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THE OGONI IN DIASPORA AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF OGONI LAND (1999-2020)

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ABSTRACT
The dwindling and impoverished state of Ogoni land with little or no government presence despite its rich oil and other natural resources has remained worrisome to both Ogonis and development analysts. Despite the sorry state of development in the area, there is a relative dearth of literatures on Ogoni development template, which would have given concrete evidence about the measure of development in the area and account for whether Ogoni development is progressive or retrogressive. The relative lean body of critical literatures in this area further compound the problem and creates a critical research gap in the literature of development studies on Ogoni. The present study therefore investigates the impact of the Ogonis in diaspora on the development of Ogoni land. The study formulated three research objectives and questions and used social identity theory as the framework of analysis. The study adopts the qualitative method with in-depth interview and used content analytical method to evaluate intervention projects by the Ogonis in diaspora for the development of Ogoniland. The findings showed that development inspired by Ogoni indigenes in diaspora embraces infrastructure, education and employment/empowerment. These contributions compliment Government effort toward the development of the area. The study further identified challenges facing diaspora development effort in the area.Based on findings, the study recommended, among others, that Ogoni indigenes in diaspora should mobilize enough fund to enable the completion of their target projects, discourage diversion of contributed fund to private use and above all, partner with NGOs, Government at all levels and spirited individuals to adequately provide an enduring development projects in the areas of water, energy and education which are major challenges in most ogoni rural communities.

KeyWords: Ogoni, Diaspora, Development, Education, Empowerment,

Introduction

The Ogoni people are a minority ethnic people who live in the Western Niger Delta Region of southern Nigeria. During the 1970s, ogoni people, became part of the Rivers State of Nigeria. With the formation of MOSOP under the able leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ogoni resource-control revolution rose to the fore. However, the great wave of resource nationalism divided Ogoni by ideology and competitive political interest particularly adequate representation at both State and National levels. These were contained in the Ogoni demands from the Nigerian State. However, the government of Nigeria led by the military junta not only declined but also adopted divide and rule tactics, including instigating communal conflicts between the ogoni people and her neighbours. Ogoni was strafed from all sides by both military and ethno-guerrilla wars. On the east border was the harrowing Andoni-Ogoni war implicitly fueled and infiltrated by the Federal Military Government through state (Rivers State) arrangements, on the West, the Okirika-Ogoni crisis also ignited and fought by the military under the supervision of the then Rivers State Governor, Chief Rufus Ada George and the federal government launched Operation Flush in Ogoni land under the command of Maj. Paul Okontimo.

With the harsh environment of Ogoniland from which Nigeria's bulk of oil production has been sourced, Ken Saro-Wiwa became even spirited to speak against the poverty and gross neglect of Ogoniland and people in the midst of pipelines and field facilities left under serious environmental damage. However, Saro-Wiwa's demands were interpreted as a low-intensity war diligently honed to

rouse similar temper in other Niger Delta communities. With this thinking, new threats in Ogoni turned vicious, reflected in armed actions by the Nigerian military and graduated into sophisticated warfare through serial-hostage taking, periodic assassination, random gun-fires and general mayhem. Ken Saro-Wiwa was several times arrested to silence the determined quest of the Ogoni people to demand their rights. With the spectre of political and social fragmentation in Ogoniland, as most Ogoni politicians then, saw the struggle as a trammel on their political aspirations, the seed of discord was sowed among the people.

With the lobbying of the political class whom were then called "vultures," there developed social conflict, in-group allegiance and conflict, fractious class loyalties, all of which signalled an uncertain future for the Ogoni peasant revolution. This intra-Ogoni conflict became a serious galvanizer to the federal-state powers and oil conglomerates, which fished on the opportunity to turn Ogoni into a tinderbox of oil-fuelled tension. Ogoni lurched from crisis to crisis, the climax of which was the extra-judicial murder, by hanging, of the environmental activist and spokesman of the Ogoni people, Ken Saro-Wiwa alongside nine other Ogoni men on November 10th, 1995. Their deaths sparked both local and international outcry. As a result of this, greater number of Ogoni men and women sought asylum elsewhere in order to escape death. Through several international organizations, thousands of Ogoni refugees left the shores of Nigeria between December, 1995 and June, 1998 to settle in Benin Republic as displaced war refugees. They were lated granted visa and emigrated to the United States of America between 1996 and 1999(). These set of Ogonis are in diaspora by force; hence they belong to the category called forced diaspora. They acquire diaspora status following the troubles that divided the land during the military incursion spanning 1990 to 1999. It is interesting to note that the entire Ogoni land was besieged by heavily armed military that killed, murdered and raped the women and looted properties worth billions of naira(). Thus, the people moved from the area and escaped to foreign countries.

Over the years, government has continually paid attention to the development of the cities, relegating the rural ogoni communities to the background through little or no attention. Most of the rural ogoni communities are only remembered when it is time for election, ballot boxes must get there; but pitiful to be forgotten immediately after election. That notwithstanding, most well-to-do individuals have left the development of the rural communities solely to the same government who has paid deaf ears to their yearnings. However, should we continue to wait on the government that grace may abound? Definitely not. This is the time to make due of what we have got, the rich human resources, with particular interest to Ogoni sons and daughters in diaspora. Many of the local ogoni communities have one or two persons abroad. Over twenty years now, they have been away in foreign lands. These Ogoni sons and daughters in foreign lands can contribute in different enormous ways in the development of their area. These efforts can be noticeable in economic, education, infrastructure and empowerment projects initiated and carried out by the Ogoni in diaspora through their representatives in the various communities in Ogoniland. However, despite the difficulty posed by the Nigerian policies and foreign matters as regard remittance, these individuals and association has done some noticeable projects in the area which are targeted towards rural development. What are the challenges facing the diasporans in carrying out developmental projects in the area and how can these challenges be brought to its barest minimal to encourage higher diaspora contributions for enhanced rural development in Ogoniland? This is the essence of this study.

Ogoni in Historical Context

The Ogoni have inhabited the Niger Delta region for at least 500 years[1]. The Ogonis are a people in the Rivers South East senatorial district of Rivers State, in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria(). They number just over 2 million and live in a 1,050-square-kilometre (404-square-mile) homeland which they also refer to as Ogoni land(Joshua, 2022). The oil rich area is with arable lands and water resources thereby putting them at the forefront of food production in Rivers State through an economy traditionally based on agriculture and fishing. Sad to say that, due to oil pollution and gas flares in the area, soil quality has deteriorated, and crop and fish yields have been decreasing steadily in recent times. It is worthy to state that despite being the engine room of oil production and other rich

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natural resource endowments, Ogoni still lag behind in developmental stride; infrastructurally and otherwise. Government projects such as healthcare facilities and school construction are few and far between, and have received the barest attention in their aspirations. This poses lots of challenges to the inhabitants, ranging from unemployment and its associated problems of poverty, hunger and other social vices. These ugly circumstances inspired the late environmental right activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa to agitate against continuous exploitation of oil and other mineral resources from the area without commensurate development, instead the results have been pollution and destruction of the ecosystem. Saro-Wiwa's struggle resulted in his hanging after a stage-managed judicial process and militarization of Ogoniland. this situation made thousands of Ogoni sons and daughters to be granted refugee visa rights in the United States of America as part of the international community's approach to cushioning the effects of the abuse of human rights in Nigeria. Having emigrated to the United States of America, the immigrant Ogoni sons and daughters from the four local governments of khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme, identified themselves and reflected back on the issues of underdevelopment at home and decided to organize themselves into groups based on their local governments. Thus, we have Ogoni (Khana chapter) in The United States of America, Ogoni (Gokana chapter), Ogoni (Tai chapter) in The United States of America. Within these, there are also sub associations on the basis of communities. In this way, we have Uegwere Community in The United States of America, Kaani in The United States of America, Bodo in The United States of America, Kpite in the United States of America. There is also the Indigenes of Ogoni in Diaspora under the aegis of National Union of Ogoni Students International (NUOS INTL) United States of America, and Ogoni Live Matter International (OLM INTL) United States of America, in collaboration with other human rights organisations in Ogoni, including the apex sociocultural organisation: Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and the Federation of Ogoni Women Association (FOWA). All these associations are basically aimed at contributing to the development of the area and their respective communities. The question is how have those who left the area following threats and destruction in Ogoni land in the 1990s contributed to the development of the area? It is this problem that inspires the present study which attempts to survey and measure the contribution of the Ogonis in diaspora to the development of Ogoni land from 1990-2021.

Conceptual of Diaspora

The term "diaspora" is a neologism coined by the translators of the Hebraic Bible into Greek in the 3rd century BC, and derived from the Greek diaspeirein "dia" meaning "through, across" and "speirein" "to scatter"(Kral.2020.p35). Originally associated with the Jewish diaspora, the term was later used to refer to other diasporas, and in particular the Armenian diaspora. In the second half of the 20th century, the term "diaspora" took on a broader meaning, often being used synonymously with migration as in the case of the migrations from Eastern European nations to western Europe or the United States between the two World War; the Empire Wind rush generation of West Indians who relocated to the United Kingdom; the Asian and South Asian diasporas in America, the United Kingdom, and Canada; and sometimes the "double diasporas" (people from former colonial nations sent to other colonized countries under colonial rule, such as the Indians sent to Kenya by the British and who helped build the railway lines).(Kral, 2020)

The recent diasporas are no longer religious diasporas; they have their origins in economic, political and, more recently, climate-related issues and are triggered by reasons ranging from improving the quality of their lives to war and being in fear for their lives. While immigration is defined as an individual venture, the collective dimension is central to the diasporic experience as diasporas are not only made up of individuals but also of groups of people who leave their home countries. Despite their relocation to a new land, diasporas maintain a strong bond with their homelands; diasporas are therefore often associated with nostalgia, a mood largely reflected in their cultural productions, particularly in film and literature. The polarity between , country/host country was later called into question, in particular in the wake of the deconstructionist critique of essentialist concepts, such as home, identity, or belonging, leading to a redefinition of "home" as "homemaking." The central issue of identity also ceased to be defined in an essentialist perspective as the negotiation of dual identities, double belonging, bilingualism, double loyalties and transnationalism came into focus. In the 21st

century, in the context of global economic migrations, terror migration, and environmental migrations, the emphasis is gradually shifting from issues of identity and belonging to the pragmatics of survival and relocation(Kral, 2020)

In contrast, a voluntary diaspora is a community of people who have left their homelands in search of economic opportunity, as in the massive emigration of people from depressed regions of Europe to the United States during the late 1800s.(Robert,2022). Unlike diaspora created by force, voluntary immigrant groups, while also maintaining close cultural and spiritual links to their countries of origin, are less likely to wish to return to their home permanently. Instead, they take pride in their shared experience and feel a certain social and political "strength-in-numbers." Today, the needs and demands of large diaspora often influence government policy, ranging from foreign affairs and economic development to immigration.

It is a fact that millions of Nigerians migrate to other parts of the world and these migrants and their descendants make up the Nigerian diaspora. This population range is about five million to fifteen million according to the Nigerian Diaspora. Nigerians can be found in the United Kingdom with Peckham referred to as little Lagos, USA, Dublin, South Africa, India, Malaysia etc. It is even a serious joke that there's hardly any place in the planet you cannot find a Nigerian and till now this study consider this vague submission as problematic (Peckham, 2017)..

These migrants, as observed, are at a high cost to the development of our country especially when it borders on professionals like doctors, scientists, lecturers which the country is in dire need of. Unfortunately, some of our brightest professionals constitute the class of people leaving the country on a daily basis for other countries that provide better facilities and services for their people. In the USA Nigerians are the most educated ethnic group with the highest percentage of bachelor degree holders and have an average honorable income of $94,000. We cannot also ignore the fact that Nigerians in diaspora also contribute largely to the economy with $12billion remitted by those in diaspora in 2012 (World Bank) which is positive to our economy.(Elewechi, 2022)

Raina, in his article "Home, Homelessness and the Artifice of Memory", says, "Dislocation can occur as a physical movement from home into alien territory forced by war and persecution. Displacement and exile have enjoyed a special privilege in literature. Bereft of the soul, estranged from the familiar, banished from the community, expelled from the recognition, a hope that sneaks in through the back door in the midst of the habitual home country, lost in the Diaspora–such tropes have formed a constant axle of poetry and novels for centuries.(Raina, 2017). He also quotes Boym who opines on diaspora thus;

> *Diasporic intimacy does not promise a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home and the homeland. Just as one learns to live with alienation and reconciles oneself to the uncanniness of the surrounding world and to the strangeness of the human touch, there comes a surprise, a pang of intimate recognition, a hope that sneaks in through the back door in the midst of the habitual estrangement of everybody's life abroad.(* Svetlana*, 1998).*

Diasporic literature is influenced by the migratory experiences of displaced communities. As Kim Butler says, the word 'diaspora is defined at its simplest, as the dispersal of people from its original homeland." This literature reflects change in social, political, and cultural realities while retaining a connection to a common cultural heritage. The characters and the events which are shown in this literature represent the people who struggle to assimilate into the new land and new culture. Serious concern for theorizing diaspora came to exist from the past one century. Many theorists came forward to opine their ideas and even they categorized different types of diaspora on the basis of the reasons behind the migration. It can be said that the meaning of the term diaspora has been expanded because of their theories.

The concept of diaspora is used within several different academic traditions. One can roughly distinguish four different ways of using the concept.(Diaspora, Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/diaspora-social-science)

Firstly, the concept has been regarded as useful in describing the geographical displacement and/ or deterritorialisation of identities in the contemporary world. Within this tradition, the concept has been seen as a way of avoiding previous essentialist discourses connected to ethnicity and `race'. This approach, largely situated within the vague area of Cultural Studies, includes writings on syncretism, `hybridity' and` new ethnicities among groups of migrant origin. This tradition largely corresponds to the set of meanings that Vertovec has labelled `diaspora as consciousness'. Secondly, as Vertovec argues, there is a discussion where the meaning of diaspora is largely considered to be a mode of cultural production'. The production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena has mainly been studied by anthropologists. However, it is obvious that this discussion frequently merges with the previously mentioned discussion within Cultural Studies about issues like cultural hybrid emphasize the political dimension of contemporary diasporas; Thirdly, the concept of diaspora has also been used among scholars who emphasize the political dimension of contemporary Diasporas(Wahlbeck,2002).

Rural Development

The word rural, is beyond being defined as that which is not urban, is a contested space from a definitional standpoint. Rural can be taken to mean from or of open areas – those outside cities. Rural has a common strand of meaning with country or countryside but is more frequently encountered with such nomenclature in public policy. Rural, as a word, is also endowed with other sorts of value: it is associated with agriculture and farming and people from outside city areas. Connections are made between people from rural areas and the land itself. While a contrasting relationship might be supposed between rural and urban, more properly, a continuum exists between the two as definitions of rural and agriculture are altered due to the forces of modern living and ultimately bear less resemblance to historical identities. Wood said that rural areas have a rich history and identity of their own, even while they share some aspects in common with urban areas(Wood,2015)**.**Rural development, for purposes of this study, encompasses efforts that are economic and social in nature, intended to encourage growth or expansion in areas outside cities. This entry considers rural development from a variety of perspectives, including economic aspects, infrastructure and service considerations, socio-cultural factors, and the role of stakeholders.

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry.

Anríquez and Stamoulis posited that:

> *''there is no universally accepted definition of rural development. As result, different scholars and institutions define and conceptualize it in different ways. In supporting this, they argued that the definition of rural development has advanced through time as a result of changes in the perceived mechanisms and goals of development'* (Anríquez and Stamoulis,2007)

According to the World Bank, rural development was seen as purely an economic issue or raising the low levels of rural income through agricultural modernization. This definition is reflective of rural development as a subset of development in the 1970s. This is because in the 1970s development was also viewed merely from the economic dimension. However, nowadays development is broadly viewed as an overall improvement of the quality of life of a human being in terms of economic, social, economic, political, environmental, and administrative issues. Thus, the 1975 World Bank definition does not consider other important dimensions of development listed above. In other words, before the 1970s, rural development was seen to be synonymous with agricultural development (World Bank , 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This paper employed Social Identity Theory as its framework of analysis. This theory begins with the premise that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups and that such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity. The creation of group identities involves both the categorization of one's "in-group" with regard to an "out-group" and the tendency to view one's own group with a positive bias vis-a-vis the out-group. The result is an identification with a collective, depersonalized identity based on group membership and imbued with positive aspects (Turner et al.,1987).

It is a psychological theory that attempts to explain intergroup conflict as a function of group-based self-definitions. SIT grew out of Henri Tajfel's early work, which attempted to apply cognitive grouping and gestalt phenomena to social groups. (Hogg and Williams, 2000). Cognitive grouping involves "judgmental accentuation" where cognitive categories lead to the increased salience of distinguishing features between categories, exaggerating category differences. Applied to social groups, this principle could be used to explain biased and exaggerated perceptions of difference between groups. Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy; Turner cited in Bernard Groen, used a minimal group paradigm to test this effect. .(Groen,2019). They divided people into two groups based on arbitrary criteria and showed that even this "minimal" group basis led people to form psychological groups, exaggerating the positive qualities of one's own group while exaggerating the negative qualities of the out-group. Subsequent studies have attempted to demonstrate the wide range of socially important phenomena that result from such categorization, such as negative evaluations of the out-group stereotyping.(. Smith , 1999) and failure to allocate resources to out-group members.(Sidanius, . Pratto, and M. Mitchell ,

. SIT opened up a wide variety of areas for research, regarding the structure of social identities, the motivations behind identification, the fluidity between different social identities, and identity's effects on individuals, groups, organizations, and wider social collectives. As these research areas grew, they branched into a variety of theoretical perspectives, including self-categorization theory, self-enhancement theory, and self-verification theory, among others. These perspectives do not always agree; for example, self-verification theory. Swann argues that epistemic motives for self-uncertainty reduction are a primary motive for identification such that people will sustain even negative social identities if these identities provide epistemic stability.(Swann, 1998)

On the other hand, self-enhancement theory holds that individuals strive for positive selves and will thus discount or underplay negative self-information. Both of these theories, although contradictory, can be interpreted in the light of SIT perspectives, in which social identity contains both an epistemic and a positive self-regard component. Subsequent research has attempted to tease apart relative effects of self-enhancement and self-verification. In addition, the question of social identification opened up important research into which groups people identify with, when they identify with one group versus another, and how consistent and enduring are such identifications. Because a person can be a member of a family, a neighborhood, a city, a country, etc., simultaneously, the groups a person belongs to must be supplemented with information regarding which of these groups is cognitively salient at a given moment and why. A large body of research has attempted to deal with the multiple social identities that people inhabit and how they psychologically organize these identities(Brewer and W. Gardner,1996). Critical Debates From a critical psychology perspective, SIT offers important insights regarding the social identity bases of discrimination, prejudice, and intergroup conflict, by locating these phenomena as resulting from group-based categorization and self-enhancement motives. However, the historical evolution of the theory itself also offers an interesting case in which intergroup conflicts become redefined as aspects of individual identity. As SIT became more focused on self-verification as an epistemic need, rather than self-enhancement as a motivational driver of identification, the conflictual bases of social identity became less central to the identity literature than the formation of a stable self-concept. While both of these bases were apparent in the original theory, critical scholars may question whether such development leaves SIT less able to unpack the psychological bases of conflict and more focused on an individual psychology of concept formation. In this respect, SIT may have developed increasingly in the direction of an individualist cognitive approach at the cost of its sociological origins. Yet, the diversity of current approaches using the term

"social identity" belies simply diagnoses, and the story of the theoretical evolution of the social identity concept is far from over. This evolution reflects wider concerns over the role of the "social" in social psychology more generally, a question which is central to critical psychologists' concern to link issues of cognition, attitude, and emotion with larger social phenomena(Jhangiani and T. Hammond,2022).

This theory is applicable to the present study in that it helps to explain how immigrants, particularly Ogoni immigrants create a social identity within an otherwise macro-Nigerian immigrants group in diaspora. It explains how the vision of self-verification informs the formation of micro-identity in the context of a macro-identity structure among Nigerian immigrants in diaspora in order to be sure of their level of self-uncertainty among a diversity of ethnically divided Nigerian immigrants. It is this sense of uncertainty that inspires the need for identification with one's ethnic group. Conversely then, self-verification, in this case, becomes a precursor for self-enhancement which goad Ogoni immigrants to strive for positive selves towards not only themselves in foreign countries but also to those at home. The demonstration of such self-enhancement is achieved through project design and execution in the Ogoni immigrants' native land. Thus, being self-uncertain and consequently self-enhanced, the Ogonis immigrants evolve a social identity which defines the groups of people with who they identify, and the manner of, the consistency and enduring nature of such social identifications. Because a person can be a member of a family, a neighborhood, a city, a country, etc., simultaneously, the groups a person belongs to must be supplemented with information regarding which of these groups is cognitively salient at a given moment and why. As group of people, they recognized their peculiar conditions and collectively work toward addressing perceived developmental problem confronting them.

Methodology

This research employs the historical research method which comprises of a qualitative method of data collection. Qualitative data were obtained from primary and secondary sources linked to Ogonis in Diaspora and their contributions to the development of Ogoniland. This involves reviewing other studies and materials that will include associations of Ogoni people in Diaspora such as the Ogoni (Khana chapter) in the US, Ogoni (Gokana chapter) in the UK, Ogoni (Tai chapter) in Canada and other organizations sponsored by these associations. However, the researcher adopted a one-on-one interview method with the respondents for data collection. leaders of the benefiting Communities, including workers or Staff of benefiting institutions were also interviewed. Individuals that benefited through empowerment programme were interviewed.The various representatives of the different association of Ogonis in diaspora were contacted through phone calls, email and WhaSSAP group, while benficiall community leaders were contacted and interviewed physically. The choice of these category of individuals was informed by the fact that they are in good position to provide more information regarding the subject under investigation as they represent the Ogonis in diaspora in carrying out most, if not all of the developmental projects in the area.

Discussion of Findings

Infrastructural Diaspora assisted Projects

In order to provide authentic answers to the above question, the researcher embarked on field research to some Ogoni communities in which the researcher interviewed community members in order to generate authentic data about the level of development undertaken by the Ogonis in diaspora in the communities visited. One of the communities visited on the 21st feb, 2022 was Barako community in Gokana Local Government Area. Indigenes of Barako community in diaspora under the name: *Concerned Citizens of Barako: Home and the Diaspora* built and donated to both the community and the Rivers State Government, a six (6) classroom block in community primary school, Baroko, in 2022 which was also approved that same year by the Rivers State government through the Rivers State Ministry of Education. This structure validated the Diaspora records which had it that, certain level of assistant have been given the ogoni communities in the area of educational infrastructure.

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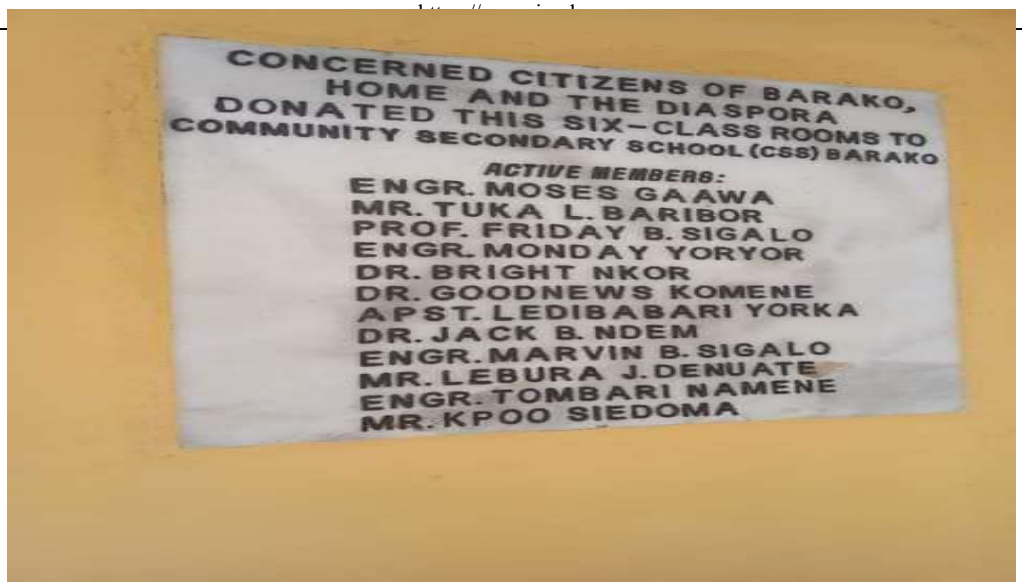


Figure 1: Plague showing members of *Concerned Citizens of Barako: Home and the Diaspora*



Figure 2: Perspective view of six (6) classrooms block in community primary school, Baroko, donated by Concerned Citizens of Barako: Home and the Diaspora in 2022

The building has enhanced the infrastructural quality of the school and has given a face lift to the otherwise dilapidated nature of the school surroundings. One of the inspiring qualities of educational development is the provision and enhancement of the environment's aesthetic qualities. There is an aphorism that says "cleanliness is next to godliness;" this does not only apply to individuals but also to institutions in which individuals take refuge for basic talents and capacity building. This is because, a sustainably good and refreshing environment inspires quality learning in so far as it energizes the psychology of humans thereby goading their intellect for intellectual recreativity. Therefore, such infrastructural development is a deliberate ploy to enervate young minds at home who are severally assaulted by different anti-social and criminal developments.

Not only is this systematic and purposive development agenda, particularly regarding infrastructural development within the school environment, undertaken to inspire the pupils to be eager to frequently go to school, learn and acquire new knowledge and skills, it also creates an exo-system which, linked with the family setting, can serve as a transformative tool for encouraging a determined approach to triumph over the challenges of one's immediate family strictures. By this is meant that, where the family is not aesthetically appealing to the pupils or students, these students can find within an ecological system of the school a better recreational, aesthetically appealing sensation that would more often than not inspire them to leave their homes and take refuge in the library or other comfort zones within the school premises, thereby motivating the cultivation of strong reading culture. What is implied in the above is that, there is a nexus between infrastructural development and the yearnings for cognitive development as a result of the comparative or otherwise contrastive features of the home and the school environment.

In the light of the above, particularly in view of the need to create an enabling social environment that, through its infrastructural setting, inspires positive intellectual attitudes in students, the Ogonis in diaspora have in different communities achieved basic feats that will be tabulated below. Also, noteworthy is the fact that the Ogoni in diaspora build modern houses that replaced the old and outdated mud houses in the area thereby contributing to the facelift of the environment. Add to infrastructural development within the school, diasporic Ogoni indigenes have equally built markets, healthcare centres, street lights, renovation of service centres, especially the renovation of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) camp at Nonwa-Gbam, Tai Local Government Area, Ogoni. All of these are tabulated in the table below:

Table 4.1: Diaspora assisted infrastructural projects

S/N	Community	Diaspora assisted project	Diaspora Donor
1	Lorre (Khana)	Seven poles of solar	Donated by Dr. RolandNwigia (Rochester, US)
2	Bianu (Khana)	Ultramodern market	Donated by Sunday Okoro (Colorado)
3	Kpite (Tai)	New modern market	Renovated by Reuben Nwalu (Ontario)
4	Botem (Tai)	Modern primary health care	Concerned Citizens of Botem in US
5	Kereken-Boue	Construction of solar-powered borehole water supply in Kereken-Boue	Mr. Moses Taabo (Rochester)
6	Nonwa (Tai)	Street lights, renovation of NYSC camp, New modern markets	Charles Gininwa (Alberta)
7	Saakpewa (Tai)	Renovation of Modern primary school	
8	Nonwa-Uedume (Tai)	Renovation of primary health care	Andy Kuapie (North Dakota)
9	Nonwa-Kerebara (Tai)	Building of primary school	Kerebara in US
10	Uegwere (Khana)	Renovation of principal's quarters, community secondary school, Uegwere	Uegwere community in US
11	Uegwere (Khana)	Renovation of Youth Corp members lodge, Community primary school II, Uegwere	Uegwere community in US
12	Uegwere (Khana)	Provision of street light	Dr. Solomon Lekia (Arizona)
13	Uegwere (Khana)	Provision of pipe borne water	Dr. Solomon Lekia (Arizona)

		(Mono-pump)	
14	Barako (Gokana)	Built 6 classrooms	Barako community in North America

Source Author's Compilation, 2023).

Equally, photographic representations of some of the projects listed in the table above become, at this point, germane to give credence to the facts stated herein:



Figure 3: Intervention water projects designed and executed by K. Dere, Gio-gonkpolo, Sea side (Gio-gonMmuu) and DereDorlo



Figure 4: Commissioning of Intervention water projects designed and executed by K. Dere, Gio-gonkpolo, Sea side (Gio-gonMmuu) and DereDorlo

Empowerment of women and youths in Ogoni land

In spite of enormous oil reserve in the area, vast area of arable land for agriculture and forestry and rivers as well as a catalogue of operating companies in the Eleme region of Ogoni, the area remains relatively underdeveloped. There is massive unemployment, poverty and an uncontrollable rural-urban migration. The Ogoni villages represent, for its teaming youths, an entrapment which trammels economic socioeconomic development and individual and collective progress. Recognizing this unfortunate Ogoni historical trajectory, the Ogonis in diaspora have established foundations which, through different skill acquisition programmes, small and medium scale enterprises, grant, educational empowerment through fully funded scholarships, renovation of dilapidated school buildings, among others. These skills and educational empowerment programmes have had great employable and economic impacts on Ogoni youths and women.

In 2019, the Life Jacket Medicals was established by some spirited Ogoni men led by Mr. Ambrose Kii from Kaa community in Babbe Kingdom, Khana Local Government Area. The Life Jacket Medicals is a pharmaceutical outfit designed to provide up-to-date quality and affordable medical services to Ogoni people in Nigeria. As a medical outreach designed for Ogonis across geographical space, the facilities are not only established in Ogoniland but also in strategic places in Port Harcourt, where there is sufficient Ogoni population. The goal of the facility is to make medical and pharmaceutical services accessible to Ogoni in both urban and rural areas, especially in Rivers State. The facilities undertake free Blood Pressure (BP) checks and other related services.



Figure 12: Interior view of one of the pharmaceutical shops located in Port Harcourt, the headquarters of Rivers State to cater for Ogoni urban dwellers.

These facilities have not only provided medical services to Ogoni Indigenes, it has become a hub for employing professional Ogoni sons and daughters in the medical industry. Also, there are information technology and communication facilities in parts of Ogoni established by Ogoni sons and daughters in the diaspora which have created enormous employment opportunities for ICT operators. Coupled with these are fish-farming and poultry farms established by Uegwere Community in US to agro-economic training for Uegwere youths and women, thereby creating employment for same Uegwere sons and daughters who are professionals in the field.

However, other empowerment projects by diasporans in the area are listed in the table below:

Table 4.2: Diaspora assisted socio-economic empowerment projects

S/N	Community	Diaspora assisted empowerment projects	Diaspora Donor
1	Kaa, Babbe Kingdom (Khana)	Pharmaceutical training for Ogoni youths	Mr. Ambrose Kii (US)
2	Uegwere (Khana)	Training of women in tailoring and giving out sewing machines to participants	Dr. Roland Nwigia (Rochester)
3	Bianu (Khana)	Provision of fertilizers to farmers for enhanced food production	Tony Tonyie Konne (Rochester)
4	Saakpewa	Computer/ICT training programme for youths	Sen. Bari Mpigi
5	Bodo (Gokana)	Computer/ICT training programme for youths	Uegwere Community in US

It is worthy to note at this juncture that the list of employment generating ventures established by Ogoni indigenes in the diaspora are too numerous to enlist here, given not only space constraints but also time, which is one of the limiting factors of the present study. However, it suffices to state here that the Ogoni in diaspora have, through different schemes, especially grants, provided self-employable business ventures for Ogoni sons and daughters at home.

That notwithstanding, their laudable contributions is also noticeable in the educational system in Ogoniland. The Ogoni in diaspora have not only empowered Ogoni sons and daughters through skills, but also knowledge-wise through education. Education goes beyond the enclosed classroom activities between teacher and students. It embraces all the activities such as sports, motivational intellectual programmes such as debates, quiz, spelling bees, scholarships and also book festivals, aimed at promoting positive interaction and yearnings for cognitive assertiveness. While the Ogonis in diaspora through, majorly individual efforts and organizational engagements, have contributed immensely to infrastructural development in the area, they have not only built commercial and economically viable infrastructures such as markets, health-intensive structures such as healthcare centres and socio-security structures such as street lights, they have equally provided infrastructures and materials for intellectual improvement in Ogoni. In 2004, the Uegwere Community in USA, a diasporic Ogoni-centric organization designed and carried out a seasoned educational intervention trust project. This project organised and coordinated extramural classes for students in the Uegwere community facilitated through undergraduates and graduates in the community who were enlisted to be models for the secondary students to whom the project was designed.

Employing the services of the well-known undergraduates as well as graduates from the community was a potent tool for encouraging the desire for further studies. This is because students familiar with supposed teachers whom they know as neighbors and sometimes senior friends would often pick challenge from the fact the persons to whom they are well known is recognized among the intelligentsia of the community and given such task as teaching. This could invariably goad the secondary school student to seek further studies in order to also be enlisted and recognized among the intellectual glitterati in the community. Monitoring and evaluation results from the Uegwere 2004 secondary school extramural classes reported that an encouraging influx of students have gained admission and have graduated from the university in the community, more than ever before since 2004 till date[2]. The implication of the above is that, through such project, students are not only taught the basics of different subjects and disciplines, they are as well encouraged to enroll for further studies thereby resulting in robust educational development for the community. Not only did the Uegwere community in US facilitated and sponsored the organization of extramural classes for secondary school pupils, they equally sponsored organized students rally by the Federated Union of Uegwere Students (FUUS) in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Therally was unequivocal in its campaign against premarital pregnancy, cultism, drug and substance abuse, youth restiveness, armed robbery,

[2] Field report 2022

truancy, pipeline vandalism and oil bunkery, kidnapping and advanced feel fraud scam, to mention but a few.

Similarly, Regina Mbaka, a US-based indigene of K. Dere, Gokana LGA, in 2020 donated a set of musical bands to Community Primary School, I I, K. Dere to enliven the school's morning assembly thus helping in enervating the students' affective domain.



Figure 5: Students playing set of band drums donated by Regina Mbaka, (US-based) to Community Primary School, II, K. Dere



Figure 6: Set of band drums donated by Regina Mbaka (US-based) to Community Primary School II, K. Dere

Following from Regina Mbaka, a group of K. Dere people resident in the US donated to students of Community Primary School, III,K. Dere, Gokana, set of exercise books.



Figure 7: Students display exercise books donated to them by concerned K. Dere Citizens

Education intervention projects does not stop only in the organization of extramural classes and the provision of books for students, it also manifests in infrastructural development such as building of classrooms to accommodate and give comfort to both teachers and students, building of lodges for National Youths Service Corp (NYSC) members, who are mostly deployed asteachers, and provision of relief materials to NYSC members to inspire them to give in their best in serving the community. In 2020, Uegwere Community in the US bought the Joint Admission and Matriculation form for qualified students who emerged after administering an aptitude test.



Figure 8: Representative of Concerned Citizens of K. Dere addressed students

Not only did the organization bought forms for about fifty four (54) qualified students, they offered scholarship to the best student in the arts and the best student in the sciences. This project initiated in 2020 has become entrenched and has continued ever after. Apart from such organizational intervention, individual Ogoni men and women in the diaspora have several times provided JAMB forms for the less privilege members of the Ogoni community.

An individual effort was reported during the field trip to K. Dere, in Gokana Local Government Area. In this case, the researcher's informant could not remember the name of the donor but he stressed that the donor is a couple from K. Dere, who are based in the US. This couple donated some matrasses to

Corp members serving in community Secondary School K. Dere, Gokana LGA. The couple equally donated some electrical appliances to facilitate power production. This was intended to provide a conducive research environment for the Youth Corp members to enable them translate such research into practical pedagogical exercise for the benefit of the students. Upon the provision of the electrical appliances, the NYSC lodge was powered and the NYSC members never had to search in the village for where to power the mobile phones. This equally reduced the risk of being waylaid by criminals and as well attracted other NYSC members who often redeploy from hostile and unaccommodating communities.



Figure 9: Formal presentation of four matrasses and basic electrical appliances by representatives of Mr. and Mrs. Baridoo to the Principal and NYSC members representatives at Community Secondary School, K. Dere on …



Figure 10: Principal, staff and NYSC member representatives, taking inventory of the donation comprising matrasses and basic electrical appliances.



Figure 11: Pieces of the matrass laid atop each other delivered to the Principal of Community Secondary school, K. Dere and the representatives of the NYSC members.

Other very significant donations by Indigenes of Ogoni in diaspora are tabulated below for space constraints:

Table 4.3: Diaspora assisted educational empowerment projects

S/N	Community	Diaspora assisted projects	Diaspora Donor
1	Sime	Provision of school uniforms	
2	Lorre	Renovation of community secondary school and provision of books and other writing materials to students	Dr. Roland Nwigia (Rochester)
3	Uegwere (Khana)	Provision of scholarship	Tony Tonyie Konne (Rochester)
4	Saakpewa	Renovation of Modern primary school	Sen. Bari Mpigi
5	Uegwere (Khana)	Provision of scholarship	Uegwere Community in US
6	Kaa	Scholarship to Kaa post-secondary school students	Chief Ambrose Kii
7	Barako (Gokana)	Built 6 classrooms	Barako community in North America
8	Uegwere (Khana)	Organization of extramural classes	Uegwere Community in US
9	Kereken-Boue (Khana)	Provision exercise books to primary school students in Kereken-Boue	Mr. Moses Taabo (New Orleans)

Challenges affecting the effective utilization of the diasporan assisted projects in Ogoniland

Over the years, diasporan assisted projects has been faced with some challenges which militate against its effective utilization. Some of these common challenges are as follows:

Lack/Inadequate fund: The major challenge bedeviling the achievement of most developmental projects in Nigeria is inadequate funding. This explains the rationale behind most of the initiated project not seeing the limelight as they are left uncompleted almost immediately they are flagged off, due to lack of fund to push the ideas into reality. The lack of fund is the number one reason why the development of empowerment programmes in Ogoniland has not improved over the years. For instance, in Bianu, the renovation of Community secondary School, Bianu which was initiated by the diasporan has remained incomplete till date due to lack of fund.

Mismanagement of the available fund: Where the diasporan decides to fund programmes geared towards sustainable community development, fund raised for this purposes are being lobbied and diverted into private pockets. Lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the mediators between the diaspora and the communities has hampered the effective utilization of fund dedicated to diaspora assisted projects in the area. This has led to non-completion of projects, as most times, half of the fund meant for the projects are being siphoned and diverted by the few. In Botem, the money

designated to the building of primary healthcare by Botem citizens in the US was siphoned and diverted into private pockets, thereby, leaving the project abandoned for years.

Difficulty in accessing grants**:** In the first point, we established that the first problem most Nigerian women and youths face in a bid for empowerment is the lack of fund. However, where the diasporan make fund in the form of grant available for the local people, the financial system and other agencies and individuals responsible for the dispensation of these grants to the individuals makes it very difficult to access through rigid policies and requirements.

Lack of interest/entrepreneurial mindset**:** Most of the youth empowerment programmes today are geared toward entrepreneurship. However, because of the mentality that was instilled in us in the last decades during the colonial era through the formal school system, many Nigerian youths mindset has been influenced. Most of the Ogoni sons and daughters lack the needed patience required to be entrepreneurs as they want their results in a jiffy. Hence, most of them do not see the need to engage in the available empowerment programmes designed for them as they see it as a waste of time.

Inadequate power supply**:** In the area of water, the community lack electricity and could not utilize the water facilities provided by the diasporan on regular basis. The people used the water only when spirited individuals provided fuel to power the generated attached to the project. Again, community development committee made to protect the facilities do not give adequate attention, hence the generators attached to it has not be repaired or serviced for a long term.

Majority of the well-to-do have their private water facility and therefore do not give adequate interest in the sustainability of the projects. In Lorre, the Sumo were made away with by bad boys who sold them. In Uegwere, inter-communal conflict between them led to the destruction of some of the water projects initiated and executed by the Ogoni indigenes in the United States.

In Okwale town hall repaired by the diasporan were also destroyed by cult groups.

In the area of scholarship, there is no effective monitoring of the beneficiary's performance, hence, most of them use the assisted projects for purposes not related to the scheme objectives.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion in this study, the direction of development is yet to receive the deserving critical research attention to determine levels of progression or retrogression. This study provides a novel attempt into this research space. Evidence from findings show that Ogoni immigrants, notwithstanding their settlement abroad, maintain a "memory," about their original homeland, especially as a place of eventual return when the time is right. Thus, they form a micro-social identity in the context of a macro-identity structure among Nigerian immigrants in diaspora and this facilitates the modernization process in Ogoni. Importantly, Ogonis in diaspora have achieved considerable developmental feats that is tripod in phase: infrastructures, education and employment/empowerment which are encapsulated in the vision of connecting Ogoni people to a political immediacy in order to achieve a counter-hegemonic position for Ogoni emancipation. Conclusively, the development direction is progressive but deviates from the political and industrial direction

Recommendations

Following from the findings, the present study therefore makes the following recommendations:

Adequate fund should be provided: This would help to address problem of project not being completed. Most projects initiated by the Diaspora suffer maintenance due lack of fund,

Mismanagement of the available fund: Where the diasporan decides to fund programmes geared towards sustainable community development, fund contributed for this purposes should be properly or judiciously utilize to realize target objective. Diversion of Diaspora project fund to private use should discouraged. Again, access to Diaspora project grant should be made flexible. In the first point, we established that the first problem most Nigerian women and youths face in a bid for empowerment is the lack of fund. However, where the diasporan make fund in the form of grant available for the local people, the financial system and other agencies and individuals responsible for the dispensation of these grants to the individuals makes it very difficult to access through rigid policies and requirements.

There should be proper orientation and enlightenment to change the mindset of the youths for positive engagement. Most of the youth empowerment programmes today are geared toward entrepreneurship. However, because of the mentality that was instilled in us in the last decades during

the colonial era through the formal school system, many Nigerian youths' mindset has been influenced. Most of the Ogoni sons and daughters lack the needed patience required to be entrepreneurs as they want their results in a jiffy. Hence, most of them do not see the need to engage in the available empowerment programmes designed for them as they see it as a waste of time.

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