Centre for Population and Environmental Development
Community Engagement Research to Promote Peace among Communities in Nigeria’s Niger Delta

Location: Nigeria
Year formed: 1999

Who we are
CPED is an independent think tank organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development through policy oriented research and active engagement on development issues. CPED has six full time senior research staff at the level of Professors and Senior Research Fellows, each playing key roles in the various in-house research of CPED.

What we do
CPED focuses on implementing high quality policy and action-oriented research on socio-economic development in Nigeria, promoting the utilization of policy research findings by various levels of government through effective policy engagement, and carrying out outreach/intervention programmes on socio-economic development and poverty reduction activities arising from the findings of our research.

Key areas of focus
- Climate change
- Gender and development
- Niger Delta region, peace building and development
- Health Systems and health care delivery
- Growth, development and equity

CONTEXT
For many decades the people of Nigeria’s Niger Delta region faced untold hardship due to oil spillages resulting in destruction of farmlands and other sources of livelihood and air pollution due to gas flaring which plagued the people in the region with numerous diseases. This led to emergence of militant groups, kidnapping/hostage taking and destruction of oil infrastructures which created multifarious crises in the region. After years of agitation and crises in the region, the Nigeria government resorted to political settlement called the Amnesty Programme in 2009 which brought relative peace to the region. After 5 years of implementation of the programme, it became clear that the policy requires some modifications if it is to bring about sustainable peace to the Niger Delta region. CPED felt that these modifications to the amnesty policy should not be imposed by policy makers without the participation of citizens in the Niger Delta region.

WHAT WE DID
CPED obtained a grant from IDRC to implement an action research project between 2013 and 2015 with the aim of promoting the participation of the citizens of the Niger Delta in the modification of the amnesty program/policies. To achieve this, CPED’s research team carried out the following activities:
- Identification of the key actors and stakeholders
- Establishment of Implementation Committees
- Organization of consultation and dialogue forums
- Data gathering and analysis of information on the amnesty program and its impact.
- Feedback meetings on the information collected with the key stakeholders, actors and beneficiaries.
- Policy workshops to discuss and agree on the policy options for the amendment of the amnesty program.
- Engagement with policy actors and representatives of key stakeholders involved in the amnesty program in the Niger Delta with policy recommendations arising from the workshops.

CHALLENGE
- Difficult to mobilise the varied citizen groups to participate in the program as many of them were sceptical about government sincerity and concern for their welfare.
- Difficult to engage policy makers because they were reluctant to face the grassroots populations as they were afraid that disappointed citizens could physically attack them.

OUTCOME
- Existence of relative peace in the Niger Delta region despite the prevailing economic challenges in Nigeria.
- The amnesty program has been extended beyond the terminal date of 2015 so that many excluded actors can be integrated.
- A large proportion of the excluded actors such as non-violent youth, the youth from other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region and women are now part of the beneficiaries of the Amnestey program.
- The Niger Delta Development Commission is now more committed in the implementation of the program by focusing on the provision of infrastructural and social welfare services for marginalised communities of the Niger Delta region.
- Empowered youth and women are now participating in policymaking and active in the engagement of policy makers and their elected representatives to pay attention to issues of promoting development in the region.