

Needs Assessment for Effective Development in the Rural Areas of the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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Abstract. The lack of needs assessment is the leading cause of ineffective and uneven development in rural areas. Previous studies on needs assessment have largely focused on urban development. However, little is known about needs assessment in the rural areas of the Niger Delta Region. This study, therefore, aimed at assessing the developmental needs of rural areas in the Niger Delta Region. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted in three states: Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers State. A total sample of 450 respondents (aged 18-50 years) were randomly selected in 15 rural communities within the selected states, while 15 focus group discussions and 30 in-depth interviews were conducted among the residents to complement the quantitative data. A structured and pre-tested questionnaire and interview guides were used as methods of data collection. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used as analytic strategies respectively. Although findings showed that majority of the rural dwellers in Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa States were faced with the challenges of flooding, poor educational facilities, poverty/unemployment, poor medical facilities, poor/electricity supply and poor communication network; the provisions of portable water, healthcare facilities, educational facilities, skill acquisition programmes, electricity and business start-up capital were mostly desired by the participants. This study, therefore, has policy implication direction for rural development by stakeholders for effective initiation and implementation of community-based projects in the Niger Delta rural communities.

Keywords: Needs assessment, rural development, infrastructure, poverty, Niger Delta Region

1. Introduction

The area known as the Niger Delta region located in the South-South region of Nigeria has been of much interest to both the Nigerian government and the international community. The Niger Delta region is

naturally endowed with a high deposit of petroleum that has been the source of its focus of interest for the federal government and multinational oil corporations. Given her huge resource deposit, it will be generally expected that the area will experience a high economic regeneration and prosperity, human development, social stability, and peaceful political atmosphere.

Surprisingly, the region happens to be one of the least developed regions in the country despite the huge financial commitment made by the government at various levels (Obi, 2014; Kaur, 2013; Eneh, 2011). Although, the federal government has established agencies like; Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Nigerian Content Management and Development Board, etc. to facilitate rapid and sustainable development projects within the region especially on ecological, human and infrastructural developments, the area is still low in her development indices (Otega, Dani, & Badariah, 2015).

In recent times, the Nigeria government has reinforced her efforts in the region by the sustenance of the amnesty to militant youths as well as the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs to formulate and coordinate policies of actions for the development, peace and security of the region. The different initiatives and programmes are meant to create a socially, economically, politically, ecologically stable and peaceful environment within the Niger Delta region. However, development in the region is not proportionate with the level of its contribution to national income and does not reflect the enormous financial commitments and efforts made by both federal and state government (Obi, 2014; Kaur, 2013).

A 2013 United Nation Development Programme report in the region (cited in Otega, Dani, & Badariah, 2015), indicated that the human development index of the region is at 0.433 compared

to other oil-producing communities found in Gabon, Libya and Malaysia put at 0.668, 0.791, and 0.791 respectively. Similarly, a study by Eneh (2011) showed that there is a low rate of access to literacy and secondary education compared to other non-oil producing regions. While the Niger Delta region has 87.9 per cent access to youth literacy and 70.3 per cent on secondary education, the south-west with little petroleum resources has 94.7 per cent and 87.5 per cent respectively. With regards to unemployment in 2010, the region was estimated to have the highest unemployment rate with 9.5 per cent, while the north-east 3.2 per cent, north-west 2.2 per cent, north-central 4.3 per cent, south-east 6.6 per cent and south-west 4.5 per cent respectively (Eneh, 2011).

Also, a report from the Niger Delta Environmental survey 2010 shows that the ratio of primary school to people leaving within communities in the region is 1 primary school to 3,700 people serving 3 or more communities while that of secondary school is 1 to 14,679 people which is 1 school to 8 or more communities. Eneh, (2011), further reported that only 45.5 per cent of the people in the region have access to the safe water source while north-west had 50.2 per cent, North-central 48.5 per cent and south-west 73.1 per cent respectively.

Several studies (Aghalino, 2012; Akinwale, & Osabuohien, 2009; Okolo, 2014) have shown that despite the colossal efforts by the NDDC through her robust master plan in developing the Niger Delta region, not much has been accomplished. Wilson (2011) confirmed that the NDDC master plan has not been able to address the socio-economic needs of the area adequately. He, therefore, suggested for an all-embracing strategic approach.

Emphatically, Okolo (2014) observed that the NDDC master plan can address the infrastructural and human development issues in the region if only the commission can redirect her developmental approach to community development. Given this, the study seeks to investigate how community participation can be employed to facilitate the activities of developmental agencies in achieving sustainable human development in the Niger Delta region.

Despite the laudable strategies adopted by the government in ensuring lasting solution in the region's underdevelopment, scholars however criticized some of the strategies. For example, Aghedo (2013) argued that the post-amnesty in Niger Delta failed because the programme was not designed to develop communities and human capacities in the Niger Delta, but as a way to entice the militants to

give up their arms. Similarly, Dode (2012) suggested the need for the government to adopt the approach of community participation and capability building in the developmental agenda in the region. Based on the above note, critical gap this study intends to fill is what Dode (2012) identified as lack of strategic method, greed and bad governance in Nigeria as factors contributing to the region underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty amid her rich natural resources. Conclusively, Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011) maintained that there are incessant unrest and violence in the region due to government failure to incorporate a robust strategy of peacebuilding. They further added that human development and capability building is a vital tool in the restoration of peace and tranquillity for sustainable development to any warring community.

A study by The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) in 2014 on 'Assessing the Contribution of Youth Employment and Empowerment Programmes to Reducing Conflict Risk in Nigeria' reported the failure of development policies in the Niger Delta Region due to non-inclusion of community members when it reported thus:

Another factor affecting the quality of programme design and implementation is the limited communication between policy-makers and young people in designing and delivering interventions. Nearly all of (sic) the youth and civil society representatives interviewed for this report pointed to this as a major obstacle. State-level research revealed the same picture, with youth participants in FGDs (Focus Group Discussions) highlighting inadequate participation of youth in formulation (sic) of initiatives supposedly designed to assist them. Youth (sic) have the best understanding of the realities and challenges they face, and so are well placed to help determine what will and will not work. Including young people at every stage of the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes would ensure that interventions have greater legitimacy and ownership, encourage active participation in society, and help mitigate frustration, apathy and social exclusion. It would also ensure that policies and practices are more targeted, context-specific and thereby more effective (NSRP, 2014).

A Top-down approach to policy formulations is always fraught with ineffectiveness in its implementation. It is against this backdrop this study seeks to investigate a better approach which will directly involve the people in making decisions with regards to their development. Most studies on investigating the development needs of the people of

the Niger Delta are conceptual reviews. Hence, there is a gap between theory and practise. This study seeks to bridge this gap by carrying out an empirical investigation to determine the needs of the people of the Niger Delta.

2. Theoretical Framework: Community-Driven or Bottom-Up Model (CD/BUM)

This model is most critical to this study in its application to community development. This model (Community-driven or bottom-up model) postulates that the communities to which the projects are to be executed have the ownership of their resources and also have the rights and responsibilities in harnessing these resources for their benefits (Gillespie, 2004). Therefore, community-driven development model in itself is in line with community-driven development/reconstruction approach (CDD/R), the asset-based community development approach (ABCD), the rights-based model (RBM), and the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) as propounded by Ostrom in 1994.

Practically, the CDD/R is the model used by the World Bank group to extend interventional support to the poor communities and people when they are critically in need especially after the outbreak of war or disasters (Wong, 2012). With regards to the ABCD model, a survey of the community assets is taken into consideration, such as the capacities and assets of local individuals, associations and institutions, rather than focusing on its needs or deficiencies. The idea behind ABCD is that the identification of assets and resources within a community can empower communities that have typically been viewed that as needing help from outside the community (Kretzmann, & McKnight, 1993).

The RBM, on the other hand, focuses on empowering communities to exercise and claim their rights, and enable those responsible to fulfil their duties. These rights include civil and political rights (such as freedom of speech, political affiliation and assembly) as well as social, cultural and economic rights (such as access to land, shelter, education and health) (DFID, 2001). Community participation and empowerment are the key aspects of the SLA. It is in this light, that Gunjan (2011), and Platteau and Gaspart (2003) seem to agree that some of the weaknesses of BUM are further marginalization of the poor, and being prone to elite control as well as the predisposition of the elites to competition with government programmes.

Also, BUM is faced with difficulties as scaling-up and sustainability problems do terminate external funding before projects become financially self-sufficient, which may not be helpful for big developmental projects. Despite the weaknesses, ABCD and SLA models have been used successfully to address the shortcomings of previous development models (Gunjan, 2011; Platteau & Gaspart, 2003).

Therefore, the Community-driven or bottom-up model is most suitable for this research because it appropriately provides the basis for engaging citizens' participation in defining their developmental needs and aspirations for the government or other relevant agencies to address. Similarly, where the developmental needs of the Niger Delta region are concerned, the BUM is more appropriate in enhancing the developmental processes. This is because BUM is essentially participatory thereby relying on a variety of ideas that involves everyone in the community to which the developmental projects are to be planned and executed. When these are considered as the spectrum for community development, the specific needs and aspirations of the people coupled with the government and non-governmental organizations collaborative efforts, a holistic view of community developmental challenges would be addressed and bring about holistic and sustainable community development.

3. Material and Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted in 15 selected rural communities in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States respectively. The choice of these states was informed by its strategic location in the Niger Delta region where there were some rural communities producing oil, yet faced with a high level of poverty and marginalization in the region. The study employed a mixed-method approach of quantitative and qualitative method. A sample of 450 respondents (aged ≥ 18 years) were randomly recruited using a structured and pretested questionnaire, with 30 from each community selected based on Cochran's (1977) quantitative sample size determination formula as stated below:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 P(1 - P)}{e^2} \text{ Where } n = \text{Sample Population; } Z = \text{Statistics level of confidence (1.96); } P = \text{Expected prevalence or proportion to be sampled in the population [0.50]; } 1 = \text{Constant; } e = \text{Marginal error (0.05).}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 [0.50(1 - 0.50)]}{0.05^2} = \frac{3.8416[0.50(0.50)]}{0.0025} = 384.16.$$

n = 384.16 + 65.3 (17% of 384)

n = 449.5 = 450

Because of the triangulation of methods (quantitative and qualitative method) adopted in the study, 30 participants were also purposively interviewed, two from each community comprising community leaders and youth leaders respectively; while fifteen focus group discussion sessions, one from each community, were held with selected residents (aged 18-50 years).

Table 1 shows a summary of the sampled distribution by the communities selected for the study.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0), while qualitative data were analysed using content analysis method. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ministry of Health in Bayelsa State. Verbal informed consents were also sought from all respondents and participants before the commencement of the study. They were also assured that their participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. Also, the confidentiality of their responses is abided by during and after the study.

Table 1: Quantitative and Qualitative Sample Size distribution by states, Local Government Areas (LGAs) and communities

S/N	States	LGAs	Communities	Quantitative sample size	Qualitative sample size	
					FGD	IDI
1.	Delta State	Ndokwa East	Aseomuku	30	1	2
2.	Rivers State	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	Odugiri	30	1	2
3.	Delta State	Isoko North	Ibrede	30	1	2
4.	Rivers State	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	Okwuzi	30	1	2
5.	Rivers State	Ahoada West	Idu-Ekpeye	30	1	2
6.	Bayelsa State	Sagbama	Agbere	30	1	2
7.	Rivers State	Ahoada East	Ubeta	30	1	2
8.	Bayelsa State	Yenagoa (Biseni)	Tuburu	30	1	2
9.	Delta State	Ndokwa East	Umuolu	30	1	2
10.	Bayelsa State	Sagbama	Ekperiwari	30	1	2
11.	Bayelsa State	Southern Ijaw	Apoi	30	1	2
12.	Bayelsa State	Ekeremor	Azagbene	30	1	2
13.	Bayelsa State	Southern Ijaw	Ikenghenbiri	30	1	2
14.	Bayelsa State	Southern Ijaw	Igbomotoru	30	1	2
15.	Bayelsa State	Southern Ijaw	Kokologbene	30	1	2
**	Total			450	15	30

FGDs=Focus Group Discussions

IDIs= In-depth Interviews

4. Results

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents by the state of residence, which ranged from gender, age group, educational attainment, marital status, religion and occupation to income level. As indicated in the table, more than half of the respondents were males with those in Rivers State having the highest percentage compared to their female counterparts. In aggregate, the majority of the respondents were within the age brackets of 20 – 39, which suggests that they were mostly dominated by young population compared to those who were above 50 years.

About half the respondents both in Bayelsa and Rivers except in Delta State had attained secondary school education as at the time of the survey compared to those who had attended tertiary education. This means that a limited percentage of the respondents had attained higher educational levels at the time when the survey was conducted in the selected rural communities in the three states. On the marital status of the respondents, more than half of the respondents in Bayelsa and Delta were married while the majority of those in Rivers State were single. Despite this, more than half of the respondents across the three states were married compared to other categories of marital status in the three states.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic variables	State of the respondents (Column %)			
	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total
Gender				
Male	139 (57.9%)	53 (58.9%)	94 (78.3%)	286 (63.6%)
Female	101 (42.1%)	37 (41.1%)	26 (21.7%)	164 (36.4%)
Age group (in years)				
Less than 20	23 (9.6%)	10 (1.1%)	17 (14.2%)	50 (11.1%)
20 – 29	59 (24.6%)	15 (16.7%)	43 (35.8%)	117 (26.0%)
30 – 39	59 (24.6%)	33 (36.7%)	31 (25.8%)	123 (27.3%)
40 – 49	48 (20.0%)	23 (25.6%)	16 (6.7%)	87 (19.3%)
50 – 59	33 (13.8%)	9 (10.0)	8 (6.7%)	50 (11.1%)
60 and above	18 (7.5%)	-	5 (4.2%)	23 (5.1%)
Educational level				
No formal education	17 (7.1%)	15 (16.7%)	3 (2.5%)	35 (7.8%)
Primary	58 (24.2%)	10 (11.1%)	9 (7.5%)	77 (17.1%)
Secondary	121 (50.4%)	41 (45.6%)	68 (56.7%)	230 (51.1%)
Tertiary	44 (18.3%)	24 (26.7%)	40 (33.3%)	108 (24.0%)
Marital status				
Single	91 (38.1%)	31 (34.4%)	71 (59.2%)	193 (43.0%)
Married	140 (58.6%)	51 (56.7%)	46 (38.3%)	237 (52.8%)
Divorced/separated	-	5 (5.6%)	-	5 (1.1%)
Widow/widower	8 (3.3%)	3 (3.3%)	3 (2.5%)	14 (3.1%)
Religion				
Christianity	237 (98.8%)	77 (85.6%)	117 (97.5%)	431 (95.8%)
Islam	-	-	-	-
Traditionalists	3 (1.2%)	13 (14.4%)	3 (2.5%)	19 (4.2%)
Occupation				
Farmer	87 (37.0%)	25 (27.8%)	14 (11.9%)	126 (28.4%)
Fishermen	17 (7.2%)	7 (7.8%)	-	24 (5.4%)
Trader	56 (23.8%)	16 (17.8%)	18 (15.3%)	90 (20.3%)
Oil worker	1 (0.4%)	5 (5.6%)	4 (3.4%)	10 (2.3%)
Labourer	9 (3.8%)	9 (10.0%)	15 (12.7%)	33 (7.4%)
Artisan	8 (3.4%)	6 (6.7%)	9 (7.6%)	23 (5.2%)
Civil service	17 (7.2%)	5 (5.6%)	19 (16.1%)	41 (9.3%)
Others	40 (17.0%)	17 (18.9%)	39 (33.1%)	96 (21.7%)
Income level				
Low income (Less than N20000)	181 (75.4%)	62 (68.9%)	89 (74.2%)	332 (73.8%)
Medium income (N20000-N39000)	37 (15.4%)	14 (15.6%)	15 (12.5%)	66 (14.7%)
High income (N40000 and above)	22 (9.2%)	14 (15.6%)	16 (13.3%)	52 (11.6%)

While it was observed that none of the respondents indicated that they practised Islam, nearly all the respondents were adherents of Christianity. This suggests that the rural communities in the three states were dominated by those who practised the Christian religion. On the occupation of the respondents, although the proportions of all occupational categories seem to spread across the selected rural communities in the three states, the proportion of those who engaged in farming was greater than other categories of occupation except for those in Rivers State whose highest proportion of respondents were those who indicated ‘others’ which included drivers, students, etc. On their average income, majority of the respondents earned low-income level (less than N20000) compared to one-tenth who earned high-income level every month. This suggests a high level of poverty among the rural communities in the states.

4.2 Developmental Challenges faced by Rural Communities in the Selected States

The developmental challenges of the respondents were ascertained, Figure 1 reports the various developmental challenges dwellers of rural communities were facing by their states of residence. The results of the challenges faced varied by states. While more than half of the rural dwellers in Rivers State were faced with flooding (51.3%), poor educational facilities (53.8%), poverty/unemployment (89.0%) and poor medical facilities (53.8%); the majority of their counterparts in Delta state had developmental challenges of poor educational facilities (94.8%), poverty/unemployment (61.0%), poor medical facilities (85.7%) and poor/electricity supply (54.5%).

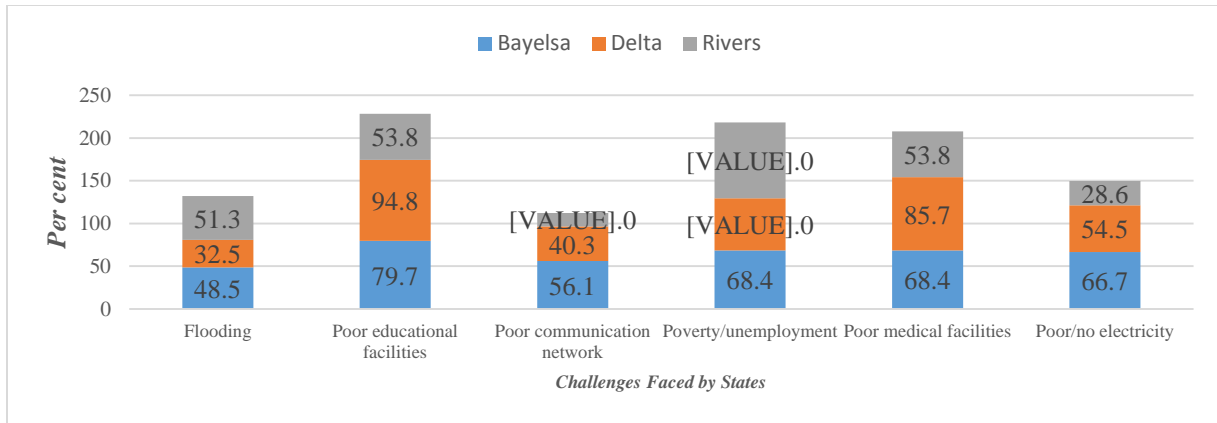


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by the developmental challenges faced by rural communities in the selected states

Similar developmental challenges were also observed in Bayelsa State with the majority of the respondents having poor educational facilities (79.7%), poor communication network (56.1%), poverty/unemployment (68.4%), poor medical facilities (68.4%) and poor or no electricity supply (66.7%). These results suggest that though dwellers of rural communities faced almost the same developmental challenges, the proportion of their challenges varied by categories.

4.3 Infrastructural needs assessment of rural communities

Respondents were asked the specific areas of infrastructural facilities requiring intervention in their respective communities, table 3 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents by infrastructural facilities. In multiple responses, it was revealed that the highest proportions of the respondents Bayelsa State require interventions in the supply of potable water, health care, educational facilities, agriculture, skill acquisition, business start-up fund other areas of need which included supports for business equipment and housing facilities.

Table 3: Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and special areas most requiring interventions

Socio-demographic variables	Special areas most requiring interventions (Column %)							
	Portable water	Health care	Educational facilities	Agriculture	Skill acquisition	Business start-up fund	Electricity	Other needs
State								
Bayelsa	61.7%	56.5%	51.0%	60.4%	46.9%	54.0%	66.2%	52.8%
Delta	20.8%	21.6%	26.9%	25.3%	23.0%	15.3%	23.1%	32.1%
Rivers	17.4%	21.9%	22.1%	14.3%	30.1%	30.7%	10.6%	15.1%
Gender								
Male	51.0%	61.3%	64.7%	60.4%	62.0%	63.3%	62.0%	67.9%
Female	49.0%	38.7%	35.3%	39.6%	38.0%	36.7%	38.0%	32.1%
Age in group (in years)								
Less than 20	8.7%	10.5%	13.5%	11.0%	13.5%	10.7%	9.7%	9.4%
20 – 29	20.8%	26.7%	23.7%	24.0%	26.1%	31.3%	25.0%	18.9%
30 – 39	32.2%	24.8%	27.9%	17.5%	27.9%	22.7%	30.6%	24.5%
40 – 49	21.5%	21.0%	21.5%	29.2%	19.0%	19.3%	21.3%	26.4%
50 -59	13.4%	8.9%	8.3%	11.0%	8.6%	12.0%	11.1%	13.2%
60 and above	3.4%	8.3%	5.1%	7.1%	4.9%	4.0%	2.3%	7.5%
Marital status								
Single	32.4%	41.1%	39.9%	44.4%	44.6%	43.0%	33.0%	34.0%
Married	63.5%	53.2%	55.9%	49.0%	50.8%	51.0%	63.3%	64.2%
Divorced/separated	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	0.7%	1.4%	1.9%
Widow/widower	2.7%	4.1%	2.6%	5.9%	3.1%	2.3%	2.3%	-
Educational level								
No education	7.4%	9.2%	9.6%	11.7%	8.0%	10.0%	6.9%	7.5%
Primary	20.8%	17.5%	15.7%	18.2%	16.3%	15.3%	23.1%	34.0%

Secondary	49.7%	50.2%	49.4%	48.2%	54.9%	49.3%	47.2%	30.2%
Tertiary	22.1%	23.2%	25.3%	21.4%	20.9%	25.3%	22.7%	28.3%
Religion								
Christianity	96.0%	94.3%	95.5%	93.5%	94.8%	95.3%	94.0%	98.1%
Islam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Traditionalists	4.0%	5.7%	4.5%	6.5%	5.2%	6.0%	1.9%	1.9%
Occupation								
Farmer	30.9%	33.2%	26.1%	36.7%	26.2%	24.0%	28.2%	30.2%
Fishermen	4.7%	6.1%	5.8%	6.0%	4.0%	6.1%	6.1%	1.9%
Trader	23.5%	15.8%	21.0%	21.3%	20.4%	23.0%	23.0%	24.5%
Oil worker	3.4%	2.3%	2.9%	1.3%	1.2%	0.5%	0.5%	-
Labourer	7.4%	10.0%	5.8%	8.0%	8.3%	6.6%	6.6%	3.8%
Artisan	3.4%	4.8%	5.5%	1.3%	6.2%	5.6%	5.6%	13.2%
Civil servants	11.4%	9.4%	9.4%	8.7%	9.0%	10.8%	10.8%	5.7%
Others	15.4%	18.4%	23.5%	16.7%	24.7%	19.2%	19.2%	20.8%
Income level								
Low income	13.5%	17.5%	20.3%	8.3%	14.1%	10.3%	11.1%	-
Medium income	37.8%	40.4%	39.0%	12.5%	32.4%	6.9%	26.7%	55.6%
High income	48.6%	42.1%	40.7%	79.2%	53.5%	82.8%	62.2%	44.4%

In terms of occupation categories, the results revealed that farmers are more likely to require specific areas of interventions in all infrastructural facilities when compared to others. This may not be unsurprising as this study was conducted in rural areas where a large number of people engaged in farming more than other occupational categories. Finally, those of high income seem to desire all areas of intervention compared to those who were of low and average income. These results indicate that although there are many areas of needs require interventions in the rural areas, yet the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents related to the specific areas. Conversely, the summary of the qualitative data gathered from the respondents to provide a piece of more robust information about the needs of rural communities is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Specific areas of interventions in rural communities based on the magnitudes of needs by states

Specific areas of interventions	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers
Portable water	√√√	√√	√
Health care facilities:			
Establishment of new health centres	√√√	√√	√√
Supply of medical personnel	√√√	√√	√√
Supply of drugs	√√√	√√√	√√√
Supply of ambulances	√√√	√√√	√√√
Upgrading of health facilities	√√√	√	√√
Educational facilities:			
Establishment of new primary schools	√	√	√
Establishment of new secondary schools	√√√	√	√
Supply of qualified teacher	√√√	√√√	√√√
Renovation of school buildings	√√√	√√√	√√√
Upgrading of laboratory	√√√	√	√√
Supply of books	√√√	√√√	√√√
Supports for desks	√√√	√√	√√
Upgrading of school library	√√√	√√√	√√√
Supports for school fees	√√√	√√√	√√√
Scholarship to higher institutions	√√√	√√√	√√√
Agriculture:			
Fishing equipment	√√√	√	√
Farming equipment	√√√	√√√	√√√
Improved seedling	√√√	√√√	√√√
Farm inputs (extension services)	√√√	√√√	√√√
Soft loans	√√√	√√√	√√√
Storage facilities	√√√	√√√	√√√
Value-added chain	√√√	√√√	√√√
Marketing of products	√	√	√
Start-up business capital/supports:			

Sales of farm products	√√	√√	√√√
Sales of provisions	√√√	√√√	√√√
Computer business centre	√√	√√	√√√
Transportation business supports	√√√	√√√	√√√
Fish farming business supports	X	√√	√√√
Arable farming business supports	√√√	√√	√
Stationeries business supports	√√	√√	√√
Skill acquisition programmes:			
Training programmes (tailoring, welding, computer, etc.)	√√√	√√√	√√√
Supports for equipment	√√√	√√√	√√√
Supports for adult education	X	X	√
Training on business skills	√√√	√√√	√√√
Electricity supply:			
Need connection to the national grid	√√√	√√	√
Need to improve power supply	√√√	√√√	√√√
Need an alternative power source	√√√	√√√	√√√

NB: √√√ = where the specific area of intervention is highly needed, √√ = where the specific areas of intervention are not highly needed, √ = where specific areas of intervention are less needed, X = where it is not needed.

These are reported based on the degree to which the specific areas of intervention were needed by states, and are ranged from the need for portable water supply, health care facilities, educational facilities, agricultural supports, start-up business capital and skill acquisition programme to an electricity supply. The symbols were shown to indicate whether the specific needs are highly needed (√√√), not highly needed (√√), less needed (√) and not mentioned as needed (X) in their respective communities at the time of the survey.

5. Discussion of Findings

This study focused on the needs assessment for effective development in rural communities of the Niger Delta Region (Nigeria). In line with the findings of the study, a large majority of the respondents were males with those in Rivers State having the highest percentage compared to their female counterparts. This suggests that there were more male respondents than female ones. Despite this, the needs and aspirations of the rural people, there seem to be no variations in the needs and aspirations of rural communities in the region. It was also revealed that the majority of the respondents were within the age brackets of 20 – 39 years. This means that a large number of people in rural communities of the Niger Delta Region were young population compared to those who were above 50 years. This may have implications on their needs. For example, while it is expected that the younger population would desire more of educational facilities, the older population may be more of health needs.

Further findings from the study indicated that about half the respondents both in Bayelsa and Rivers except in Delta State had attained secondary school education. This suggests that educational needs of rural communities in the study areas could be targeted at pursuing more higher educational qualification for the young adults through scholarship and bursaries while the young adolescents of the rural communities are targeted with the provisions of basic school facilities. Findings also revealed that more than half of the respondents in Bayelsa and Delta were married while the majority of those in Rivers State were single. This may also have implications on the social or infrastructural needs of the rural communities in the future.

Moreover, the findings revealed that the majority of the study participants were Christians when compared to other religion. This could also have policy implication on the provision of future spiritual needs of the rural populace. The finding showed that almost all categories of occupations were engaged in all rural communities of the selected states though with variations among those who engaged in farming being greater than other categories of occupation except for those in Rivers State in proportion. This could also mean a lot to the needs and aspirations of the people based on their occupation. On the average income received by the respondents, a large majority of the respondents earned low-income level below USD55 (less than N20000) compared to those who earned above USD55 on monthly basis. This points to the fact that there is a high level of poverty among the rural communities in the states.

Conversely, findings from this study corroborate those of earlier studies in the region, which had

highlighted the majority of the challenges of the rural dwellers were faced with. This study indicated that more than half of those in Rivers State was faced with flooding, poor educational facilities, poverty/unemployment and poor medical facilities; the majority of their counterparts in Delta state had developmental challenges of poor educational facilities, poverty/unemployment, poor medical facilities and poor/electricity supply, while it was observed that majority of the respondents in Bayelsa State were being faced with the challenges of poor educational facilities, poor communication network, poverty/unemployment, poor medical facilities and poor or no electricity supply. This is by implication suggesting that although the rural communities in the three states had similar challenges, the magnitude to which they were affected varied by communities such as education, poverty, among others. These findings affirm Otega, Dani and Badariah (2015), Eneh (2011), and Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011), who identified education, poverty and poor health facilities as major challenges facing communities in the Niger Delta Region.

Because of the peculiarity of oil exploration in most rural communities of the Niger Delta Region (Nigeria), they are more vulnerable to environmental hazards (Enyoghasim et al., 2019), and consequently poor availability of portable water (Owamah, 2020), health hazards (Nnaemeka, 2020), low access to education (Eneh, 2011), among others. Findings from this study, however, revealed that the majority of the respondents in their respective rural communities do not only desire the provisions of potable water suitable for drinking, health facilities for its teeming population but education facilities as well as start-up business capital, among others to cushion the effects of environmental-induced hazards and lack of social amenities in the rural areas of the region.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the needs of the rural communities varied by socio-demographic characteristics, thus, it has no significant variations by the socio-demographic variables. This means that the needs of the rural areas of the selected states are almost similar. This is by implication pointing to the fact that there is a need to adopt the master plan of infrastructural and human development issues of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in the region if only the commission can redirect her developmental approach on community development as earlier suggested by Okolo (2014).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

While most of the developmental projects executed in the study communities tended towards top-down

approach with the exclusion of targeted members of the communities to which the projects were executed, community-driven or bottom-up approach has not been given the utmost attention it required for successful implementation of developmental projects/programmes in some of the communities in the region. Because community members are the end-users of the developmental projects, it is needful that they are involved in the process of developmental projects by concerned agencies of government, NGOs and the oil companies.

Although most communities in the region benefit from the benevolence of the government, NGOs and the oil companies in terms of provision of basic needs, human factors are found to impede their successful and satisfactory implementation. These factors are ranged from hijacks, nepotism, favouritism among other corrupt practices by community leaders. Community leaders in the region must be orientated to cooperate with the communities they are leading to a successful implementation of community development projects.

Given the findings of this research, the following are policy recommendations for defining a successful citizen participation model of development in the Niger Delta region:

- All development partners including; governmental agencies, oil operators, and non-governmental agencies should encourage effective citizens' participation in the initiation of community development projects in the Niger Delta area to sustain the purpose and viability of such projects.
- The above agencies should also carry out feasibility studies to determine the needs assessment of the people before embarking on such projects.
- To prevent the hijack of aids/supports by the leadership of communities in the region, the delivery of aids/supports to individual members across communities by the government, NGOs and oil companies should be done and monitored by neutral/independent bodies who will, in turn, be found responsible to the institutions from which aids/supports are delivered.
- To alleviate the suffering of people in the region, it is needful that basic social amenities such as health care centres, schools, electricity, jetties, communication networks among others are provided in all communities. Where they are available, efforts to equip them with necessary facilities and manpower should be made.

- To cushion the effects of youth unemployment in the region, there should be constant youth empowerment programmes through skill acquisition programmes, scholarships etc.
- Those who are into one business or the other should be taught soft skills such as; investment, management, marketing, etc. and if possible be encouraged to expand their business through soft loans. This will enable them to employ others.

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