

# **Corruption and Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: An Analysis of the Niger Delta Development Commission.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examined corruption and development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: an analysis of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The NDDC was created in the year 2000 by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration to fast-track the development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. To ensure that the Commission carry out this mandate effectively, section 14 (2) of the NDDC Act 2000 provided sources of funding for the agency. Despite the huge financial budgets approved by the Nigerian government to the Commission to succeed in its task, little or no improvement can be seen on the ground to justify the amount received because of the high level of corruption in the Commission. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined corruption in NDDC and how it can be curbed to achieve rapid development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The paper relied on secondary sources of data. The system theory as propounded by David Easton was adopted as the theoretical framework. It was found out that there is a high level of corruption in the NDDC that has made the Commission not to fully achieve its mandate. The paper applauded the forensic audit ordered by President Buhari on the activities of the Commission from 2001 to 2019 but however recommended that the forensic report which has been submitted since September 2021 be made public and those found wanting should be punished accordingly as this will discourage further corruption in the Commission and fast-track development of the Niger Delta region.

**KEYWORDS:** Corruption, Development, Underdevelopment, NDDC, Niger Delta, System Theory.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Corruption affects people throughout the world. Ancient civilizations show signs of pervasive illegality and corruption, making the history of corruption as old as the world itself. According to Aluko (2009), corruption is not confined to any particular nation, race, or area of the world, but rather transcends national boundaries and borders and may be found around the world. Corruption is widely regarded to be widespread in modern governance, and it is not limited to any one continent, area, country, or ethnic group. The fact that corruption exists in every society does not imply that the incidence and size of corrupt acts are the same in every society. Some countries are unquestionably more corrupt than others, while others have proven to be successful in effectively managing the corruption problem. Corruption encompasses a wide range of activities, including the exploitation of public office for private benefit, the payment of bribes to influence decisions or to induce others to do things that are morally wrong, among other things. The corruption menace has resulted in circumstances such as slow file movement in offices, police extortion of toll payments, port congestion, lines at passport offices and petrol stations, ghost workers syndrome, and election irregularities, to name a few examples of consequences (Dike, 2005, Ihenacho, 2004, Oliyide & Odeku, 2002 and Aluko, 2009). A small number of corrupt government officials enrich themselves by diverting government funds in their possession to their personal use, coercing civilians to pay bribe money, and inducing authorities with bribes to get them anything they desire from government or corporate offices.

Nigeria at sixty-one, is contending with the problems of corruption and underdevelopment. Though corruption may be found in every society, it is particularly prevalent in Nigeria, where no one appears to be immune from it, whether as a perpetrator or as a victim. According to certain scholars, corruption has permeated the Nigerian state to such an extent that it is now considered to be part of the country's cultural heritage. There is hardly any sector of the Nigerian State that is free from the menace of corruption. Corruption is one of the

greatest problems of Nigerian society and it also finds its ugly and devastating effects in all sectors of the polity including the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Corruption has a significant negative impact on society. Even if a person is not directly involved in corruption, it has an impact on every member of society. Corruption has a negative impact on the country's overall wealth.

Since the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission in the year 2000, the issues of underdevelopment it was created to tackle are not only still there but have grown in great proportion as a result of corruption. Corruption in NDDC takes different shapes. Sometimes, it involves the officials of the Commission benefiting at the expense of developing the Niger Delta region. For instance, cases where resources to be used for the development of the Niger Delta region which will ensure a good life for the people of the region are diverted by officials of the Commission or corrupt government officials are very common. There have been allegations of cases of corruption, embezzlement, diversion of funds, duplication of projects, and conspiracy between NDDC officials and contractors to deliver inferior projects. For example, the Auditor General of the Federation had opined that ₦183 billion was diverted by the managers of the Commission (Premium Times, 2015). Contractors handling most of the abandoned projects and those poorly completed projects in the region have been paid fully by the Commission. In time past, it was alleged that the chairman of the Commission spent around ₦1 billion for a voodoo charm to eliminate a top official of the Commission (Nairaland, 2008). These abnormal practices have made some public analysts believe that the Commission is being used as a conduit pipe for the theft of public funds.

Despite the huge financial budgets approved by the Nigerian government to the Commission to fast-track development in the Niger Delta region, little or no improvement can be seen on the ground to justify the amount received because of the high level of corruption in the Commission. Thus, the paper examines corruption in NDDC and how it can be curbed to achieve rapid development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

## **II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **a. Corruption**

The concept of corruption is not easy to define, some scholars' definitions have been varied and divergent. Corruption has been defined in many ways. However, an act of corruption may not be difficult to recognise when observed. The recognition of corrupt practice is aided by the explicit classification of what constitutes corruption by the laws of various states, agencies, bodies, organisation, etc. The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 in Nigeria, for example, lists gratification by an official, corrupt offers to public officers, corrupt demand by persons, fraudulent acquisition of property, fraudulent receipt of property, making a false statement or return, gratification by and through agents, bribery of public officers, and using position for gratification as offences punishable by the Act (Onyeukwu, 2021).

The most popular and simplest definition of corruption according to Nye (1967) is the abuse of public power for private benefit. From the above definition, it should not be concluded that corruption cannot exist within private sector activities. Tanzi (1995) defined corruption as the intentional non-compliance with the arm's length principle aimed at deriving some advantage for oneself or for related individuals from this behaviour.

Osoba (1996) corruption, in his opinion, is a form of anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group that confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is incompatible with established legal norms and the prevailing moral ethos of the land, and is likely to subvert or diminish the legitimate authorities' ability to provide fully for the material and spiritual wellbeing of all members of society in a just and equitable manner.

Myint (2000) corrupt behaviour is when a public official takes advantage of his or her position, title, or status to benefit personally from it. There are many types of corruption, including extortion, fraud, and embezzlement as well as nepotism and the misuse of public assets and property for personal gain. Myint also referred to influence peddling and bribery as examples of corrupt behaviour. Akinseye (2000) attempts at describing it as 'mother of all crimes' and identifies four forms of corruption as bribery, prebendalism, graft, and nepotism.

In his broad definition of corruption, Ekiyor (2005) defined it as the illegal use of official power or influence by a government official to enrich himself or further his career and/or any other person at the expense of the public, in violation of his oath of office and/or the applicable conventions or laws. It is said that this menace knows no time or period; it can strike at any time or in any period of a country's history.

From an economic standpoint, Ngwakwe (2009) defined corruption as non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with the goal of illegally earning wealth, either individually or in a group or organised manner, thereby violating existing legislation governing government and its administration's economic activities.

According to Ackerman (2014), corruption occurs when private wealth and public power collide. It refers to the illegal use of willingness-to-pay as a criterion for determining decisions. When someone is excused from the application of particular laws or regulations, or given disproportionate favouritism in the distribution of scarce resources, this is corruption.

Graycar (2015) looked at corruption by its type, activities, sectors, and places. The examples of type, activities, sectors, and places (TASP) of corruption is shown in the table below:

**Table 1:** TASP of Corruption

Type	Activities	Sectors	Places
• Bribery	• Appointing personnel	• Construction	• Countries
• Extortion	• Buying things (Procurement)	• Health	• Regions
• Misappropriation	• Delivering programmes or services	• Tax administration	• Localities
• Self-dealing	• Making things (construction/manufacturing)	• Energy	• Workplaces, etc.
• Patronage	• Rebuilding things (after a disaster)	• Environment and water	
• Abuse of discretion	• Controlling activities (licensing/regulation/issuing of permits)	• Forestry	
• Misuse of information	• Administering (justice for example), etc.	• Customs and Immigration system	
• Creating or exploiting conflict of interest		• Legal	
• Nepotism, clientelism and favouritism, etc.		• Disaster relief	
		• Education, etc.	

Source: Graycar (2015).

From the various foregoing definitions of corruption, one can see that there is hardly consensus on the meaning of the term. However, one thing that is certain about those various definitions is that they lack precise elements that constitute corruption. Nonetheless, they all have enough indicators as to conducts that might be judged as corrupt and the distinguishing element of such conduct is some moral failing or depravity (Ibrahim 2003).

**b. Development**

The ambiguous nature of development has made it difficult to advance a precise meaning. When it comes to understanding what development is all about, there are a plethora of points of view to consider. Those who see development via the lens of economics and those who believe it is a multifaceted idea whose implications extend beyond the economic sphere. In the words of Nnoli (1980), some researchers perceive development in terms of physical structures, whilst others view it in terms of social development, which incorporates characteristics such as economic, political, cultural, and ideological growth. According to Meier (1988), development is the process of increasing the value of the Gross National Product to its maximum level through the accumulation of capital and the industrialization of a country. Furthermore, development can be defined as a country's ability to expand its static economic base to the point where it can generate and sustain an annual growth in its Gross National Product (GNP). Besides that, he went on to say that development is not limited to the acquisition of industries but also encompasses processes such as modernization, productivity, social and economic equalisation, modern technical know-how, improved institutions, and attitudes, as well as an intelligently coordinated policy apparatus (Meier, 1988). In the same way, Oghator and Okoobo (2000) noted that development goes beyond the increase in per capita income or economic growth, but also includes sustainable improvements in the living standards of the people, which are guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures, as well as the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures. Todaro (1985) views development as a holistic process that encompasses all aspects of a nation's life; he asserts that development must be viewed as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth; and he concludes that development must be viewed as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth.

Seers (1979), on the other hand, defined development by raising a series of questions, such as: what has happened to poverty, unemployment, and inequality? If all three indicators (poverty, unemployment, and inequality) are rising at a relatively rapid pace, according to him, there is a lack of development and vice versa, he says. Following this, there are several characteristics to consider when determining whether a country is considered developed, including the level of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the country. Developed countries, thus according Anikpo (1996), are those that make significant efforts to modify the physical and

social environments in which they live and work in order to raise their level of life. In the same way, Onah (2005) asserts that development is not a static process but is rather a continuous improvement in the ability of an individual and a society to control and manipulate the forces of nature for the purpose of raising the standard of living for all members of the community in which they live. Also emphasised by Adamolekun (2005), development has to do with improving the living conditions of the general population. He outlined some indicators of development, which include: a higher quality of life, a higher income, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty in society, a cleaner environment, greater individual freedom, and a more diverse cultural life among citizens of a given state, amongst other things. People should be at the centre of development, which should be continuous and in constant motion. It must be directed at maximising the potentials and capacities of the human race as a whole. When a man becomes the pivot for development, his personality becomes enhanced. Again, man's enlarged personality will provide him the opportunity to meet his own wants, improve his skills and knowledge, and enjoy greater independence, among other advantages. According to Wonah (2017), development is defined as the progressive and persistent transformation of the people's way of life. Among other things, it is the modification of the way people live their lives that is founded mostly on man's progressive control over nature. In another instance, Wonah (2021) posited that development is the ability of man to use his ingenuity to derive value from nature in order to ensure his survival. People's ability to tackle their problems in their own way, according to him, is what distinguishes them. As a result, development is centred on the individual. It all begins and ends with the human being. The human being is consequently the pivot around which growth revolves and should be actively involved in the process of development. Man must gain the necessary skills and information, as well as the freedom, in order to participate in the process of development. It is necessary to protect this freedom of man to participate in the development process from fear, intimidation, oppression, subjection, exploitation, and other forms of injustice.

Development in its essence must represent the whole gamut of changes by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individual and social groups within that system move away from a condition widely perceived as unsatisfactory and toward a situation of life regarded as materially and spiritually better. From the various meanings of development outlined, it can be deduced that development is not limited to economic growth or per capita income alone but is a concept that is all-encompassing that analyses the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural, religious, and living standards of the people in a given society. Furthermore, from what has been said about development above by different writers, it is clear that attempting a satisfactory definition of development is not an easy task. We can, therefore, conceptualise development as advancement which makes life more meaningful in all its ramifications. This form of development can hardly, be achieved in a society like Nigeria where resources meant for development are expropriated by the stronger in the society.

### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper adopted the system theory propounded by David Easton as its theoretical framework of analysis. The origin of system theory is traced to the writings of a biologist named Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1920 and later adopted in political science by David Easton in the 60s (Nekabari, 2004). A system is an entity in which everything relates to everything. System analysts perceived the environment as a system with many sub-systems and each of the sub-systems interacts with the other system for efficient performance and functioning of the system (Nekabari, 2004). Systems theory can be thought of as a set of propositions concerning the link between independent variables, in which changes in one variable are accompanied or followed by changes in others (Adedire, 2014). According to Alapiki (2010), a system is a collection of interconnected elements or things that work together inside a defined environment limit. The elements that make up the system are interdependent, which means that if one of them fails to work efficiently and effectively, it will have an impact on the entire system.

According to Easton (1969), organization as a system refers to a set of elements or units, which interacts with its environment by importing inputs, while it exports outputs. A system can be closed or open. An open system interacts with its environment and closed systems do not. Easton stresses further that demands are made from the environment on the system in form of inputs, for example, demands of the citizens for the maintenance of law and order, good life, and provision of infrastructural facilities. These demands are then processed into outputs, which are authoritative decisions within the governmental administration. The feedback corrects the actions of the administrative system. This is necessary for equilibrium.

The system theory is a conceptual framework and methodology for understanding the operation of a system where there are two or several actors that are essential components of the whole. The importance of applying system theory in a functional democracy cannot be overstated. This is due to the fact that it handles the challenges of interconnectedness, reliance, and variable interactions (Adedire, 2014). System analysis in political science has helped in broadening the understanding of government by describing the complex relationships that exist between the political institutions and the larger society. Looking at the political system in

Nigeria, it is evident that the conversion processes of the inputs from the environment have not generated the expected outputs. Thus, this theory is relevant to the study as it shows the interplay between NDDC which is a government institution, and the people of the Niger Delta region. Funds are allocated to NDDC to ensure it develops the people and the Niger Delta region as a way of input. In return (output), the people will want to see that they are developed and their region is transformed. It also shows how corruption in NDDC affects the development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The failure of NDDC to adequately develop the Niger Delta region is partly attributed to the corrupt practices in the Commission. Corruption in NDDC if not checked will affect the whole system, that is, Nigerian State.

#### **IV. THE NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND CORRUPTION IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION**

The Niger Delta Development Commission was established in 2000 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in response to agitations for the development of the Niger Delta region by the people of the region. It was created as an interventionist agency to speed up the development of the long-neglected and polluted oil-producing states of the Niger Delta region. The establishment of the Commission was for it to facilitate rapid, even, and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative, and politically peaceful (Isidiho & Sabran, 2015). It was mandated to conceive, plan and implement projects and programs for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta area and to undertake infrastructural development in the region (NDDC, 2001). The Commission was also saddled with the duty of formulating and implementing programs and developing a masterplan geared toward speedy sustainable development and transformation of the Niger Delta region in areas of education, employment, electricity, housing, transportation, health, water supply, agriculture, fisheries, telecommunication, urban development and industrialization (Azaiki, 2003). To ensure that the Commission carry out this mandate effectively, section 14 (2) of the NDDC Act 2000 provides various sources of funding for the agency as listed below:

- a. Federal Government contribution:** the equivalent of 15 percent of the total monthly statutory allocations due to member States of the Commission from the Federation Account;
- b. Oil and gas companies' contributions:** 3 percent of the total annual budget of any oil-producing company operating, on-shore and off-shore, in the Niger-Delta Area;
- c. Ecological Fund:** 50 percent of monies due to member states of the Commission from the Ecological Fund;
- d. Grants, etc.:** such monies as may from time to time, be granted or lent to or deposited with the Commission by the Federal or a State Government, any other body or institution whether local or foreign;
- e. Gifts, Loans, etc.:** all amounts of money raised for the Commission by way of gifts, loan, grants-in-aid, testamentary disposition or otherwise; and,
- f. Other sources:** proceeds from all other assets that may, from time to time, accrue to the Commission

These sources of funds give NDDC a potentially strong capital base. It is pertinent to say and as noted by the NDDC document that without effective and efficient regulatory mechanisms, the re-emergence of corruption would be a danger (NDDC, 2000).

However, recent revelations have shown that the Commission has long deviated from its core mandates and been turned into a milking cow by its officials, politicians, civil servants, and contractors. There have been numerous corruption cases against the Niger Delta Development Commission and some of its top officials. The corruption cases in the Commission have made some scholars see the Commission as headquarters of corruption in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Isidiho and Sabran (2015) attributed the enormous corruption in Nigeria of having transcended into the activities of NDDC and hence most of the funds for the contracts were corruptly embezzled and misappropriated leading to lots of cases of abandoned projects in the communities. For a region that produces the oil that provides revenue and foreign exchange for which the Nigerian tripod stands, the Niger Delta is littered with abandoned projects and half-baked infrastructures that dilapidate as days run into months. This situation has serious implications for development in the region.

According to Odisu (2017), corruption is implicated in the poor performance of the NDDC. There have been allegations of embezzlement, diversion of funds, duplication of projects, and connivance between the commission's officials and contractors to do shoddy jobs. For instance, the Auditor General of the Federation had alleged that ₦183 billion was diverted by the managers of the Commission. Most of the abandoned projects and those shoddily completed have been paid for by the Commission. He further stated that a chairman of the Commission allegedly spent about ₦1 billion for a voodoo charm to exterminate a top official of the commission and a state governor. Ebeku (2020), pointed out that a high level of corruption in the NDDC is a key factor to blame for the poor performance and failure of the agency. The NDDC failed due partly to corruption, misappropriation, and mismanagement of available funds by the rapacious ruling cabal. Also, corruption manifests in the Commission through the award of bogus contracts. Another good example of a corruption case

in the NDDC is the one concerning Prof. Pondei, the former interim chairman of the Commission. The Punch Newspaper (2020) reported that Pondei collapsed while being grilled by National Assembly members investigating the mismanagement of funds up to the tune of eighty-one billion, five hundred million naira (₦81.5bn) in the NDDC.

Still, on issues bothering on corruption, Ojougboh in an interview with This Day newspaper (2020) said, "I make bold to tell you that without President Muhammadu Buhari, the NDDC would have been killed and buried. In seven months in 2019, a total of 1,921 emergency contracts valued at ₦1,070,349,631,757.70 was awarded while the unprocessed budget of the NDDC was ₦350 billion and was still before the National Assembly. You will recall that the Acting MD/CEO, Dr. Joi Nunieh had last week, in line with the directive of Mr. President, inaugurated a Contract Verification Committee as a prelude to the ordered forensic audit, with my humble self as Chairman, I can tell you as I said in a recent press conference that we have made some remarkable discoveries. While successive leaderships of NDDC may have done their best, today, the general conclusion of most stakeholders in the region is that the NDDC has not delivered on its mandate, at best a lacklustre performance, with very little to show for the humongous resources that have accrued to it over the past 19 years. Stories of pervasive corruption, flagrant abuse of due process, abandoned projects, and poor-quality project delivery among others at the NDDC, have adorned our media space over the years."

Furthermore, Ojougboh said, "It is now common knowledge that some of the awards were not only spurious but criminal as records available to us show that most of the awards were not backed by budget, have no bills of engineering measurement or drawings, and were just open cheque for contractors and their collaborators to fill in at the nearest banks. For instance, in 2017, the Commission awarded a total of 201 emergency contracts valued at ₦100,396,879,001.06; in 2018, a total 1,057 emergency contracts valued at ₦162,688,289,333.05; and just seven months in 2019, a total 1,921 emergency contracts valued at ₦1,070,249,631,757.70 were awarded. We are talking of a total of over ₦1.3trillion in less than three years. The yearly budget of NDDC is hardly above 400billion and a situation, where contracts that do not qualify for emergencies were fraudulently awarded to over one trillion naira valued in less than one-year amounts to stealing from the pulpit and stealing the entire pulpit." Ojougboh also stated that a serving senator has 300 NDDC contracts to his name. Of the 300 contracts, 120 have been fully paid and he has not mobilised to site for these 120 contracts.

It was due to the high level of corruption in the NDDC and their poor performance that made President Muhammadu Buhari ordered a forensic audit of the operations of the Commission from 2000 to 2019. As this will help to expose the corrupt activities of the Commission and suggest a way of repositioning the Commission, to make it actualise its mandate. It is unfortunate that since September 2021 that the forensic report has been presented to the President through the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister Justice; Abubakar Malami, the report is yet to be made public or the recommendation implemented. However, Malami had shortly after receiving the audit report said that over thirteen thousand (13,000) projects executed under the supervision of the NDDC were compromised despite receiving ₦6 trillion in 19 years (Premium Times, 2021).

Still, on the issue of corruption in the NDDC, the AuGF report on NDDC which covers between the years 2013 and 2018 exposed some unaccounted sums of money by the Commission due to corruption. These unaccounted funds have found their way to private bags of some power public figures to the detriment of the people of the Niger Delta region who would have been benefitting from the development tied to such funds. Table 2 shows some of the contract types, contract value, the amount paid, and then the unaccounted sum.

**Table 2: Abridged AuGF Report on NDDC Complied by the Researchers.**

S/N	Contract Type	Contract Value (₦)	Amount Paid (₦)	Unaccounted Sum (₦)
	Payment of medical check-up expenses to part-time board members	N/A	459,350,000	459,350,000
	Excessive payment of imprest to the executive board members	N/A	1,358,300,000	1,358,300,000
	Engagement and payment of external solicitors	N/A	1,528,986,030	1,528,986,030
	Contract for logistic and consultancy services	199,474,160.50	199,474,160.50	16,900,784.83
	Contract for the award of emergency construction	N/A	3,001,517,063.27	3,001,517,063.27
	Contract for the studies and design of projects	485,128,179.79	153,834,462.2	153,834,462.2

Legal advisory services	N/A	1,225,000 000	175,000,000
Contract for regional security surveillance of NDDC projects	N/A	698,128,550	698,128,550
Contract for entrepreneurial development scheme by NDDC	6,500,000,000	1,741,074,999.93	1,741,074,999.93
Contract for the construction of Gbaregolor – Gbekbor – Ogulagha road phase 1	N/A	190,956,627.75	190,956,627.75

**Source:** AuGF Report on NDDC (2021) [https://valueformoney.ng/media/2021/04/Simplified\\_Audit-Report-on-NDDC\\_2013-2018.pdf](https://valueformoney.ng/media/2021/04/Simplified_Audit-Report-on-NDDC_2013-2018.pdf)

It is obvious from the analysis presented so far, that there exists massive corruption in the NDDC. The people of the Niger Delta are at the receiving end of these corrupt practices in the NDDC. The consequences of these corrupt practices in NDDC are manifested by the Commission not being able to meet up with its mandate of developing the Niger Delta region. Hence, there will be an increasing level of substandard, uncompleted, and abandoned projects littered all around the region to the detriment of the people of the region. For instance, Ebiri (2017), stated that it is a notorious fact, that the number of ongoing and abandoned projects far out-numbers the number of executed projects. In the same vein, Ukpong (2019) citing the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs stated that there are over 12,000 abandoned projects of the NDDC all over the Niger Delta region (Ukpong, 2019).

## V. CONCLUSION

The NDDC was established to facilitate rapid, even, and sustainable development of the Niger Delta and also to turn the region into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative, and politically peaceful. However, the corruption in the Commission has posed a great challenge in the realisation of its mandate. The Niger Delta region is undeveloped, partly because of the corruption and mismanagement of its resources by the managers of the Niger Delta Development Commission which was created to oversee the overall development of the region. Thus, this paper concludes that if corruption is not dealt with in the NDDC, the Commission just like previous interventionist agencies will not be making any meaningful impact in the development of the Niger Delta region.

### The Way Forward

For the rapid development of the Niger Delta region, corruption existing in the Niger Delta Development Commission should be curbed. This paper, therefore, recommends that;

The resources allocated for the development of the region should be used for the purposes of development for which it was allocated and not be diverted into private bags of powerful officials.

A system should be put in place for monitoring official conduct and exposing wrongdoing. There should be a credible system built for assessing charges for wrongdoings and for punishing convicted wrongdoers. Also, the statutory Monitoring Committee established under section 21 of the NDDC Act 2000 should be activated and made functional. The section provides a mechanism for the control of the agency and is designed to check corruption and promote efficiency.

The forensic audit ordered by President Buhari on the activities of the NDDC from 2001 to 2019 is a step in the right direction. However, the forensic report which has been submitted since early September 2021 should be made public and those found wanting should be punished accordingly as this will discourage corruption in the Commission.

In fighting against corruption in NDDC, Obasanjo's slogan of 'no sacred cows' should be put into maximum use by prosecuting all the known corrupt 'heavy-weights' in the Commission.

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