=1574)

Type of Projects	Angala-Oweigbene (n= 181)	Odoni (n=171)	Zamara-Epie (n=183)	Adonishaka-Ebedei (n=179)	Emevor (n=169)	Otor-Udu (n=174)	Elibrada (n=174)	Nwebiara (n=176)	Obodhi (n=172)
Borehole Water	√	x	√	√	x	x	x	x	x
Market	x	x	x	x	x	√	√	x	x
Health Centre	x	√	x	√	x	x	x	√	x
Generator House	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Staff Quarter	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	√

Note: Yes = √; No = x

Table 1 shows that, in Bayelsa state, all the respondents in Angala-Oweigbene indicated that their community got water borehole and a generator-house; Odoni got a health centre. Similarly, all the respondents in Zarama-Epie said that they got two water boreholes. In Delta state, all the respondents in Adonishaka-Ebedei agreed that they got water borehole and a health centre. In Emevor, they got a staff quarter for civil servants; while in Otor-Udu, all the respondents said that they benefited from a market. For Rivers state, Table 1 also reveals that all the respondents in Elibrada indicated that they benefited from a market. All the respondents in Nwebiara indicated they got a health centre, while all the respondents indicated that staff quarters for civil servants was constructed in Obodhi. In all the FGD sessions conducted in the study areas, participants unanimously agreed that their communities benefited from the projects listed in Table 1.

Similarly, the IDI respondents, in each of the nine communities, named also the same projects. For instance, in Delta state, the FGD participants in Otor-Udu unanimously agreed that their community benefited from an open-stall market project from MPP3. Similarly, in Bayelsa state, a male IDI interviewee in Zarama-Epie community said “we benefited from two borehole water projects from MPP3”.

Sustainability in MPP3 development projects

This section looks at the issues of the sustainability of the projects executed under MPP3 in the study areas. The result from this section is shown in Figure 1 below:

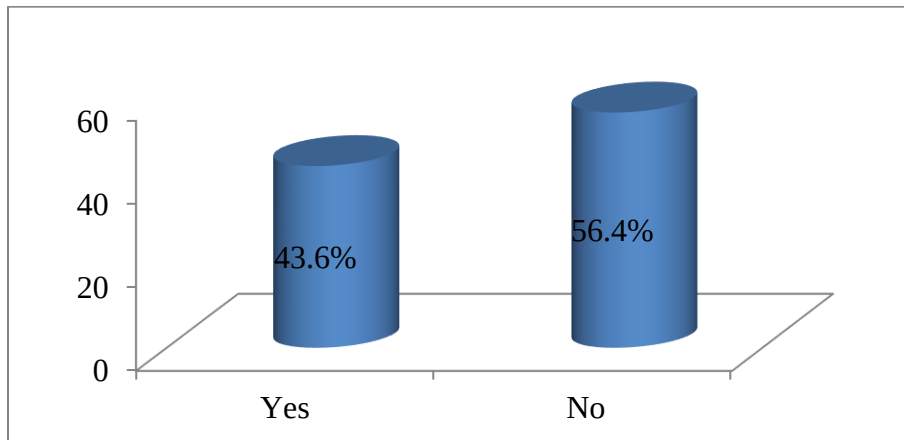


Figure I: Distribution of Respondents by whether all MPP3 Project(s) provided Services continuously to the Communities ($n=1574$)

Figure I above shows that 56.4% of the respondents, which is more than half, said that MPP3 projects (market, health centres, generator house, and boreholes water) did not provide services to their community continuously (not sustainable), while 43.6% agreed that the project(s) provided services (market, health and accommodation for staff) continuously to their community (sustainable). In the FGD sessions, particularly in Bayelsa and Delta states, participants unanimously agreed that the projects (boreholes water, generator house, health centre, and market) did not provide services to their communities continuously. However, FGD participants in Rivers state unanimously agreed that MPP3 projects (market, health centre and staff quarters) provided services to their communities continuously. Similarly, the IDIs interviewees in Bayelsa and Delta states were of the view that MPP3 projects did not provide services continuously to most of the beneficiary communities. One of their typical comments is:

The two borehole water projects we benefited stopped providing water long ago. One became dysfunctional almost immediately after its completion because the water was not good for drinking, though we were using it for washing of clothes and plates until it eventually stopped working. The second one served us for some time, but now it is bad. The community repaired them severally, now nobody cares about them. So, I can say that the projects did not actually provide any services in anyway. (A male IDI interviewee in Zarama-Epie community, Bayelsa state).

On the contrary, in Rivers state and Emevor community in Delta state, interviewees maintained that the projects provided services continuously to their communities. A female IDI interviewee in Elibrada community, Rivers state observed that “the market is in order, the community is using it effectively, our neighbouring communities’ members are coming to the market for businesses, we have extended it on our own, and it is providing the needed service to our community”.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by problems affecting the sustainability of MPP3 in the study areas ($n=1263$)

Perceived Problems	Yes	No
Inadequate funding of MPP3 Projects	769 (60.9%)	494 (39.1%)
Inexperienced MPP3 officials	388 (30.7%)	875 (69.3%)
Inadequate community involvement	816 (64.6%)	447 (35.4%)
Corrupt community leaders	105 (8.3%)	1158 (91.7%)
Poor monitoring of projects	224 (17.7%)	1039 (82.3%)
Contractors' resistance to suggestions	160 (12.7%)	1103 (87.3%)

Table 2 indicates that 64.6% of the respondents indicated that inadequate community involvement was one of the major problems affecting the sustainability of MPP3 projects in the study areas, 60.9% mentioned inadequate funding, while 30.7% indicated that inexperienced MPP3 officials were the problem. This is followed by inadequate funding for the projects. FGD participants and IDI interviewees who said that MPP3 has not achieved its specific objectives were probed further to mention the problems they thought were facing the sustainability of the projects. In the FGD sessions, across the study areas, participants unanimously agreed that inadequate community involvement in the projects was one of the major problems affecting the sustainability of the projects. Also, in Delta state, a female IDI interviewee, in Adonishaka-Ebedei community, stressed that: “the major problem facing MPP3, among others, in the implementation of projects, is inadequate involvement of the community members in the projects”.

Discussion

All the respondents, the FGD participants, and the IDI interviewees were aware of the existence of MPP3 in the study areas. On types of community development projects executed under MPP3 in the study areas, the study revealed that boreholes water, markets, health centres, generator house, and staff quarters were the projects executed under the MPP3, in the study communities, but most of them were later abandoned, some were not used right from the onset, while few were being utilized.

Concerning the sustainability of the community development projects implemented under MPP3 in the study areas, the study revealed that 56.4% of the respondents, which is more than half, said that MPP3 projects (market, health centres, generator house, and water boreholes) did not provide services continuously (unsustainable) to community members in Bayelsa and Delta states. The reason may be because members of the benefitting communities were mainly involved in the provision of land for the projects and nothing more. The study further revealed that sustainability of the MPP3 projects was high in Rivers state where beneficiary community members were more involved in projects' development process, and as such, projects' sustainability was enhanced and the projects were accepted as theirs. This finding corroborates Ogueri's (2010) submission that the involvement of the communities, especially youths, not only in selection but also in the execution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes of Odidi-Forcados gas link pipeline projects enhanced sustainability. This finding is related to the top-down model which is described as planned coordination of

intentions and actions to achieve specified outcomes imposed by a central authority with a minimum discretion left for development targets (Burgelman and Grove, 2007). Beneficiary communities of Bayelsa and Delta states, unlike Rivers states, were not adequately involved in the development process of the MPP3 projects, but merely received planned and imposed projects. Thus, these projects were not sustainable in these areas.

Other factors militating against the sustainability of MPP3 development projects in the study areas include inadequate funding, poor accountability of MPP3 officials, inexperienced MPP3 officials, corrupt community leaders, poor monitoring of MPP3 projects, and resistance to suggestions coming from the beneficiary communities during projects implementation stage by contractors handling the projects. This finding is in line with Mushuku, Chazovachii, Chitongo, and Mamhova (2012) who noted that several factors were constraining the delivery of social and infrastructural services in Chivi District. These included financial deficit; poor budget performance; lack of qualified personnel; poor local participation; and human resource issues. It also agrees with Kelemework (2012) who also observed that rural development has been impeded by several factors, including lack of proper devolution of power to the grassroots; hasty non-participatory implementation of projects; lack of proper utilization of public funds; problems related to evaluation and monitoring activities. It is also in line with Enefiok and Ekong (2014) who found out that despite government huge expenditure in the provision of affordable and portable water in the rural communities, lack of maintenance, lack of community participation, lack of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders, political factor, inefficient monitoring, and poor attitude towards public property were the factors that affected sustainability in water projects in the study area. Generally, from the findings of this study, the state of development in the Niger Delta region has not improved rather it has further deteriorated. This is because of the inability of MPP3 and other development programmes to adopt development strategies and approaches that would yield sustainable development in the region.

Based on the findings of this study, there is a need for the professionalization of social work in Nigeria. This would create room for MPP3 and other development agencies to employ more professional social workers who will sensitize community members about their roles and functions in community development matters. This will enable potential communities to be conversant with their expected roles and functions when issues on community development arise. It will also enhance MPP3's performance as required procedures in the community development process will be adequately adopted. There is a need for adequate funding for MPP3 development projects. This is because when enough funds are made available for programmes of this nature, few or no projects would be executed below the expectations of the beneficiary communities. Social workers should be involved in organizing seminars and training for development agencies/ commission officials in Nigeria and other developing nations, and particularly for MPP3 officials. These should be done periodically, to update their knowledge on community development strategies to enhance the overall performance of MPP3 in the study areas. There is also a need for MPP3 to adequately monitor its development projects in collaboration with the beneficiary community. This is to ensure that projects are implemented as planned, and in line with the objectives of

addressing the felt needs of the beneficiary communities. Thus, for effective monitoring of MPP3 projects, area offices, headed by professional social workers, should be established in all the local government headquarters in the study areas. To facilitate sustainability in MPP3 projects, such as health centres, there is a need for MPP3 to collaborate with governments, especially at the local level, to ensure that medical social workers and other qualified health personnel are posted to such facilities. This will enable adequate delivery of health services to beneficiary communities. There is a need also for social workers to be at the helm of development policy formulation and monitoring of development agencies and commissions in Nigeria and other developing nations, particularly in the Niger Delta region. This measure would enhance the application of required theories/models in the development process towards ensuring the active participation of target communities in the development process. This would enhance the attainment of needed sustainability in development programmes and projects particularly in the Niger Delta region and generally in Nigeria.

The study has some limitations one of which is the fact that only one community each was selected for the study and so conclusion drawn may not be generalised for all of the Niger Delta region. There may be a need therefore to sample more communities to make the conclusion more generalized.

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