THE STATE AND MASS MEDIA COLLABORATION IN DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The mass media as powerful tools come in the development process of a state through what is called development communication. This type of communication is consciously packaged by the mass media such that the message content or information sent could persuade, encourage or convince the target audience to adopt an attitude and participate in actualizing a development plan or goal. However, the contents delivered by various media channels are determined by the kind of relationship that exists between the media and the state where the media operate. This means, where the mass media do not have good collaboration with the state, development could be farfetched. The study identified issues of security, economic sabotage and corruption as factors impeding development; and how media-state collaboration could help mitigate such. The paper was anchored on the development media theory that emphasizes the role of the mass media in development. The result showed that state and media collaboration is a determining factor to achieving all-round development. It, however, observed that where the state and media do not have good relationship, media contents instead of developing, tend to antagonize state policies on development, which could lead to mistrust as often the case in Nigeria. The study recommended that the state and mass media should work as Siamese twin, if development must be achieved.

Keywords: State, mass media, collaboration, development

Introduction

There has been a recurrent and sustained argument that the Nigerian state, like its counterparts in Africa and other countries of the developing world, underperforms due to lack of state capacity to deal with the contemporary complexities of governance. The nature of the state, public institutions, through which legitimate power is exercised and enforced, is germane to the study of politics in any state (Smith, 2003, p. 108). The "petroleum-rich" Nigerian state, confronted by socio-political instability, high degree of corruption, mass hostility to the public, and poor macroeconomic management, continue to display the attributes of a state in crisis (Akinola, 2008). According to Osakwe (2010), the nature of Nigeria's development strategy has contributed to the slow pace in achieving reduction of poverty and unemployment in the country, as such, the country has not gone through the normal process of structural transformation. Insecurity, economic sabotage, killings are also major setbacks to the development of the country and Niger Delta in particular. This implies that the strategies employed by Nigeria government have not led to the

growth of productive capacities and structural transformation which are the pivot for generating any productive employment opportunities and reducing poverty to a minimal level.

However, the development of a society can be greatly influenced by the relationship that exists between the government and media that operate within its jurisdiction. Thus, there are certain factors that can affect this; one of such is the level of independence of the mass media to report issues bothering the society around it. This means, in an environment where the media depend more on government for unknown gratification, the task of objectivity in reporting development can be questioned.

For years, governance strategies have been generally poor at integrating the mass media into sensitive areas of the economy and finance, giving room for gross unaccountability, corruption and mismanagement of public funds. Somehow, the relationship that exists between government and the mass media pre-defines the outcome of the kind of media contents that relates to development. How the media and government collaborate with each other impacts the content shared by media to the public. While a fruitful collaboration could engender media access to government information and other benefits like security, there is always a risk of compromise – which the media must avoid. The way in which the media are conceptualized in relationship to governance, needs a rethink and that governance policy needs to be given open air, free from political intimidation if development must thrive.

Consequently, the need for good governance has attracted increasing attention from scholars, policy makers, international development agencies, etc. This is because sustained development is hinged on the effective application of the ethos and principles of good governance. The mass media, with its agenda setting role is required to engender development through consistent public discourse on government policies. The object of good governance is to make public office holders responsive, accountable and subject to the people. Thus it is the responsibility of governments at all levels to formulate appropriate policies, make and implement such decisions that impact on the generality of the people positively (Love & Kalama 2018). Azeez (2009) opines that good governance is the competence of government to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions, implement effectively and deliver services. The extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and leadership responsiveness totheneeds of the citizens; good governance is also the competent to ensure law and order, deliver public services, and creating an enabling environment for productive activities equitable in its conduct.This study, therefore, uses the Niger Delta region as a focal point.

Theoretical Framework

The Development Media Theory was found appropriate for the study. This theory is classified under normative theory and was put forward as a means of paying for the imbalance in development and information flow of the third world countries and a solution to the technological problems facing them.Development media theory is normative in the sense that it ties the operation of the mass media to the political environment in which the media operate. According to Daramola (2003, p. 40), the basic assumption of normative theories is that “the mass media reflect and are conditioned by the nature of society in which they operate.”The major tenets of development media theory as enunciated by McQuail are that: the media must accept

and carry out positive development task in line with naturally established policies, freedom of the media should be opened to economic priorities and development needs of the society; and in the interest of development the state has a right to intervene or restrict media operations.

Features of the third world countries that make it difficult to apply normative theory: absence of requisite communication infrastructure; limited supply of requisite professional skills; limited availability of media literate audiences, dependence on developed world for technology skills and cultural products. When these are prevailing, which appear to be so, development would continue to stare us in the face. The relevance of this theory to the study is hinged on the foregoing.

Review of Related Literature

Corruption and Challenges of Good Governance in the Niger Delta

According to Maiangwa (2012), the Nigerian State "command and expend vast resources, but it cannot get things done. Hence, the state has become the primary means for the accumulation of personal wealth. The foregoing is supported by the assumption of prebendalism, which has it that elected officials and government workers feel they have a right to a share of government revenues, and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic group. Seteolu, (2005) quoted in Maiangwa, (2012) posits that clientelism assists us to understand the mechanism of how class control legitimizes the lopsided distribution of resources among social groups and enhances states of the political elite"

Therefore, politics in the Niger Delta region is premised on prebendalism and clientelism, which further enhances our comprehension of corruption and underdevelopment in the area. Since the return of democratic governance in 1999, the Niger Delta governors, local government chairmen and other public office holders have been looting the wealth accruing to these states with impunity. In its report, the Commission for Africa in 2005 posited that "Nigeria has suffered from government that have looted the resources of the state: that could not or would not deliver services to their people; that in many cases were predatory, corruptly extracting their countries (Maiangwa, 2012). Ake (2000) avers that the greatest impediment to good governance is the political conditions, the prominent being the politics of self-aggrandizement and exploitation at the expense of promoting the general good of the people. Ikporukpo (2001) posits that the prevailing perception in the region is that the people are being deprived of the benefits of oil and gas exploited and this has consequently generated underdevelopment and widespread poverty resulting from bad governance. Governance in the Niger Delta region is characterized by bad governance and high level of corruption both at the state and local government levels.

Pervasive corruption has been highlighted as responsible for the failure of government at all levels to confront development challenges facing the people despite huge fund accruing from the region. It has been argued in several quarters that if government officials in the area have judiciously utilized the revenue accruing to their states and local government areas, for the benefit of the people through job creation, and infrastructural development, the region would have been described as a developed area.

Discussing how corruption had hampered development and SDGs in the Niger Delta, Maiangwa (2012) quoted Joseph Amberkedelin of South-South Element Progressives Union as saying that the amount of money that has accrued to South-South governors in the past nine years is enough, more than enough to transform the

Niger Delta; if monies are being used judiciously and religiously, the monies that have come to the governors of the South-South today, we would not have the problems we are having in the Niger Delta. What are these people asking for anyway? Roads, water, electricity, school buildings and furniture for these school. The corruption among the governors in the South-South is enormous- the stealing is enormous.

To buttress the point that large scale corruption is prevalent in the region and has hampered development in Niger Delta states, two former governors from the region have been convicted and jailed for corruption in the country since 1999. The former Governors of Bayelsa and Delta states, Diepreye Alameiyesigha and James Ibori were convicted and jailed for corruption after office. Earlier Mr. Alamieyeseigha was impeached by the State Legislature for gross misconduct, corruption and abuse of office in 2006 and subsequently tried and convicted by a Lagos High Court.

According to Enweremadu (2009), during his first tenure in office (1999-2003), Mr. Alamieyeseigha and several officials of the State were investigated by the EFCC and ICPC for corruption. A notable case was an investigation by ICPC in 2003, accused the governor of approving several dubious contracts and payments totaling 1.7 billion naira in favour of fictitious companies. He was also said to have awarded other contracts amounting to 667.58 million naira to another set of fictitious companies through the Bayelsa State Tender Boardwhich the governor presided. Explaining further the high level of mismanagement of public funds in Bayelsa state, Enweremadu (2009) revealed that by 2005, all known indices of transparency and accountability have been jettisoned, while budgetary appropriations were exploited to enrich those incharge. One common strategy adopted to siphon money was concentrating huge public expenditure on highly priced projects, which had no relevant on the people, while offered unlimited opportunities for officials to accumulate wealth.

Conversely, important social services such as education, health, portable water and other anti-poverty schemes which offered fewer opportunities for primitive enrichment were underfunded.Enweremadu (2009) also disclosed that another type of corruption that was prevalent under Alamieyeseigha was direct payments to top officials in the State. For instance, the governor in 2005, paid 100 million naira to each of the 24 members of the State House of Assembly for constituency development projects in their respective constituencies, amounting to 2.4 billion naira. The said payments were not captured in the 2005 budget.

Large scale and widespread corruption, mismanagement and misallocation of public funds as described above were not unique to Bayelsa state under Alamieyeseigha. Other Niger Delta states did not fare better. Enweremadu (2009) study also exposed the high level of corruption and mismanagement of public funds in Rivers State, from 1999-2003.

Rivers State, according to him, under Dr. Peter Odili from 1999-2003, witnessed mind bugling corruption cases, for instance, in the 2006 budget estimate of 160 billion naira, the Governor allocated 10.7 billion naira to maintain his office, 3 billion naira for foreign trips, the 32 members of the State Legislature equally had 690 million as travelling allowances. In addition, Dr. Odili budgeted $10 million for catering, gifts and souvenirs, $38 million for two helicopters in 2006 (Maiangwa, 2012).

Besides, the former governor of the state, Rotimi Amaechi was implicated in an investigation by EFCC of corruption case involving the alleged theft of about

N100 billion when he was the speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, between 1999- 2007 (Maiangwa, 2012). Also, according to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the former governor of Delta State, James Ibori allegedly stole about $292 million while governor of the State between 1999-2003 (Maiangwa,2012). Supporting the assertion that State funds meant for development purpose are often embezzled, Julius Ihonvbere, a political scientist, added "that if you go to the Niger Delta, some states that have collected over 600 million since 1999, have nothing to show for the huge money" (Vanguard Newspaper, July 15 2007).

Records from United Nations Development Programme 2014 report reveals that Nigeria ranked number 152 out of 187 countries in Human development, which is average quality of life and standard of living. The report puts Nigeria's Human Development Index at 0.381 which is below the prescribed level. Thus, in such instances, there is absence of continuity in policies when the tenures of specific governments come to an end. It also pointed that, although corruption is a global issue, Nigeria, as a country is caught in the web of corruption. Often times, funds which are set aside for implementing policies are usually syphoned to the detriment of the entire nation. In addition, lack of credible leadership which can recognize and articulate the specific needs of the people also pose a challenge to development.

Dike (2010) also stresses the fact that leadership has become a bane to development in Nigeria. To him, most of the so called leaders do not actually understand that leadership entails assuming responsibilities for certain important issues. Poor governance on the part of the leaders has also resulted to inappropriate check and balances and mechanisms to regulate the affairs of government officials and institutions. As such, politics is seen as a do or die affair, while ethical politics is delegated to the background.

Economic Sabotage

The concept of oil pipeline vandalism which causes economic sabotage is vital to this discourse. First, oil pipelines are the medium through which crude oil, natural gas, and industrial chemicals are transported (Chibuzor, Chukwujekwu, &Ekene, 2014). Oil pipelines are vital and sensible facilities that could cause unconceivable catastrophes during operation, transportation of petroleum product or maintenance without a deliberate act of vandals or saboteur. The concept of vandalism according to Chibuzor, et al. (2014), is an illegal or unauthorized activity carried out jointly with different entities in the destruction of gas, petroleum, and chemical pipelines. Umar and Othman (2017) describe vandalism as a thoughtful antagonistic behaviour of unsatisfied and corrupt individuals aimed directly to an environmental object with a destructive motive of damaging properties and causing harm.

Taking Nigeria as a developing country for instance, oil (pipeline) or sabotage is prohibited under the law of the Petroleum Production and Distribution Act (Act 355 of 1990) section 1. However, the Act stipulates and describes a saboteur as "any person who does; aids another person; or incites, counsels or procures any other person, to do anything with intent to obstruct or prevent the production or distributions of petroleum products in any part of Nigeria. Or, any person who willfully does anything with intent to obstruct or prevent the procurement of petroleum product for the distribution in any part of Nigeria or, willfully does anything in respect of any vehicle or any public highway with the intent to obstruct or prevent the use of that vehicle or that public highway for the distribution of petroleum

products" the person found to be guilty of sabotage will be convicted and sentenced either to death or 21 years' imprisonment (Onuoha, 2008).Vandalism and sabotage cases have tremendously and continuously impacted the Nigerian environment and other sub-systems through the local refining process (oil bunkering) and its related waves. This influences media work which eventually impedes development.

Insecurity

The oil-related agency opines that most of the pipelines are above the ground and as such attracts criminal motive even though the vandals from the communities carry out the activities in conjunction with other higher officials and international bodies. The community members have conceived some sense of neglect and marginalization and as such will use every opportunity to destroy government and or multinationals facilities, even though, some basic necessities are occasionally provided (Albert, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2019). Contrarily, a majority of the participants from the oil and gas researchers oppose the view of shallow pipeline structures, while, maintaining that communities act of sabotage and vandalism are a deliberate act. Accordingly, the oil and gas researchers opine that pipelines are buried below, above or beneath the water and as such should not create an avenue for any vandals.

While, on the contrary, a majority of the community participants maintained that oil bunkering will ever increase given that it contributes to livelihood support for the communities. The participants believe that shallow laying of a pipeline is not an influencing factor for sabotage while community respondents and agency respondents revealed that shallow laying of some pipes across and within communities without maximum security influences vandalism/sabotage. However, the community perspective supports the literature of (Akinleye, 2018), who revealed that most communities have felt marginalized and neglected for decades and as such, oil bunkering becomes a share for the communities irrespective of any form of a treatment to health and environment.The media may not be able to carry out their development task in such situations, since, to operators, one must live to report other issues.

Challenges of Development

Studies have shown that there are numerous factors that challenge development in Nigeria (Makinde, 2005; Babawale, 2007; Nnabuife, 2010; Yunusa, 2009). For Makinde (2005), he maintains that the imposition of policies on citizens of a nation, lack of adequate human resources or capital to implement these plans/policies, corruption and lack of credible leadership are the major challenges to Nigeria's development. Most national development problems in Nigeria arise as a result of poor implementation of policies and subsequently lack of adequate and reliable human resources. Makinde (2005) further maintain that most policies of developing nations are imposed on the masses. The policies are made by the government without considering the target population, as such the masses are not given the opportunity to contribute in the formulation of policies that concern their wellbeing. In addition, there are no human resources or capital to implement these plans as a result of the low quality of human development in the country.

The major prospects for conflict resolution and positive change in the Niger Delta region rest in the number of factors identifiable within the framework of fortuitous circumstances still within the control of the parties to this conflict: One, the

fact that the ethnic groups of the Niger Delta are really not yet at war with the state. The warring militants are basically Ijaws, fighting for goals that are not really directed at solving the Niger Delta problems; and criminal cult gangs, both of which are merely exploiting the economic and socio-political crisis for private and primordial ends. What this means is that the Niger Delta struggle is yet to assume a really violent coloration or involve an armed struggle by the people of the region against the state.

Two, is that all ethnic nationalities in the region favour dialogue and negotiation as a means of resolution of this conflict, and will be willing to shift grounds on some issues like total resource control, at least in the short run. This leaves room for negotiation and a very important window of opportunity for conflict resolution.Three, the proposal of government to create at the federal level, a Niger Delta ministry to cater exclusively for the people of the region. This proposal seems to have been received with an open mind by the peoples of the Niger Delta and does present very good prospects for mutual understanding and reconciliation.Fourth, is that there are positive signs that the oil companies in the region are beginning to embrace the doctrine of Corporate Social Responsibility, and are becoming more positively engaged with some of the communities in their areas of operation. The last concluded sittings of the River State Truth and Reconciliation panel did provide a much needed window of opportunity for frank and open public discussions on the issues involved between the oil companies and their hosts and is expected to yield positive results.

Fifth, is that all the governors of the region had convened a South-South Governors forum which met in Yenagoa on Friday the 21st of November 2008, and came out with a resolution to deal collectively with the criminal cult gangs operating in the region (Nigerian Tribune, 2008). This is a giant step in the right direction.

Sixth, is that there is at last some signs of serious effort on the part of government to address the problem of gas flaring in some parts of the region. The 5.9 billion USD Escravos gas to liquid project (EGTL) in Delta state is the first of its kind in the region. The essence of the EGTL is to stop gas flaring (The Nation, 2008). This will go a long way not only to assuage community fears and anxiety, but also provide jobs for unemployed youths of the region.

Seventh, is that the country's constitution does not set a ceiling for the derivation formula of revenue allocation. The current 13% being paid to the oil producing states is the constitutionally prescribed minimum. It does not therefore require a constitutional amendment to review the formula upwards to the 50% being demanded by the region. This is feasible and should be considered by government.

The Role of Mass Media in Governance

The role of the mass media and freedom of expression in relation to governance is difficult to summarize, with debates reaching back millennia. As Francis Fukuyama documents, Emperor Qin – the founder of the first unified Chinese state in the third century B.C. – saw control of ideas as fundamental to his state building project. "If such conditions are not prohibited, the Imperial power will decline above and partisanships will form below," wrote Li Si, Qin's Chancellor in 213 B.C. "It is expedient that these be prohibited. Your servant requests that all persons possessing works of a literature, the Shith (Book of Odes), the Shu (the Book of History) and the discussions of the various philosophers should destroy them (Fukuyama, 2011: p. 130). Four hundred Confucian scholars who resisted were reportedly buried alive.

Two millennia later, the extreme opposite approach to state building was articulated by Thomas Jefferson in his famous quote, "If I had to choose between government without newspapers, and newspapers without government, I wouldn't hesitate to choose the latter."

Any development discussion on the role of media in governance is inextricably enmeshed in a set of debates about effectiveness, and a set of debates about values. The debates about effectiveness tend to revolve around the tension between the efficiency and stability of government (with open liberalized media systems often being accused of undermining both), or alternatively around the accountability, sustainability and responsiveness of any governance system (with a free media often being upheld as a guarantor of all three). The debates about values are about how much any governance system should enshrine a respect for human rights and dignity, political freedom, and democracy. This brief article does not try to reconcile these tensions but does argue that any attempt to deal with the role of media in development does need to ensure that such tensions, often submerged, are surfaced, examined and interrogated.

Currently, the role of the media in governance strategies is inchoate in the development system. Relatively small sums are spent on media support, there are very few donors who have departments or specialists working on the issue, the role of media and communication is rarely prioritized in development research or among development think tanks, and there is substantial divergence among development actors about what the media, in governance terms, are actually expected to deliver in terms of results.There are, in simplistic terms, four reasons why development actors currently invest in media support or believe support for media is important:

1. To build an independent media sector as an intrinsic good in and of itself, essential to the functioning of a democratic society and a key platform for freedom of expression (democratic and human rights objectives).
2. To enhance the accountability of governments to citizens, often in order to improve service delivery and state responsiveness, improve state-citizen relations, support more informed democratic/electoral decision-making, or shift social norms to decrease public tolerance of corruption or poor governance (accountability objectives).
3. To improve debate, dialogue and tolerance especially in fragile or conflicted societies, increase the availability of balanced, reliable and trustworthy information, reduce the likelihood of hate speech or inflammatory media likely to exacerbate conflict, enhance social cohesion or build the legitimacy of weak governments in fragile contexts (conflict and stability objectives).
4. To create demand for services (such as health or agricultural services) and use the media as instruments to achieve development objectives including working to shift behaviours (e.g. improving uptake of immunization) or changing the social norms that prevent such uptake, such as distrust of vaccinations. (Communication for development objectives).

These areas are not mutually exclusive, but they do tend to reflect the sometimes soloed thinking that prevents joined-up strategic programming across governance spheres. Strategies to support the media within the context of democracy and human rights bring together donors, media and development actors who share normative assumptions about its importance.

Media – Government Tension

Freedom of expression and free media are closely aligned to the principles behind open government. Free, independent and plural media can provide a crucial check on abuse of power and corruption, enable informed public debate on critical issues and provide public recognition to all sectors of society. It can help build trust in, and oversight of institutions and encourage engaged citizens. However, there are growing government restrictions on free media. Supporting freedom of expression and media plurality should be a core principle for a developing country as Nigeria, subscribing to the principles of open government. This should not be confined to traditional media – it should extend to other areas of the open agenda and individual rights including open data, freedom of expression, governance of the internet and policies on personal privacy.

The mass media need provision of security from government and a safe terrain to support the cause and agenda of development. This is where it calls for proper collaboration. A government that has a right footing on policy and decision making needs the power of the mass media to ensure full implementation and communication of same to the populace. Where both are corrupt and compromised, it becomes a danger which the duo should avoid.Government needs to develop trust for the mass media and rely on them to serve the public better with proper development communication model aimed at building a vibrant society.

Opportunity for Mass Media

Genuinely, open government offers an opportunity to reinvent the civic role for media at a time when it is suffering severe business disruption and its own crisis in public trust. A fundamental question, which many media organizations are grappling with, is what is the role of the 4th estate in the 21st century? With radical changes in technology, production, delivery and consumption of news much is transformed. The media, in the West in particular, have suffered their own crisis in public trust – partly fed by greater access to information and public debate via social media and other networked communications. However, the core role of the media in representing the interests of the public to those with power will persist. An open government provides an opportunity for media to re-invigorate their civic role and provide renewed value and closer connection to the public through evidence-based monitoring of the performance of those in power.

The media lack the necessary resources and skills to fulfil this role and properly process and analyse open government data. Although there are numerous examples of excellent data journalism and analysis there are more organizations that are struggling to develop these skills and expertise. At a time of economic challenge and budget cuts many organizations struggle to invest in new editorial functions. Understanding of digital technology and the opportunities presented by open data is low. There is a need for civil society, academia and even governments to support media learning about these new opportunities. There is also, of course, an educational role for the media in helping the public understand the uses and value of data. These technical obstacles should not overwhelm or put off the media. However, the challenge is to find and tell compelling stories which will engage the public – and that's what media is good at doing.

Media need to adapt to more open models of journalism. Openness does not only apply to government. As open government, and other aspects of the open movement, progress media will recognize that a traditional closed model of reporting

is not necessarily in their best interests. Networked expertise from civil society, academia, digital innovators and the public will become more important to the discovery and analysis of key information. There are already many non-corporate digital media operations which take advantage of such an opportunity and compete for public attention and credit. This is both a cultural challenge and one of expertise. Currently many media organizations are unresponsive to the public – refusing to engage in debate about their operations or the news and seeking to maintain an increasingly anachronistic gatekeeper role.

Open information is a public resource for which the traditional journalistic practice of keeping information close and proprietary becomes less relevant. Public access and contribution to open media sources is not yet widely recognized as a means to better reporting – but is likely to become so. Media organizations must recognize the need to become more open and accountable themselves. We cannot overlook the fact that in many parts of the world there is deep distrust of corporate and public or state media. The balance between media independence and accountability is still an issue of active debate in many countries – including, currently the UK. As the transparency movement progresses, the public will increasingly expect it to apply to the media as well. In many parts of the world, corporate media still operate in a closed and unaccountable fashion.

To have legitimacy in holding open government to account, they must become more open and accountable as institutions. Some are opposed, both, to open or networked reporting and to offering greater accountability of their own. The backlash from some corporate media to WikiLeaks and to Edward Snowden, the NSA whistle-blower, is one example. The political tussle over press regulation in the UK is another. The need for media accountability applies as much to new digital corporations like Facebook, Google and Twitter as it does to traditional media players.

Prospects

There is urgent need for Nigerians irrespective of status, to reflect on the visions, values and aspirations of founding fathers of their nation, particularly in the areas of good governance, formulation and implementation of people-oriented policies and programmes through good leadership.Development can possibly be achieved if the government and media come to the point of aligning their different development roles to serve the generality of the public. The determination of governments and other stakeholders to partner in rapid development of the country must be complemented by effectiveness, accountability and transparency at all levels. There is an urgent need to rebuild largely eroded faith in the integrity, intents and capability of governments among the populace and the global community.

Conclusion

This paper examined media and government collaboration in development, outlining the issues of bad governance and vices as key setbacks to development with focus in the Niger Delta. Lack of good governance in the Niger Delta region has been identified as the greatest obstacle to development and realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the area. It is against this background that despite the increasing funds accruing to the area vis-à-vis massive underdevelopment, pipeline vandalism, insecurity and the alarming rate of poverty are still prevalent in the region that we can state that the pervasive levels of underdevelopment may not be entirely blamed on the activities of oil companies and the Nigerian public, but bad governance

and corruption by public office holders in the region. We saw the need for collaborative relationship between the mass media and government, so as to curb the aggressiveness of one leading to antagonism by the other with regards to policy implementation and development reporting. The paper asserts that of all the problems that undermined development in the Niger Delta, political corruption arising from bad governance is the greatest impediment It is clear that the region is a victim of high level of corruption and bad governance which have retarded the development and attainment of SDGs in the area.

Recommendations

In the view of the forgoing, the study recommends as follows:

1. The state and mass media should work as Siamese twin, if development must be achieved.
2. Engendering free press to allow mass media play their role in development reporting.
3. The speedy prosecution of corrupt cases against present and former public office holders.
4. Public office holders in the Niger Delta region should be made to be accountable to the people and the mass media should wake up to their responsibilities.
5. The repeal of immunity clause in the 1999 constitution as amended, so that serving governors can be prosecuted while in office.
6. Civil Society Groups should wake up to their responsibilities of checkmating the activities of governments, individuals and organizations in the region.

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