

## THE ROLE OF SPORTS MANAGERS IN ERADICATING YOUTH RESTIVENESS AMONG NIGER DELTA YOUTHS

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### **Abstract**

*This paper looked into the role of sports managers in eradicating youth restiveness among Niger Delta youth. Youth restiveness in Niger Delta area came a long time ago as a result of non-implementation of federal government policies regarding oil producing area. There was total neglect of oil producing areas, and as a result, pollution, poverty, unemployment and mass suffering of people became the order of the day. As a result of this, Niger Delta youths picked up all necessary weapons to agitate for their rights. The dimension of Niger Delta youths is all about the various bodies that constitutes the Niger Delta youths, ranging from the movement for the emancipation of Niger Delta to Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). Some were fighting for the rights of the people, while some fought for their own selfish interest. The causes of youth restiveness were listed as comprising lack of job opportunity, unemployment, land, air and water pollution and lack of good governance amongst others. Consequences of youth restiveness were; pipeline vandalization, loss of revenue, closure and relocation of oil companies, kidnapping and arson. The sports manager is professionally trained personnel who have acquired a graduate degree in sports management, and he is skilled in all sports related responsibilities. The sports manager's responsibilities greatly play very important roles in eradicating youth restiveness among Niger Delta youths, and some include; job creation, creation of recreation parks, scouting of talents, sports marketing and organizing of sports fiesta. These important roles will greatly engage Niger Delta youths, and prevent them from clustering and fermenting troubles, even if aggrieved and also expose them to civil manners.*

Over the years since in the late 1950's, the federal government had been exploring the Niger Delta region in search of crude oil, which is now the main stay of the nation's economy. According to analysts, the Niger Delta crisis began with the discovery of oil

in Oloibiri in 1956, and the region has suffered from environmental degradation and untold neglect by the government and the oil multinational companies (Jumbo, 2016).

Logically, the Niger Delta is supposed to be a model region in Nigeria in terms of socio-economic development, industry, youth empowerment, and employment. Ironically, the region is one of the most neglected areas in Nigeria. Oil and gas pollution and years of abandonment of the people have resulted in untold economic hardship and health hazards (Jumbo, 2016). These years of neglects, pollution and economic hardship brought about youth restiveness. Youth and restiveness are two words that have gained notoriety in the Nigerian context, especially in the Niger Delta region. With its oil resources which account for about 70 percent of the nation's revenue, the Niger Delta Region has become more or less the soul of Nigerian economy (Tide, 2006).

Niger – Delta crises of youth restiveness and repression started when exploration of the people's rights were breached. A lot of statutory laws by the federal government gave the oil exploration companies the backing to operate and be accountable only to her. The Federal government collects all rates and royalties without any recourse to the area where the huge amounts of money are sourced (www.uniprojectmaterials.com). The principle of derivation as part of statutory allocation policy politically became a source of litigation against the Niger-Deltans of Nigeria, interest and ideological articulation (the Kalama Declaration of 1998) of the people of Niger Delta gave birth to joint task force co-named "Operation Restore Hope" therefore the Niger Deltans comparing

their human and environmental destructions against the edifice in Abuja and other non-oil producing states of Nigeria (www.uniprojectmaterials.com).

The dissatisfaction of the people of Niger Delta especially the youths on the level of attention given to the development of their region and the damages to their ecology by oil spillage are the major causes of the alarming youth restiveness (Chukwuemeka and Aghara, 2010). Youth restiveness is coined from aggressiveness youths developed as a result of external or internal aggression on their beliefs and standard of living by government and non-governmental agencies.

Youths are vibrant and are naturally endowment, and they are always bubbling in spirit with high hopes, big dreams, aspiration and ideas of what their future will be. To achieve this therefore, they must not naturally be still or remain quiet, especially when their anticipation or future is heading towards the unexpected. So they have to fight for their rights (Tide, 2006). It has been observed that since there had been mass unemployment, some Niger Delta youths have been idle and others have engaged themselves in meaningful engagement, while the majority became nuisance by forming occultic groups. Those youths in different group movement associations became antagonistic to oppressive tendencies against government neglect over the years due to oil exploration.

It is believed that in order to stem the tide against youth restiveness, there is the urgent need to look at those meaningful areas that can engage the

youths, so as to provide them with useful engagement and job opportunities. Providing the Niger Delta youths with direct or indirect jobs will provide a peaceful atmosphere that will be devoid of destruction of oil installations, pipelines vandalization and kidnappings; amongst other social vices. Therefore, it is the intention of this paper to eradicate youth restiveness through sports managers programmes. They intend to do this through internalizing useful and ideas into meaningful sports and physical activities for the teeming youths to participate in. Participating either passively or actively, will provide useful time and opportunity for spending their leisure time engagingly which would have been used in fermenting trouble and engaging in unproductive ventures.

#### **Dimensions of Niger Delta Youth Groups**

Various types of youth groups were formed by Niger Delta youths. Some emerged as militant groups while others as pressure groups. According to Jumbo (2016), the following youth groups emerged from Niger Delta youths;

- Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND)
- Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF)
- The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)
- The Okoloma Ikpangi
- The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

- The Egbesu Boys
- The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)

#### **Historical Perspective of Niger Delta Youth Groups**

According to the Tide (2009), the restive youths fell into four categories: The first is the group that is geared towards genuine agitation for the rights and restoration of the dignity to the Niger Delta. This group was the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by late Ken-Saro-Wiwo. The late social critic and other eight Ogoni sons were executed by the Late Sani Abacha. Also within this group is the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND).

The second group is made up of youths who engage in self-seeking and criminal activities such as oil-bunkering, armed robbery and other heinous crimes. They are also being used as political thugs by politicians from this region to intimidate political opponents and to rig elections. The third group comprises of youths who engage in supremacy contest among one another, in a bid to gain government's recognition and attention. The supremacy contest between the group led by Asari Dokubo and another by Ateke Tom for some years now is a clear example. Their activities in the Niger Delta have claimed many lives, as well as forestalling economic activities in the Niger Delta. The last group is made up of youths who are on revenge mission for being used and dumped by politicians after getting to power.

### **Causes of Youth Restiveness among Niger Delta Youth**

Years of oil exploration and pollution have totally destroyed the environment and can hardly sustain the means of livelihood of the people of the area whose main source of subsistence is farming and fishing. The Niger Delta has given all to the nation without any corresponding recompense in return. There is total death of basic infrastructure and social amenities. The people's sources of drinking water are polluted by constant oil spillages, their farm lands have been destroyed and rendered unfit for agricultural purposes. Even the air they breathe is unsafe due to gas flaring and emission of carbon monoxide and other noxious emissions that are daily released into the air due to oil and gas exploration activities (Emaduku, 2016).

Lack of job opportunities and unemployment at federal, state, local government, and even private offices and underdevelopment heightened the situation. The Niger Delta also has the highest rate of unemployment, when the unemployment level of the region is put at 9.5 percent no other region except the South-East has a figure that is as high as 6.6 percent (Emaduku, 2016). Despite decades of protestation and even appeals to the federal, state governments, oil corporations, and the international community, the core issues of the region remained largely unattended to.

Youth restiveness may be caused by a number of factors. Chukwuemeka, (2008) observed that composite unemployment in Nigeria increased from

3.8% in 2006 to 4.2% in the first half of 2011. He further stated that structural unemployment results in talents not being used where they are available, hence, idle mind is definitely the devil's workshop. Unequal socio-economic development of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria led to inter ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts. Chukwuemeka, Anazodo and Nzewi (2011) found that dissatisfaction of the people of South-South especially the youths on the level of attention given to development of their region and the damage to their ecology by oil spillage are the major causes of alarming rate of youth restiveness.

According to Ofem & Ajayi (2008) and Stella (2010), the following factors cause youth restiveness amongst Niger Delta youths:

- Peer motivated excitement
- The jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas
- Perceived victimization arising from exploitation
- Lack of humanitarian and social welfare
- Lack of good governance
- Corrupt practices of governing officials
- Inadequate training programmes
- Lack of quality education.

### **Consequences of Niger Delta Youth Restiveness**

**Pipeline Vandalization:** In respect of pipeline vandialization, the Niger Delta has a hotbed of crises. This is because the youth commonly resort to cutting of flow

lines and destruction of oil facilities belonging to oil companies or the NNPC. In 1998, for instance, agitated youth vandalized NNPC's pipelines at Jesse in Ethiope Local Government Area of Delta State in Nigeria. Later, about 1,000 people were there to siphon petroleum products from the man-ruptured pipeline and they were killed in the inferno (Okecha, 2011). Since then, so many lives have been lost due to pipeline vandalization.

**Loss of Revenue:** Since the main source of revenue in Nigeria is through crude oil exploration, excessive pipeline vandalization by aggrieved youths have brought about losses in the federal government financial source. Also private oil explorers were affected by this trend, since most of their pipelines were destroyed which need huge sums of money to repair.

**Closure of Private Oil Firms:** The agitated youths more often than not direct their violent protests at oil conglomerates because the latter are perceived not just as the direct culprits in their plight, but also as the most proximate government agents. Such protests took the form of blockages of and sabotage to oil installations (Okecha, 2011). The Niger Delta youth eventually went beyond the sabotage of oil installations to an attack of the personnel of oil companies.

**Kidnapping of Personnel Working in Oil Companies:** In 1997, a gang of armed youths attacked and closed down six flow stations in Delta State, taking 127

personnel hostage and shutting in 10,000 bpd of oil. According to Anderson (1996), it took 6 days of negotiation to get the hostages released. Subsequently, 15 contract staff on board a supply convoy were kidnapped and detained for more than 3 weeks. Between 1990 and 1999, at least 24 groups of different youth agitators were formed that intensified struggles, often with violent outcomes, against the companies and federal (state) agents and agencies such as the police and armed forces (Jega, 2007).

### **Who is a Sport Manager?**

A sport manager is a professionally trained personnel who have acquired a graduate degree in sports management. The sports manager are also referred to as general managers who handle business matters for sports teams and athletic in a variety of sports at the college or professional level. A professional sports agent handles the businesses and legal deals for professional athletics negotiates contracts and helps athletes manage their money (<http://www,1.cfnc.org>.)

The sports manager also serves as a sports agent is a legal representative hence agent for professional sports figures like athletes and coaches, and negotiates employment and endorsement contracts for the athlete or coach whom they represent. Because of the unique characteristics of the industry sports agents are responsible for communications with team owners, managers and other individuals. Primarily, agents are used to broker and negotiate contracts for their

clients. Also, they are responsible for making recommendations in regard to athlete's options (Job Profile.org. Achived,2010). Sports managers are part of large companies, and some are on their own.

#### **Job Description of a Sports Manager**

Sports managers are responsible for handling the business matters, such as contracts and trade deals, for sports teams and athletes. Sports manager lead diverse and active lives and perform valuable jobs, from the youth sports levels to professional athletes. The job description of a sports manager can be simple or complicated, depending on where schools are located, your school or sports organization size and your own goals. Understanding the basic duties of a sports manager may help one decide whether this field is one that one will like to enter (Stern, 2017).

According to Stern (2017), the following are the job descriptions of a sports manager:

**Marketing:** A sports manager spends a lot of time marketing and promoting a single athlete or an entire team. He works with individual team players or solitary athletes to ensure that players receive the best training, motivation, and competition or career opportunities. The job of sports manager will require you to spend a lot of time at the desk, arranging and coordinating the activities, events or appearances of athletes while they are competing or travelling from one venue to another.

**Communication:** Knowledge of trends in the sports or activity, and the aptitude to deal with differing attitudes, personalities and goals of team management and players, are also important and players, are also important for the sports managers, who makes sure that his player has ample opportunity to work with coach or trainers to prepare for events or competitions. This sports manager may act as a liaison when it comes to misunderstandings or disputes between player and managers or players and organizations;

**Training:** Sports managers are responsible for maintaining adequate training schedules for athletes that they represent. Sports managers must have access to facilities and equipment for both local and distant competitions and help maintain and ensure professional standards and patterns expected behavior from athletes at home and away games or event. Sports managers are also responsible for hiring and training of team support personnel including coaches, trainers and other support personnel such as medical professionals, therapists or training specialists;

**Budgeting:** Sports managers make deals with owners and players while keeping budget constraints in mind. They are also responsible for determining the salary or salaries of your athletes, and make arrangements for travelling costs and budgeting for player injuries and;

**Team Building:** The sports manager is partially or completely responsible for recruiting and signing on new players or

athlete into teams, doing their best to create deals that make not only the player or athlete happy, but management or organizational leadership as well. He also work in conjunction with team coaches and athletic scouts to recruit the most talented players or athletes that they can. Kunz (2017) listed the following as job description of a sports manager:

- Training of athletes
- Salary negotiator
- Sports team manager
- Sports markets
- Sports promotion and athletic director

#### **Responsibilities of the Sports Managers in Eradicating Youth Restiveness**

- **Job creation:** The sports manager offer jobs to youths through direct and indirect sports participation and recreational activities. Active participation through the grassroots sports level of our teeming youths in athletics, soccer and a host of other sports will actively engage the Niger Delta youths, and give them knowledge about the various sports talent that they possess (Okon, 2013). Active participation in grassroots sports will enable government harness the useful talent among our teeming youths, and sponsor them towards achieving their utmost goals in their sporting careers and employing them.
- **Creation of Recreation Parks:** Creating of recreation parks will enable youths to be engaged in recreational activities as well as being employed to carry out essential services within the

recreational park. Some youths can serve as attendants, food vendors and as groundsman and earn a living doing so.

- **Scouting of Talents:** The sports managers assist government and sports councils to scout for talented boys and girls as well as youths from the nooks and crannies of Niger Delta area including the creeks. They do this by attending inter-house sports competitions, and mini-sports festivals and football fields in secondary schools (Okuns, 2013).

- **Making Youths to be Self Employed:** Sports manager can make youths to be self employed by engaging them in fitness training, which they can be employed by fitness houses and be self employed. Egun, 2016 explained the usefulness of youths indulgence in handwork ventures and suggested that physical fitness activities will do them a lot of favour instead of hanging around streets corners waiting for government to provide all their needs. According to Ashim (2015), more people are getting involved in fitness activities and this have produce job opportunities for fitness specialists among Niger Delta youths.

- **Organizing of Sport Fiesta:** The organizing of sports fiesta or festival at local, state and national levels by local, state and national government in conjunction with the sports managers will expose redundant youths to active or passive participation in sporting activity. This will give youths an ample opportunity to actively engaged themselves in useful venture, and will drastically reduce evil vices among them (Ashim, 2005).

- **Sports Marketing of Athletes:** Sports managers who are coaches training athletes and assist in marketing to private clubs within and outside the country. Although, as managers to athlete they can still market coaches also to any interested clubs.
- **Organising of Sports Academy:** The sports manager liaises with corporate bodies or rich sports men and women to build schools known as sports academy (to train talented athletes).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The menace occasioned by Niger Delta youth restiveness in this country is not pleasant to note in every quarters. Youth restiveness among Niger Delta youths has been a prominent issue in recent times. The original battle was for recognition of the areas which produce the crude oil and alleviating their sufferings, poverty and plight. As time progresses, other sets of youth groups identifying themselves as militants and enraged youths started acts of violence and lawlessness. They also indulged in hostage taking and destruction of pipelines and oil installations.

Niger Delta youth anger hinged on, lack of employment, pollution of their environment; lack of good governance and perceived victimization arising from exploitation. An overview of both the causes of youth restiveness and its attending consequences elicited the concern of the sports managers in seeking to play active role in eradicating youth restiveness among Niger Delta youths. In other to achieve this laudable objectives,

the following roles were played by sports managers; job creation, creation of recreation parks, scouting of talents athletes, organizing sports fiestas and sport marketing of athletes and coaches among others. These roles of sports managers will give Niger Delta youths ample opportunity to make use of their time in useful engagement, rather than being lazy and redundant. They will become useful to themselves, their immediate society and the nation at large.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations for this paper are as follows:

1. Grassroots sports participation should be introduced and encouraged by government through sports managers to primary and secondary schools.
2. Niger Delta youths should be encouraged to harness their talents by looking inward to their athletic careers.
3. Regular sports meets at local and state levels should be organized every two years so as to fish out talented athletes.
4. Regular allowance should be given to talented youths in sports to avert military and laziness.
5. The sports managers should liaise with foreign sports clubs to recruit exceptionally talented athletes.
6. Scholarship and admission on foreign land should be sought for in other for bright Niger Delta talented athletes to further their education.
7. Opening of sports academy with the help of the government of the day, non-governmental agencies as well as established sportsmen and women should



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be encouraged to train talented athletes in both sports and academic purposes.

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