

Women, Inclusiveness and Participatory Governance in Nigeria's Niger Delta: A Focus on Shell's Model of Community Development in the Region

Christopher Isike

*University of Zululand, Politics and International Studies Department,
Faculty of Arts, KwaDlangezwa 3886, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
E-mail: IsikeC@unizulu.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT This paper analyzed the influence of adaptive collaborative governance on women's inclusion and participation in governance in the Niger Delta of Nigeria with focus on Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC's) community development model; the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU). It used the *inclusiveness*, *governance* and *transparency* scores in Shell's internal evaluation (SCOTDI) of 19 active GMOU clusters in the Niger Delta as indices to measure the performances of 10 selected clusters viz-a-viz their inclusion of women in their governance structures and processes. The 10 supervisory NGOs of these clusters were also interviewed in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The data generated from the SCOTDI evaluation and FGD was qualitatively analyzed in line with the objectives of the paper and the findings presented and discussed accordingly. A key finding showed governance improved with women's inclusion in decision-making. Although challenges around the quality of women's representation persist, the paper concludes that the GMOU has potential for mediating the governance and development challenges the Niger Delta faces.

INTRODUCTION

In the last 20 years since the 1995 Beijing conference, the question of women's representation in public affairs has increasingly gained currency, and has produced useful gains for women's political representation globally. In Africa, one sees the emergence of the first female presidents in Liberia and Malawi, as well as unprecedented increases in women's representation in national and provincial or state parliaments. Rwanda (63%) tops the global chart with Seychelles (44%) and South Africa (42%) occupying 4th and 7th respectively (see Ighobor, 2015). Other African countries such as Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe have all achieved proportions of women's representation in parliament above the thirty percent stipulated by UN Resolution 1325 of 2000. This has put these states ahead of more established Western democracies such as the United Kingdom (22%) and the United States (16.8%).

Nigeria fares poorly in this regard compared to other African countries (see Graphic Online 2016). The level of women's political representation in the geopolitical regions in the country reflects the national statistics. The Niger Delta region, perhaps the only region in Nigeria where

there are more women than men¹ is no different in spite of women's numerical domination. Indeed, women and men in the Niger Delta region have different and disproportionate experiences of the development crisis perpetuated by poor governance, oil-related environmental despoliation and violent conflicts which continue to plague the region (Gabriel 2004; Koripamo-Agary and Agary 2005; Ikelegbe and Ikelegbe 2006; Isike 2013; Ukuagwu 2016; Morrissey 2016). For example, women dominate its agricultural sectors of farming, fishing, rubber tapping and the gathering of seafood, which are directly dependent on the environment, and have been negatively affected by the environmental changes emanating from oil exploration activities (CASS 2005; ERA Report 2011; Ukuagwu 2016). This has negative consequences not only for women's livelihoods, but also for the survival and development of their communities. As mentioned before, although women constitute approximately half of the region's population and in spite of the informal contributions they often make towards peace and reconstruction, they are conveniently excluded from the public decision-making processes of their communities and the region as a whole (Isike and Okeke-Uzodike 2010; Isike 2013; Ukuagwu 2016). These show the "failure of masculinized politics, which has continu-

ally been recycled, not only in the region, but across Nigeria since the inception of its post-independence era” (Isike and Isike 2016: 175).

Objective(s) of Study

This paper therefore seeks to analyze the quality of women’s participation and representation in community governance structures in the Niger Delta. It uses the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC’s) community development model; the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) as a reference point. To meet its objective, the paper analyzes the results of SPDC’s internal evaluation of the performances of the 19 GMoU clusters in the Niger Delta¹ within a governance framework. This evaluation known as the SPDC Community Transformation and Development Index (SCOTDI) was developed as a sustainability assurance and evaluation framework for an objective assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of GMoUs over a 5 years period from 2009 to 2013 (CTDA Final Report 2013).

METHODOLOGY

In terms of a research design, the objectives and research questions of the paper required methodological flexibility to produce a nuanced understanding of the phenomena studied. In this light, a qualitative research approach was adopted to answer the key research questions outlined bearing in mind its descriptive and exploratory nature. Qualitative research is most appropriate if the purpose of the study, as is the case here, is to ‘describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event, and if analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it’ (Kumar 1999: 10). This paper is also exploratory as it provides novel insights and information on the research area (Babbie and Mouton 2006: 80). For example, it explored the intersection between the 5 top performing and 5 least performing clusters out of the 19 with a view to understanding how they impact on women’s substantive representation in governance structures.

Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Five Shell staff members (selected because of their involvement with GMoU implementation) were interviewed, and 10 representatives of the

NGOs that mentored the 10 clusters took part in the FGD. The NGOs include Lite-Africa, SHER-DA, Accord for Development, Pro Natura International (Nigeria), Youth Advancement Initiatives and Reneva International. The 10 clusters selected for this study were from the 19 that participated in Shell’s internal evaluation of the GMoU model. They include Nembe, Ikwere, Andoni, Etche I, Iduwuni, Abuo/Odual, Emohua, Degema I, RA and Bassan clusters. The broad theme of the interview schedule was the utility of GMoU as a tool of inclusive and collaborative governance. Questions asked revolved around the working of the GMoU, challenges encountered in implementing GMoU, challenges of women’s participation and opinions on how to enhance women’s participation in GMoU. For the FGD, the broad theme was the *quality* of women’s representation in GMoU structures and clusters. Questions asked include, do women have the required knowledge and skills to participate in the GMoU structures? What particular challenges militate against their substantive representation in GMoU structures in the selected study areas and what suggestions can be offered for engaging women more effectively in governance structures in the region? Both interviewees and FGD participants were asked to give insights into the factors that account for the performances of the different clusters in the SCOTDI evaluations. The interviews took place between 3rd and 8th May 2015 after work hours at the homes of the staff members selected while the FGD took place on June 17th 2015 in a community town hall in the RA cluster area. All data collected was analyzed using the content analysis technique in line with the main objective and themes mentioned above.

Analytical Framework

Adaptive Collaborative Governance

This is an approach to governance, which argues that quality participation, active adaptive learning and collaboration are pivotal to natural resource management and national development. According to Ojha et al. (2013: 5), “More and more policy actors now agree that without involving the poor living in and around natural resource systems, neither poverty reduction nor environmental sustainability can be achieved”. In a study by McDougall et al. (2013:

571), which profiles women as part of the poorest and most vulnerable segment of resource rich communities, adaptive collaborative governance is conceptualized as an approach in which groups of actors consciously and explicitly base decision-making on social learning and critical reflection, emphasize inclusion and equity in governance, and strive for balanced and strategic relations with other actors or groups, including seeking to effectively manage conflict. According to them, inclusion and equity relates explicitly to the notion of engagement in governance, which was the main focus of their study given its critical role in influencing people's well-being. McDougall et al. (2013: 571) thus defined engagement in governance as "people: (1) making efforts to express their views and exercise their rights, including challenging dominant power, (2) taking leadership roles, and (3) having their "voice" effectively integrated into group understanding and decisions". This conceptualization indeed acknowledges communities as being internally diverse rather than homogeneous units. This sets the stage for the different units within communities to contend or compete over values and resources, thus making engagement with one another inevitable (see Roling 2002; McDougall et al. 2013; Ravnborg et al. 2016). However, the quality of engagement is what escalates competition into violent conflict with attendant undesirable effects. What type of engagement then is most appropriate to achieving desirable results?

McDougall et al. (2013) gave their view of engagement which they refer to as the "higher rungs of the ladder of participation", similar to Agarwal's (2001) "active and interactive participation," as opposed to "passive or manipulative participation" (McDougall et al. 2013: 571). They also used Motsi's (2009) distinction between "consultation" and "engagement," with the former constituted as dialogue and the latter as (often facilitated) dialogue "with more emphasis on...making a decision and working in partnership"² According to McDougall et al. (2013: 571), power, expressed as multidimensional manifestations of control is central to these distinctions. Power in this context is viewed as relational, dynamic, contextual, and underpinned by resources and economics thus making all resource management processes inherently political.

Therefore a collaborative kind of engagement between all groups or stakeholders in a commu-

nity is critical to realizing the common good and the development of such a community. This is because it reduces the incidence of violent conflicts arising from discontent, provides opportunities for stakeholders to bring out their best and thus contributes to better quality outcomes. For McDougall et al. (2013), the intrinsic value of engagement is illuminated in Sen's (1999) understanding of social choice as contributing to the idea of "development as freedom". They also refer to Hickey and Mohan's (2005: 238) idea of participation as the extent to which it generates "transformations to existing social, political, and economic structures and relations in ways that empower the previously excluded or exploited" (McDougall et al. 2013: 572). However, this does not mean that participation is a magic wand for good governance and development in practice as participation of previously marginalized groups can be bland. For example, according to Osmani (2008), "although there are some spectacularly successful examples of participatory governance in some parts of the world, they are far outnumbered by cases of failed and spurious participation" (Osmani 2008: 28). Impliedly, engagement in governance should be meaningful, transformative and emancipatory. This view of engagement is purposeful for facilitating equity regarding processes and distribution. Equity here refers to a subjective quality of "fairness" as opposed to equality, which refers to a quality of "sameness" (see McDougall et al. 2013: 572). Thus they argue that equity is significant to natural resource governance and development in pragmatic terms (McDougall et al. 2013). Similarly, inequitable access to resources has clear implications for poverty and wellbeing, which in turn have been linked to some forms of environmental degradation. In practice however, "the adaptive collaborative approach varies from context to context, but follows overall patterns of inclusive, bottom-up decision-making based on shared critical reflection, including visioning and ongoing joint monitoring of process and outcomes" (McDougall et al. 2013: 571). In the case of the Niger Delta, SPDC's GMoU model of community development is a very good example of adaptive collaborative governance, which seeks to include all segments of communities in governance and development processes that shape people's wellbeing, community peace and overall development. In the context of this paper, the GMoU is an apt governance and development

model that allows women to express and exercise their rights through engagement in governance structures such as the Cluster Development Board (CDB) and Community Trust (CT). It enables them to take on leadership roles and to have their voices integrated into the community as defined by McDougall et al. (2013). It also entails active and interactive participation where engagement is a facilitated dialogue (between men and women, old and young, physically challenged and other vulnerable groups) with the emphasis on making a decision and working in partnership for the overall community good.

Three-gap Analysis of Effective Participation

The three-gap analysis of effective participation is an analytical lens which can be used to identify and explain areas of challenges that impact on the quality of group participation (Osmani 2008). It gives broader insights into the barriers to and strategies for enabling quality participatory engagement of stakeholders and can help draw connections between an adaptive collaborative approach and a wider discourse on women's participation in natural resource governance and development (see McDougall et al. 2013). According to Osmani (2008), the three gaps are capacity gap, incentive gap and power gap. The capacity gap refers to shortages of both general skills (such as communicating effectively in a diverse group) and specific skills or knowledge. The incentive gap refers to there being "costs" (broadly defined) to participation, including opportunity costs of time and effort, and social risks of retribution. "Most people would not be keen to participate actively unless they perceive the potential gains to be large enough to outweigh the costs" (Osmani 2008: 29). The power gap reflects the power imbalances that exist between different social strata in society such as women and men, poor and wealthy, young and old, minority and majority groups. It emerges from "systematic asymmetries of power that [are] inherent in unequal societies" (Osmani 2008: 30). The three-gap analysis is deployed as a framework of analysis in this paper to identify the barriers that compromise the quality of women's participation in community development initiatives such as Shell's GMoU. This is intended to also give some insights into the challenges that continue to con-

strain women's participation in governance structures in the Niger Delta.

Overview of Shell's Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) in the Niger Delta

SPDC has a long history of engaging and negotiating Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with communities in the Niger Delta region, dating back to the 1980s. For example, between 1980 and 2005, the company signed MoUs with over 1000 individual communities across the region including numerous bilateral agreements. Unfortunately, in spite of the visible, capital-intensive infrastructure projects (such as roads, health centers, schools) and other short-term development activities which came out of these MoUs, most communities remained resistent and at loggerheads with SPDC (see Onishi 2002). On the company side, managing the MoUs was resource and time intensive, especially with the projects being implemented through SPDC's internal structures and processes. For example, it proved difficult to administer the delivery of so many projects at the same time and the outcome was a proliferation of uncoordinated and often uncompleted projects in the region. The situation was further exacerbated by increasing violence in the Niger Delta³, and by the uncoordinated implementation of various government development intervention programs in the region. However, at the core of the low success rates of SPDC's engagement with communities through MoUs was the fact that the company relegated communities to playing a passive role in their own development. This background set the stage for the need to correct this through the GMoU model, which was adapted by Shell in 2005 and deployed in 2006. The GMoU is a 5-year agreement with clusters of communities that gives them access to funds and technical assistance for the implementation of development programs. Agreements are backed up by a governance system that allows for transparency, inclusion and stakeholder participation.

How the GMoU Works

As mentioned before, a GMoU is an agreement between SPDC and a group of several communities referred to as clusters. Clusters are based on local government or clan or historical

affinity lines as advised by the relevant state government. The GMoU model is community-driven and its success depends on the ability of community institutions to clearly articulate, plan and deliver sustainable development interventions that would positively impact the livelihoods of people living in SPDC's operational area. The Community Trust (CT) and the Cluster Development Board (CDB) are the two community institutions that have primary responsibility for the implementation of the GMoU. Governing structures also include a Steering Committee chaired by the State Government. The CT and CDB, while having separate roles and responsibilities at the community and cluster levels, have areas of overlap such as CDB committee structures working directly with community stakeholders (chiefs, women and youth groups) who operate in committee offices at CT levels.

Under the terms of the GMoU, SPDC provides each CDB with secure funding for 5 years, ensuring that the communities have stable and reliable finances as they undertake their work. SPDC provides each CDB access to development experts to help build local capacity and to help mentor them in the delivery of social investment projects. Each CDB with support from their partner NGOs engages with members of each community in the cluster to identify their development needs, decide on how monies should be spent and contribute to the implementation of these projects to meet their identified needs. Under the GMoU, the communities through their CDBs drive the GMoU process in a transparent and accountable manner that builds trust between the community people, their representatives, the local and state government and SPDC.

Shell's Evaluation of GMoUs Using the SCOTDI Assessment as Framework

Since inception, the GMoU model has recorded significant success stories. Many of the clusters have implemented and commissioned various community development projects, which contribute to the sustainability of their clusters and communities. For example, in 2012, a total of 723 projects were successfully completed through GMoUs. However, there was a lack of a suitable, credible and generally accepted framework, which could be used to uniformly evaluate, assess and rank the performance of all the GMoU clusters. Against this background, the SPDC Community Transformation and Development Index (SCOT-

DI), was developed as a sustainability assurance and evaluation framework for an objective assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of GMoUs. The SCOTDI is a composite index for weighing, scoring and ranking the performance of GMoU clusters based on 5 key criteria including transparency and accountability, inclusiveness and participation, governance and democracy, and business climate and sustainability. According to the SCOTDI Report (2013: 3), these criteria are defined as follows.

Transparency and Accountability

This refers to openness to public scrutiny, available, accessible and disclosed information on processes, activities and transactions, as well as periodic stewardship feedback. It implies the extent to which GMoU processes especially the institution is open to scrutiny and/or provides information on its activities to its stakeholders.

Inclusiveness and Participation

This relates to the creation of equal opportunities for the entire community to get involved in the development process, and addresses marginalization and the exclusion of vulnerable groups from benefits. It also implies the extent to which the GMoU process accommodates the interest of diverse groups in the community. The process must provide participation space for women, youths and other traditionally marginalized groups.

Governance and Democracy

This refers to the manner in which power is exercised in the management of economic and social resources, and adherence to laid down procedures (tenure and succession, financial management). It relates to the process of making or taking decisions on the allocation of resources available to the institution.

Business Climate

This relates to the enabling environment for Shell Exploration and Production Companies in Nigeria (SEPCiN), and active alignment to SEPCiN strategic priorities (that is, crude theft, sabotage spills, active advocacy for SEPCiN, alternative dispute resolution and grievance management). It also includes performance of an institu-

tion in terms of the value and benefits of its outputs or outcomes and this entails the level of satisfaction with institutional outputs or projects usually measured in terms of the quality of human, social and infrastructural investments.

Progress towards Sustainability

This refers to the deployment of innovation in project execution, capacity to implement quality projects, alignment of projects to felt needs, and diversity and growth in funding. It also means that the different types of projects implemented are of good quality and reflect the needs of communities in the cluster.

From the results of the SCOTDI assessment, and using 2 of the 5 criteria (inclusiveness and governance), two categories were outlined for the 5 top performing clusters and the 5 worst performing clusters. The 5 top performing clusters were Nembe (Bayelsa), Ikwerre (Rivers), Andoni (Rivers), Etche I (Rivers) and Iduwuni (Bayelsa). In the 5 worst performing clusters were Residential Area (Rivers), Degema I (Rivers), Bassan (Bayelsa), Emohua (Rivers) and Abua/Odual (Rivers). The findings from an analysis of the performance of these 10 clusters are presented in the next section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The top performing clusters had to score 30 points and above to rank as top performers. All the top performers had high scores in both criteria. In terms of inclusiveness of women for example, they all had twenty percent or more of women in CT structures. Only Nembe and Iduwuni had thirty percent of women in their CDB. When their marks in the inclusiveness and governance criteria were further compared with the transparency criterion, all top 5 clusters also scored very high as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Top 5 performing clusters and scores

Clusters	States	Inclusiveness	Governance	SCOTDI Ranking
Nembe	Bayelsa	39	40	1
Andoni	Rivers	36	38	5
Ikwerre	Rivers	32	39	2
Etche I	Rivers	31	39	6
Iduwuni	Bayelsa	30	40	7

Source: Compiled by author

Twenty-five (25) was the cut off point for the worst performers and they all had low scores in both criteria except Degema, RA and Bassan West, which had 27, 38 and 30 respectively in the governance criterion as shown in Table 2. There was no women representation in the CDBs except Abua/Odual, which had ten percent but all 5 had twenty percent women representation in the CTs. However, when compared with the transparency criterion, only 2 (Emohua, 19 and Abua/Odual, 19) scored correspondingly low points. Degema I (37), RA (31) and Bassan West (30) all scored high in transparency.

Table 2: Worst 5 performing clusters

Clusters	States	Inclusiveness	Governance	SCOTDI Ranking
RA	Rivers	24	38	08
Degema I	Rivers	21	27	14
Bassan West	Bayelsa	20	30	16
Emohua	Rivers	15	18	17
Abua/Odual	Rivers	13	14	18

Source: Compiled by author

The positive association between the inclusiveness, governance and transparency scores in all 5 top performing clusters is not surprising as participation by all segments of society improves the quality of governance including in the areas of transparency and accountability. However, it is interesting that Degema I, RA and Bassan West also recorded high scores in transparency even though they were not inclusive in their governance. While this is not unrelated to the high scores which they also had in governance, it is apt to ask how transparent and accountable can these clusters' CTs and CDBs be in the governance and democratic area, if they are not fully representative of their populations? This begs for some answers as, apart from excluding women, other vulnerable segments of their populations were also not represented in their CTs. Also, there is a need to explain why even though all the 10 clusters had twenty percent of women in their CTs (except Abua/Odual had 10%) and only Nembe and Iduwuni had thirty percent (Abua/Odual had 10%) women in their CDBs, Etche I, Ikwerre and Andoni with no women in their CDBs scored higher than RA, Degema I and Bassan West in inclusiveness and governance. On further probing, a number of intervening variables surfaced.

First, different clusters had different levels of patriarchy. For example, compared to Dege-ma, Etche I, Ikwerre and Andoni were more tolerant of women and their rights so even though they did not have women in their CDBs as Nembe for example had, they accommodated the diverse interests of their communities including those of women in decision-making. This also explains why they scored higher than Iduwuni in inclusiveness and the overall SCOTDI ranking (see Table 1), even though Iduwuni had thirty percent of women in their CDB. Second, given the nature of clustering which put communities that had historical conflicts together to form clusters, there were initial start-up frictions which affected their overall performance and in particular criteria of the assessments. For example, Abua/Odual and RA had to deal with matters arising and with fence-mending from protracted conflicts between different communities in their clusters, and this led to a late GMoU start-off in both clusters. This was itself a third intervening variable on their performances in the SCOTDI assessments.

Other findings in line with the broad research questions posed were on the quality of women's representation in the GMoU structures within which particular challenges were highlighted in the context of the three-gap-analysis framework discussed earlier.

Quality of Women's Representation

Generally, women were added as tokens and in spite of mainstreaming them into governance structures in critical mass numbers across all the clusters, the quality of their output was generally low. For example, apart from Nembe and Andoni, which came 1st and 2nd respectively, women in the governing structures did not have the requisite knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully (Focus Group Discussions June 2015). This was also confirmed in interviews with 3 SPDC staff members who had responsibility for supervising GMoU clusters in the region. However, women participated actively in Community Forums (CFs) and it appears their very high numbers and the unstructured nature of CFs meetings gave them a boost to participate actively and to challenge the dominant power of men in these meetings. Some of the challenges, which came out from applying the three-gap analysis framework, included the following.

Patriarchy and Power Gap

In all the clusters, the power imbalance between men and women was palpable. Men dominated the decision-making structures not only in numbers but also in terms of critical decision-making positions (only Nembe had a woman as chair of the CDB). The patriarchal hegemony men wielded enabled them to have leverage, which they deployed in ways that gave them an advantage over women. Men often used innuendoes to remind women of 'their place' in the presence of men and in some cases to verbally abuse them. According to Morrissey (2016), a particular barrier to women's public participation is the way patriarchal structures inform the notion of public space as a male domain that is separate from the domestic domain of women. This notion affected women's confidence and interest in public governance as most prefer to go about their usual chores, responsibilities and businesses than attend or to pay attention to public governance and development issues. Thus patriarchal structures, which determine norms regarding appropriate gender roles, constrain not only women's access to power but also the quality of their participation. For Ravnborg et al. (2016), patriarchal structures such as family law and customary law continue to hamper women's access to vital resources such as land. This is significant as land is an instrument that women can use to access political power and when they are denied access to such an important economic resource, it invariably hampers their access to political power as well.

Capacity Gap

Apart from Nembe and Andoni, women in the CTs in all the other 8 clusters lacked capacity (general and specific skills) to participate effectively in decision-making. Although this is also related to the poor depth of leadership in these communities and others in the region, women were particularly worse off given the extra burden of having to prove themselves to deserve their participation in public decision-making. A good number of the women in all the CTs did not have the confidence to express themselves during CT meetings. The exception was Nembe where the CDB was led by a very educated and experienced woman and where thirty percent of its CDB were women. This was also

the case for Iduwuni where women constituted thirty percent of its CDB. The women in the CTs in these two clusters were generally outspoken, had good presentation skills and were more collaborative than their counterparts in other clusters where there were no women in the CDBs. While different levels of patriarchy in different communities impact the capacity gaps in different ways, having a thirty percent critical mass of women in CDBs is a motivating factor for women in the CTs to be themselves because they will have women at the top to look up to.

Incentive Gap

In all 10 clusters, women in the CTs and CDBs complained about personal costs of participation, which impacted on the quality of their participation. These include having sometimes to compromise their family responsibilities as mothers and wives, loss of personal income every time they have to leave their occupations to attend meetings and having to risk verbal abuse and cultural persecution whenever they were vocal on issues. Mentoring NGOs reported that there were a few instances of women's personal safety as a cost of their participation. This was in cases where women were threatened or physically assaulted by men whose positions they challenged at meetings. These socio-economic costs tended to affect their performance at meetings thus underscoring the intersection between women's economic well-being and political power (see Ravnborg et al. 2016).

In spite of the gaps in the quality of women's participation and overall representation in governance structures across all 10 clusters sampled, there are important insights that come out, which can be useful for enhancing the performance of clusters and the GMoU process, as well as enabling overall development across the Niger Delta, with similar implications for Nigeria as a whole. For example, notwithstanding the capacity gaps in women's performance, the native intelligence of a good number of these women cannot be overlooked. They have shown they have the intelligence to deal with the everyday issues of their lives and make the best of opportunities available. What they require is confidence-building and mentoring by NGOs that supervise the clusters. Also, in terms of power gap, it came out clearly that mentoring NGOs played a huge role in bridging the gap between

men and women in governance structures. For instance, 7 of the 10 representatives of the mentoring NGOs who took part in the study confirmed that they often intervened to protect women's rights to be active participants at meetings, and that the men succumbed to their interventions most of the time, perhaps due to the supervisory role of the NGOs in the whole GMoU process.

Finally, the level of a community's social exposure, education capital and location plays a role in the quality of gender mainstreaming exemplified in the Nembe cluster⁴. These factors help douse the effects of a hegemonic patriarchy, which does stifle the positive contributions women can bring. However, irrespective of the social environment, women acted as a stabilizing factor during CT and Community Forum meetings as well as in CDB meetings in Nembe and Iduwuni where they were members of the board. Men tended more to focus on the main objectives when women were around the table and that helped stabilize meetings (FGD 17 June 2015).

CONCLUSION

The paper analyzed the quality of women's participation and representation in community governance structures in the Niger Delta. It used the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SP-DC's) community development model; the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) as a case study. The findings show that including women in governance structures in the community clusters studied improved governance and thus development. For example, there was a positive association between inclusion, transparency and good governance in the cases of the 5 top performing clusters and the opposite was the case amongst the 5 least performing clusters although there were variations in both categories. However, in the context of the three-gap analysis framework that the paper deployed, there were challenges that impact on the quality of women's representation in the GMoU governance structures. These include the power, capacity and incentive gaps.

Overall, the GMoU is a veritable model for mediating the governance and development challenges that emerge from resource-rich regions in the developing world such as the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Its provision for the inclusion of wom-

en in its governing structures within communities promotes inclusiveness, equity and collaboration, which are a pivot for natural resource management and national development. In this regard, its potential for peaceful co-existence cannot be overemphasized since the inclusion of all segments of society in such collaborative governance promotes acceptance, tolerance and belongingness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, if properly fine-tuned, the GMoU could evolve to become an effective peace building and community development model not only in the Niger Delta but also in Nigeria generally, given its inclusive engagement component. However, in line with the objective/themes of the paper, the following suggestions are offered:

- i. At the company level, SPDC needs to review the process of mainstreaming women into CDBs and CTs by providing for special quotas for mainstreaming women. The company should insist on the nomination of women to fill at least thirty percent of the membership and executive positions of the CDBs and of the CTs. It will also be expedient to insist on having at least thirty percent of the projects to be implemented annually, to target women and young girls. Similarly, it will be useful to provide for special projects funding for women outside of the funds that go to society generally.
- ii. Mentoring NGOs need to build their capacity for gender sensitivity and monitoring. To start with, SPDC should endeavor to engage only competent NGOs with track records. The company should identify credible NGOs that have a passion for development work and the expertise to build capacity for the CDBs and CTs to make them more independent and self-sustaining in the long term. It is also necessary for SPDC to explore opportunities that will grow NGO capacity in the area of proposal writing, advocacy, M&E and program management.
- iii. Governance capacity building for communities (women and men) should be implemented by SPDC in collaboration with mentoring NGOs.

- iv. SPDC should emplace gender sensitivity training for staff members responsible for GMoU implementation. The list includes Community Relations Officers, Community Relations Coordinators and Community Interface Coordinators.
- v. GMoUs need to be geared towards harnessing indigenous knowledge (women's agency) at grassroots level.
- vi. The GMoU Operating Principles and Procedure Guidelines (OPPG) should provide for women's participation in the contracting process for project implementation in the next cycle of review.
- vii. At the national and state level, the National Assembly needs to revisit and pass the Gender Equality Bill⁵ to legally foreground the mainstreaming of women into the public sphere.

NOTES

- 1 Nineteen (19) out of the 24 active clusters participated in the SCOTDI assessments of GMoU clusters in the region.
- 2 According to McDougall et al. (2013:571), power, expressed as multidimensional manifestations of control is central to these distinctions. Power in this context is viewed as relational, dynamic, contextual, and underpinned by resources and economics thus making all resource management processes inherently political.
- 3 According to a Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends Report (January to March 2016: 3-11), historical grievances and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian) contribute to many of the conflict dynamics in the region and new types of conflicts are emerging. These include election violence, political tensions, cult violence, violent criminality and protests.
- 4 According to Hansen (2000:534), Nembe is a foremost traditional city-state in the Niger Delta and one of the 32 traditional states of Nigeria. It is today the capital of Nembe Local Government Area in Bayelsa state, and has a relatively high literacy level in its population. This pedigree and its location as an economic hub in the region place it in good stead to be a bit more liberal in its cultural outlook even though, as most Ijaw communities of Nigeria are, it is also deeply patriarchal. This is also confirmed by Ifeoma Olisakwe of Lite Africa, the mentoring NGO of Nembe cluster who said the level of education in the Nembe cluster, its exposure and tourist location were predisposing factors towards a gender sensitive society.
- 5 The bill aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women was turned down for a second reading at the Nigerian Senate on March 15th 2016. Among others, the bill was designed to address women's freedom of movement, female economic activities,

girl's access to education, and equal rights for women in marriage, divorce, property/land ownership and inheritance.

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