

**CONCEPTUALIZING RURALITY FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS OF THE NIGER DELTA REGION  
IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study employed the use of case study in extensive review of secondary data and observation to critically examine the structural characteristics of rural areas in the Niger Delta with an insight for rural development. It is sufficiently obvious that there is a missing link to sustainable rural development in this region. The Niger Delta in Nigeria is not only endowed with crude oil or petroleum resources as conceived in many sections, but also has a rich rural life that can be explored for poverty alleviation and pedestal the rural areas on the path of income and livelihood security, and ultimately lead to sustainable development if the rural structures and characteristics are properly harnessed. Based on Nigeria's criteria for rurality, which is a settlement with population less than 20,000, the area has over 13,329 rural settlements making it predominantly rural, and over 90% of the rural economy is dependent on agriculture which suffers various challenges such as lack of power supply, lack of modern technology, lack of processing or preservation facilities, vulnerability to flood and climatic instability and lack of access to capital amongst several others.

**Keywords:** Rurality, Rural development, Niger Delta, Rural economy, Demography

**Discipline:** Economics

**Absztrakt****A VIDÉK MEGHATÁROZÁSA NIGÉRIÁBAN, NIGER DELTA RÉGIÓJA VIDÉKI TERÜLETEINEK TÁRSADALMI FEJLŐDÉSÉÉRT**

Jelen tanulmányban esettanulmányt használtak a másodlagos adatok kiterjedt áttekintésére és Niger-delta vidéki területeinek strukturális jellemzőinek kritikus vizsgálatára.. Elégge nyilvánvaló, hogy ebben a régióban hiányzik egy láncszem a fenntartható vidékfejlesztéshez. A nigériai Niger-delta nemcsak nyersolaj- vagy kőolaj-forrásokkal rendelkezik - ahogyan azt sokan elképzelték-, hanem gazdag vidéki élettel is. Ennek a szegénység enyhítése érdekében történő kiaknázása a vidéki területeket a jövedelem és a megélhetés biztonságának ösvényére állíthatja. Ha a vidéki struktúrákat és jellemzőket megfelelően kihasználják, az a fenntartható fejlődéshez vezethet.. A nigériai vidékiség kritériumai alapján, vidék az a település, amely 20 000-nél kisebb lélekszámú. A területen több mint 13 329 vidéki település található, így túlnyomórészt vidéki, és a vidéki gazdaság több mint 90%-a a mezőgazdaságtól függ, amely különféle kihívásokkal, például energiahíánnyal küzd. Ezek többek között a kínálat, a modern technológia hiánya, a feldolgozó vagy konzerváló létesítmények hiánya, az árvízzel szembeni sebezhetőség és az éghajlati instabilitás, valamint a tőkéhez való hozzáférés hiánya.

**Kulcsszavak:** vidék, vidékfejlesztés, Niger-delta, vidéki gazdaság, demográfia

**Diszcipline:** Gazdaságtudomány

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**Introduction**

The terms “rurality” and “rural areas” have an apparent clarity. They are immediately understood by almost everybody because they evoke physical, social and cultural concept which is a counterpart of the “urban” (Study Programme on European Spatial Planning, 1999). Although drawing a precise line of demarcation between rural and urban components of a population may be difficult due to the social, cultural, political

and economic perspectives through which they are viewed (Ignatius, 2010). In Nigeria however, a single criterion of population size obtained through census is still being used to define rural areas. The Nigeria 1991 population census defines a rural area as a settlement with less than 20,000 inhabitants (Ignatius, 2010). The definition, based solely on population size, masks the varying intensity or degree of rurality exhibited in Nigeria (Alaneme, 2000). This is because it has been shown

that due to the heterogeneity of rural areas, the definition of rural, based only on population and/or one single economic activity (commonly agriculture), is not enough to define areas or regions as rural (Leon, 2005; Vaz et al., 2006). Moreover, the grouping of the population figures of separate localities, villages and hamlets, within the territory of autonomous communities in Nigeria ends up grouping the communities as towns. This, according to Alaneme (2000), masks the rural characters of the localities, hamlets and villages in the country. Therefore, for the goal of this study, we shall be critically examining characteristics of rural areas in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Nigeria is notably the most populous country in Africa, with a population estimate of over 200 million people, a land surface area of 923,768km<sup>2</sup> and a national growth rate of 3.2 percent per annum (Akinyemi and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014). Nigeria held several distinct kingdoms with predominant rural settlements and unique cultural heritage before the British took over in the 19th century (Okundamiya and Nzeako, 2010). The nation consists of 36 states and the federal capital territory and is further divided into geo-political zones and regions based on socio-cultural similarities (Oyelere 2008). Nigeria is dominantly rural, and the dominance of areas with high degrees of rurality in the country is an indication that most parts of the country still lack the basic socio-economic infrastructure that aids rural transformation (Ignatius, 2010).

According to SDN (2013), the Niger Delta has a long-standing history prior to the 11th century when it had its first formation of city states. It was comprised of a people who, like many other tribes in Nigeria, were an independent and free people; who did whatever they wanted on their land and interacted with whomsoever they wished. It was operating in “regions controlled by different tribes and kings, like the Urhobo, Delta Igbo, Isoko, Itsekiri, Oron, and Ijaw (which has always been the majority ethnic groups in the Delta), however there are other minority tribes that were also in existence in the region long before the coming of European merchants in the 15th century and before the formation of the Nigerian state. At this time of their independent existence, the people lived with each other in their various territories and engaged in different forms of trading, especially in ornamental wares.

The Niger Delta is the delta of the Niger River at the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Nigeria. Jike (2004) described the Niger Delta as “both panoply of geographically contiguous states and a convenient nomenclature for resource allocation and distribution among nine states in the south of Nigeria” which includes Delta, Bayelsa, Edo, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ondo, Abia and Imo (Elum et. al., 2016). The Niger Delta is Africa’s largest delta covering with 112,110 km<sup>2</sup> land area and a population of approximately 31 million people (NDDC, 2014). It is the most famous region in Nigeria due to its abundant endowment

with petroleum resources which serves as a major driver of the nation's economy. Crude oil produced from this region accounts for about 79.5 percent of government's revenue and provides more than 95 percent of export (Akinlo, 2012). Interestingly too, the region is home to an exceptional variety of people; mostly fishers and farmers with a history of rich cultural heritage (Elum et. al., 2016).

Remarkably, there is no universal definition of what constitutes a rural area. Definitions vary significantly between countries. The term Rurality is simply used to describe the characteristics of a rural area, considering several factors to give a universal idea of what constitutes the rural. Typically, rural areas are described or defined based on one or some of the following characteristics: settlement,

population size, economic activities, land cover, land use, and remoteness from urban areas. As different as the term "Rural" may be in different places, one common feature that connects it in different locations is that it relates to a definite settlement. Since the term "Rural" is defined in different places by different denominators, it is likely that people indifferent places may have different views or understanding of rurality that can be misleading, especially when considered in relation to development plans or activities. Therefore, this work aims to describe what constitutes a rural area in Nigeria using the Niger Delta as a case study especially because of its significant contribution to the nation's economy, and with this rurality, give insight into who rural development strategy might be necessary for this area

*Table 1: Population of the Niger Delta Region by States. State Population (NPC, 2016) . Source: National Population Commission (NPC), 2016.*

State	Population (NPC, 2016)	Population density, people per sq. km	Capital City
<b>Abia</b>	3,727,347	760.68	Umuahia
<b>Akwa Ibom</b>	5,482,177	794.52	Uyo
<b>Bayelsa</b>	2,277,961	251.46	Yenegoa
<b>Cross River</b>	3,866,269	177.46	Calabar
<b>Delta</b>	5,663,362	331.04	Asaba
<b>Edo</b>	4,235,595	220.75	Benin City
<b>Imo</b>	5,408,756	1,022.84	Owerri
<b>Ondo</b>	4,671,695	295.30	Akure
<b>Rivers</b>	7,303,924	690.68	Port Harcourt
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>42,637,092</b>		<b>N/A</b>

### **Natural Conditions in the Niger Delta**

The entire Niger Delta topography is characterized by a varying dimension of swampland with a complicated network of streams, creeks, swamps, tributaries, and lagoons crisscrossing the area (Alagoa, 1999). A lush region with the largest mangrove swamps in Africa where cash crops, including rubber, cocoa, oil palm and coconut, and food crops such as cassava, yam and plantain, are produced (UNDP, 2006). Wetlands in the Niger Delta have been referred to as largest biodiversity hotspots in Africa that inhabit several species of fish and wildlife resources that are endemic to the region, with a miscellany of flora and fauna as well as (Omotola, 2006).

Also, the Niger Delta is the third largest wetland in the world (Zabbey et al. 2020). Richly endowed with arable land for agricultural purposes, crude oil and natural gas deposits in a rainforest zone (Izah et. al., 2018). The region has several water bodies which are distributed as freshwater (river, creek, creek lets, ponds, lakes and streams), estuarine (fresh and saltwater interphase) and marine/salt water (Izah and Angaye, 2016). The soil of the region is also variable according to types such as clay, silts and sand, with chemical properties that shows the soil is acidic (PH range from 4.6 to 5.3), and it is a major direct recipient of human activities including food processing such as cassava processing, oil palm processing, wastes from different settings including municipal

wastes (Izah et. al., 2017).

The aquatic ecosystem in this region is also serves as habitats to several biological species including fisheries (both fin and shelled fish), some aquatic mammals, reptiles etc. Additionally, in most static freshwater resources in Bayelsa state for instance, you can easily and frequently find some species of snails, aquatic insects, freshwater shrimps, snakes and fishes like catfish; algae, water lilies, water hyacinths and lettuce in such habitats.

While in flowing water bodies like rivers on the other hand, several species of fishes and macrophytes can be found in the freshwater ecosystem. Animals like sharks, whales, dolphins are some diversities found in the marine ecosystems (Izah, 2018). In the same vein, several species of biodiversity have been reported in the region, while some are endemic, several others are threatened, endangered or critically endangered (Izah, 2018).

Naturally, biodiversity involves all species of life forms including plants, animals and microbes that play essential role in the ecosystem.

Some endemic species in the region includes Nigerian white-throated guenon (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster pococki*), Sclater's guenon (*Cercopithecus sclateri*), red-capped mangabey (*Cercocebus torquatus*) and the endangered Nigeria–Cameroon chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) and many others (Izah, 2018). Notably also, other endemic mammals have gone on extinction in the region probably due to excessives exploitation, a

common example is the Heslop's pygmy hippopotamus (*Hexaprotodon liberiensis-heslopi*) (Ikemeh, 2015).

Furthermore, the Niger Delta is an Eocene sedimentary basin that lies between latitude 4°400 N to 5°400 N and longitude 6°500 E to 7°500 E located in the southern part of Nigeria (Hassan et al., 2019). It is notably located in the Gulf of Guinea and stretches to the central South Atlantic Ocean just at the mouth of the Niger Benue and Cross River systems (Ibrahim et. el., 2019). The Atlantic Ocean and the River Niger are the two largest water bodies in the region. The area has a typically humid subequatorial climate with a short dry season usually from November to February and a long-wet season from March to October (Hassan et al., 2019). The average annual temperature is 27 °C, plus or minus 3 °C. The annual rainfall ranges from 2000 mm in the northern plain to more than 4000 mm in the coastal areas, with an average of 3000 mm (Ophori, 2007).

The area is basically characterized by two main physiographic zones: the hilly region to the north and coastal regions to the south. These separated or isolated hilly regions show a complicated surface relief that is separated into two main parts by the Niger River and dotted with small islands. The elevation of the area ranges from -5m masl towards the sea in the south to 400m in the north of the region. The coastal plain is typically flat, but local sand bars give it a gently undulating view (Ophori, 2007).

### **Social Condition of the Niger Delta Rural Areas**

The Niger Delta region comprises of nine out of the 36 states in Nigeria. The nine states of the region are Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River, Abia, Imo, Ondo and Akwa Ibom. Importantly, more than 40 ethnic groups considered minority in the nation such as the Ijaw, Urhobo, Iteskiri, Isoko, Kalabari, Nokws, Ndom, Ogoni, Bini, Ogba, Abua/Odual, Ukwuani, Efik, Annang, Andoni, Brass, Ikwerre, Etche, Nembe, Ibibio, Orashi, Obolo, Ishian, Ibo and Okrika are collectively predominant in the region, speaking about 250 different dialects (Ojakorotu and Uzodike, 2007). One very interesting thing about the ethnic groups is this region is that they have a unique cultural system that is integrated with similar characteristics making is difficult to differentiate them by mere surface outlooks, these shared cultural values is also perceived to have contributed to the peaceful coexistence in the region The unique topography of the region encourages people to gather in small communities with an estimated 13,329 settlements, 94 per cent of which have populations of less than 5,000. Therefore, meeting the rural population size criteria and are rural communities offering very limited economic opportunities, with a generally deplorable infrastructure and vastly inadequate social services for the populace (UNDP: Niger Delta Human Development Report, 2011).

. Table 2: *Size Distribution of Settlements in the Niger Delta. Source: Centre for Population and Environment Development (CPED), 2013, p. 236.*

<b>NDDC States</b>	<b>Less than 1,000 people</b>	<b>1,000-5,000 people</b>	<b>5,001-20,000</b>	<b>20,001 people and above</b>
<b>Abia</b>	393	494	52	11
<b>Akwa Ibom</b>	1,236	1,098	46	7
<b>Bayelsa</b>	290	317	85	4
<b>Cross River</b>	117	500	56	8
<b>Delta</b>	1,016	307	104	22
<b>Edo</b>	903	264	70	11
<b>Imo</b>	788	925	81	2
<b>NDDC States</b>	<b>Less than 1,000 people</b>	<b>1,000-5,000 people</b>	<b>5,001-20,000</b>	<b>20,001 people and above</b>
<b>Abia</b>	393	494	52	11
<b>Akwa Ibom</b>	1,236	1,098	46	7

Furthermore, the people speak different languages according to their tribes such as Ijaw, Urhobo, Ishian, Kalabare, Isoko, Ibibio, Efik, Ibo etc. They engage in different means to earn a living, such as: fishing, farming, canoe carving, palm-wine tapping, rubber taping, palm oil production, hunting and small enterprises (Baro and Endouware, 2013). One common characteristics of the rural settlement in the Niger Delta is that the population is highly reliant on the land and water resources for their livelihoods, which includes subsistence farming and fishing (Chinweze et al., 2012).

A World Bank report indicates that 88% of households in the region are illiterate, only 30% of the population have access to health care, and some 85% lack access to safe drinking water in the midst of a fast-growing population rate as projected in Table 3 below (Oyeshola, 2011).

Unemployment rates in most communities are at about 70%, a striking contrast to a national average of 27%. Sadly, with the level of poverty in these rural areas, individuals who are ill rely on herbal remedies and/or self-medication with orthodox drugs. Where self-treatment is unsuccessful, patients are compelled to seek and pay for expensive outpatient services from traditional healers, private practitioners, and pharmacists (Inem et. al., 2003). This can result in a large health expenditure among families seeking treatment for seriously ill relatives (Dienye et. al., 2011).

As is the case in most Nigerian communities, women play prominent role in the management of health of the household because as agents of fertility, they have specific knowledge of local medicines. Their knowledge of herbs, tree barks and other local cures were acquired

during their ‘fattening’ room period. This starts after the birth of the first child and lasts for one year. During this period, she is not allowed out of the family compound (though this practice is already fading away). Besides being a time to rest, it is also a time of informal education when she learns to look after her child and home. She is attended to by women from her family and older women in the community.

### **Economic Condition of Rural Areas in Niger Delta**

According to Niger Delta Human Development Report published by United Nations Development Programme (2006), many development agencies and private sector organizations, including oil companies, have sought to transform the region socially and economically because

the analyses of poverty and human development paint a dismal image. The human development index (HDI) score in the region; a measure of well-being including the life expectancy, knowledge and a decent or modest standard of living, is at a low score of 0.564 (1 being the highest score value).

While these ratings put the region at a slightly higher position than Nigeria’s overall HDI of 0.453, sadly the area rates far below countries or regions with similar oil and gas resources. Typically, Saudi Arabia has almost the same population with the region, but in 2005, the HDI stood at 0.800, and in 2020, 0.854, while Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Libya and Indonesia achieved scores of 0.844, 0.849, 0.772, 0.799, and 0.697, respectively in 2005.

*Table 3: Projected Population of Niger Delta States. Source: Centre for Population and Environment Development (CPED), 2013; 421.*

<i>States</i>	<i>Land Area (Km2)</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2020</i>
<b>Abia</b>	4,877	2,667,762	3,026,623	3,230,000	3,763,000	4,383,000	6,106,000
<b>Akwa Ibom</b>	6,806	2,746,748	3,131,230	3,343,000	3,895,000	4,537,000	6,285,000
<b>Bayelsa</b>	11,007	1,327,488	1,571,540	1,710,000	1,992,000	2,320,000	2,703,000
<b>Cross River</b>	21,930	2,952,900	3,365,881	3,694,000	4,186,000	4,877,000	5,681,000
<b>Delta</b>	17,163	2,952,900	3,365,881	3,594,000	4,186,000	4,877,000	5,681,000
<b>Edo</b>	19,698	2,475,352	3,150,050	3,342,000	3,894,000	4,535,000	5,283,000
<b>Imo</b>	5,165	2,798,238	3,150,050	3,342,000	3,894,000	4,535,000	5,283,000
<b>Ondo</b>	15,086	2,532,535	2,851,293	3,025,000	3,524,000	4,105,000	4,782,000
<b>Rivers</b>	10,378	3,772,738	4,466,293	4,858,000	5,659,000	6,592,000	7,679,000
<b>Niger Delta Region</b>	<b>112,110</b>	<b>23,469,866</b>	<b>26,934,302</b>	<b>28,856,000</b>	<b>33,616,000</b>	<b>39,157,000</b>	<b>45,715,000</b>



The report further revealed that behind the Delta's poor human development index performance reflects a complex brew of social, economic, environmental and political factors. Social instability, poor local governance, competition for scarce economic resources and environmental degradation have taken a toll. The general neglect of infrastructure and inequalities, often rationalized by the difficulty of the delta's terrain, has worsened people's access to fundamental services such as electricity, safe drinking water, roads and health facilities that are taken for granted in many other parts of Nigeria. Other elements include the negative impacts of the oil industry, a constricted land area, a delicately balanced environment and extreme economic deprivation.

Additionally, since after the discovery of crude oil in the region in 1956 and consequently large-scale exploration and operation to date, an estimated nine out of ten rural dwellers in the Niger-Delta villages live in poverty and gross livelihood insecurity.

In relation to the high level of income generated from oil which is mostly found in remote places in the region, the livelihood system of the rural dwellers in this area witnesses no fundamental or practical positive changes in economic and social relationships while the environmental impact emanating from such exploration has led to bizarre economic deprivation and underdevelopment of the area (Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007).

Agriculture has remained the most dominant economic activity for rural dwellers in the Niger Delta region, with crop farming and fishing activities accounting for approximately 90% of all forms of activities in the rural area while about 50%-68% of the active labour force is engaged in one form of agricultural practice or the other including fishing and farming and local food processing (FOS, 2004).

The common agricultural pattern in the area remains the use of crop rotation, shifting cultivation or bush fallow system characterized by land and labour being the principal inputs of production. Practically, the region houses the largest palm plantation in Nigeria and also serves as the largest producer of palm oil in the country. This is predominantly a rural occupation done by local crafts and techniques.

Notably, across the Niger Delta area, 65 per cent of the population depends on the natural environment (living and non-living) for their livelihoods while the other 35% depends on remittance. Prominently, agriculture is the primary and basic source of income to these rural dwellers, however in this region, livelihood systems are much more than sets of material and economic conditions; while rural dwellers in Niger-Delta must cater for many human needs such as food and shelter for their households, they also need to address concerns of the human attachment to the environment (Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007). The large and persistent margin between agricultural activities and

livelihood security in the region with little or no formal sources of income and unemployment indicates that livelihood security is dependent on agriculture in rural areas; but many can no longer afford to sustain their livelihoods through agricultural practices alone as source of income for the households (details in table 4). This is largely due to environmental pollutions resulting from oil activities in the region that has rendered many arable lands unproductive hence increasing the number of the rural poor to remain in perpetual food insecure state in the area (Ordinioha and Brisibe, 2013).

Sadly, over the past 60 years, the region has experienced over 7000 oil spill incidents caused by engineering failure, pipeline vandalism, aged infrastructure, oil theft, artisanal refining activities and

natural factors which have resulted in environmental pollution and degradation (Anejionu et al., 2015; Onojake et al., 2015; Sam et al., 2017), and in turn, impacted human health, groundwater, soil functionality, livelihoods and ecosystem services (Kabari, 2016; UNEP, 2011). Onakuse and Lenihan (2007), revealed that livelihoods in the rural area of Niger-Delta are constantly exposed to the impact from environmental pollution which is constantly causing a great loss in both flora and fauna; a major source of livelihoods for the indigenous people. Of significant importance also to them are the network of paths, tracks and access routes in the immediate village vicinity, dotted with criss-crossing pipelines and oil stations on which they rely to access water, firewood, fields, and local market opportunities.

*Table 4: Source of Income of Poor and Non-poor Families in the Niger-Delta Sector Poor Families Non-poor Families. Source: Participatory rural assessment activity in Niger-Delta (2020).*

Sector	Poor Families	Non-poor Families
Labour	Farm and non-farm labour	Not a source of income
Agriculture	Any kinds of cereals, root crops and legumes	Rubber, Oil Palm and coconut
Livestock	Chickens, ducks, goats	Goats, chicken, and ducks
Fishing	Fish/Shrimps/Sea food	Not a source of income
Processing	Palm wine, local gin & Banga	Not a source of income
Shop, kiosk	Shopkeeper	Owner
Skills used	Make fishing equipment, basket making broom making from coconut leaves, and making fishing nets	Skills for outside salaried employment or business skills

Therefore, increasing mobility within the village is important to enable access to mean of livelihoods and income sources such as markets outside the village.

Most of the lingering challenges faced in this region is because of decades of oil prospecting and exploitation which has damaged much of the ecosystem. The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation estimate, based on reported cases of spillage, between 1976 and 1996, there were a total of 4,835 incidents resulting in the spillage of at least 2,446,322 barrels (102.7 million US gallons), of which an estimated 1,896,930 barrels (79.7 million US gallons; 77 percent) were lost to the environment (NDHDR, 2006). The result has been a general deterioration of economic, social and political cohesion. Conflict has become a booming business, with grave implications for future development prospects. Already entrenched is corrupt practices breeding youth restiveness, weak entrepreneurial skills, the destruction of traditional institutions that formerly served as reservoirs of social capital, the disregard of formal and informal authorities, and insecure property rights. This ongoing dissent denies the region lasting security, enduring peace and prosperity, and the realization of abundant opportunities.

In other to ameliorate the situation of the people of this region, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established on 5th June 2000, by the Federal Government of Nigeria and

saddled them with the sole mandate of developing the oil-region; a mandate many now consider having been subverted with corruption, thereby leading to the slow pace of development witnessed in the region. In addition, one of the prominent policies of government also considered unfavorable and unfriendly by people in this region is the Land Use Act Decree No. 6, which was signed into law in March 1978, appropriating all lands in the name of the Federal Government. Meanwhile in 1969, the Federal Government promulgated the Petroleum Act, which forbade individuals from engaging in mining petroleum resources. Decree No.13 of 1970, empowered the Federal Government of Nigeria to acquire all federally collected resources, also Decree No. 9 of 1971 gives the Federal Government all rights to offshore rents and royalties. These laws give away communal lands, rivers and forests to trans-national companies for the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas which results to attendant loss of land for local livelihoods and dislocation of indigenous communities (Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This brief study has revealed important facts about rurality (rural characteristics) in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which is characteristically defined by population size of less than 20,000 people living in an area.

*Table 5: SWOT Analysis of the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria*  
*Strength Weakness Opportunities Treats*

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Treats</b>
Agricultural land and related resources	Environmental crisis and Environmental pollution	Food processing industries and related businesses	Vulnerability to flood
Forest resources	Farming is a business for the old only	Furniture and wood works	Inflation and economic instability
Petroleum and natural gas resources	Obsolete technology for agriculture	Oil companies	Soil pollution
Natural water bodies	Lack of key skills and competencies	Rural tourism	Water Pollution
Human resources; majorly viable youth population	Lack of sufficient verifiable information or database	Educational and Health care	Increasing communal crisis and Insecurity
Abundant biodiversity	Poor service support	Poor infrastructure	Abundant biodiversity
Wildlife and animal resources	Lack of employment opportunities	Increasing population without improving welfare	Wildlife and animal resources
Diverse resource endowment			

The rural economy in this area is largely agrarian, cutting across fishing, farming, hunting or marketing of these produce. Though richly endowed with natural resources both renewable and non-renewable, and blessed with favourable climatic conditions, rural dwellers in the region are faced with diverse challenges such as lack of portable water and electricity, lack of infrastructure, dependence on household labour, lack of technological implements, lack of market for farm produce, lack of social amenities, environmental and water pollution as well as food insecurity. These challenges give rise to slow economic growth and development, increasing youth restiveness

and involvement in social vices, massive rural-urban drift leading to overpopulation of urban areas and further exerting pressure on the urban social system as well as rising insecurity. There is therefore an urgent need for a “Sustainable Development” approach in transforming the rurality system of this area; an approach that seeks to explore the abundant resources in the area to bridge the needs gap and meet the aspirations of the present without compromising the needs of the future. A practical process in which the exploration of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes are all in synergy to

enhance both current and future potentials and meet the growing needs and aspirations of the people. This can be achieved through special agricultural intervention programmes by the Government, youths' skills development and involvement in agriculture, creation of agricultural marketing agency to enhance marketing of produce, standardized input supply for farmers to improve output, provision of essential social amenities such as drinkable water, primary healthcare facilities and electricity, continuous remediation of the degraded environment and the use information communication technology as a driver of social change through establishment of technology hubs. Finally, rural tourism can also be explored in this region as a veritable alternative to the primarily agrarian rural economy in the region.

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