Report on Campaign against Electoral Violence – 2007
Rivers State

With the collaboration of
Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group
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Officials of Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group (NDEBUMOG) leading the campaign at Agana Community in Andoni Local Government, Rivers State-Nigeria during the project.
On the 17th of January 2007, NDEBUMOG entered into a MoU with Action Aid International-Nigeria for a project on “Campaign against Election Violence in Nigeria”. Part of the objectives for the project was to include:

a. To Influence public attitude and behavior against electoral violence through the use of anti-violence message.

b. To encourage and empower men, women and youth to organize and avoid electoral violence in their communities.

Subject to the powers of the memorandum, NDEBUMOG was to execute the project for Action Aid International- Nigeria on behalf of Oxford University of UK. Therefore, four (4) strategic locations of two (2) Controls and two (2) Treatments (Locations) were assigned NDEBUMOG as principal areas of Campaigns during the project.

In line with the above modus, NDEBUMOG supervisors accompanied PSI enumerators to a Pre-Campaign Survey of the locations primarily targeted at identifying Fifty (50) sampling households on the basis of a pre and post assessment surveys during the project, including these Fifty (50) households also being key focus target during the Campaign proper.
The supervisors were:
(1) Wisdom Progress
(2) Nglass Nkariojio
(3) Nonye Agoh
(4) Samuel Ubom

In arriving at the above four (4) supervisors, NDEBUMOG Secretariat decided to pulled two (2) from the pool of volunteers in our primary NGO (Commonwealth of Niger Delta Youths – COMDELPEACE) and the remaining two (2) drawn within NDEBUMOG as a Civil Society Coalition, all working on the strict superintendence of NDEBUMOG National Leadership.
Nonye Agoh of NDEBUMOG interviewing a prominent member of Agana Community

Locations History:

Yeghe Khana and Sime Tai

Yeghe and Sime Tai are communities located at Khana and Tai Local Government areas of Rivers State. The people of the area are Ogonis and share boundaries with the ikwere in the North, Andoni in the South, Akwa Ibom in the East, and okrikas in the West. The languages of the people are predominantly pidgin english and their native Ogoni. Their occupations are farming, hunting and fishing in areas where rivers and streams are available, its mostly an upland area. Ogonis comprises Khana, that is Nyor Khana and Ken Khana.

The area are and people are peace loving, though extractive activities led mostly by Royal Dutch Shell had fragmented peace in the area following and aftermath of the killing of Kenule Weeson Saro Wiwa, an environmental rights activist that championed and brought the world attention to environmental degradation, cultural corruption, social distortions and human rights abuses caused the people by activities of extractive companies in the
There are concerns and fears presently on the possibility of another upsurge and outburst of sporadic violence in the area due to attempts to return Shell to the area which had caused divisions, factions and suspicions among stakeholders and community people in the area. The area had witnessed cases violence politically and on issues embedded to the politics of oil control in the Niger Delta area.

Rukpakwolusi

This community is located within the municipality of Port Harcourt, but under the jurisdictional area of Obio Akpor Local Government area in Rivers State. They speak Ikwere language and English and practice egalitarian trade, farming and other commercial activities possible in an urban environment. They are predominantly peaceful people and practicing Christianity with few others in the community also into the old culture of native African religion. The people of the area are politically active and had produced Senior citizens like the one time Chairman of Nigeria Bar Association, O.C.J. Okacha (SAN), with the area not having history of violence activities outside a perspective to the generalized restiveness of youths in the Niger Delta.

Staff of NDEBUMOG and Volunteers campaigning during the project at Rupakwolusi Community Obio Akpor Local Government or Rivers State in Nigeria’s Niger Delta
Agana Community

Agana community is a melting pot of languages and culture. The people speak Ijaw, English and Ibibio/Efik languages. It is an historical fact that the area are ancestrally integrated to the Ibibio speaking people of Ikot Abasi in Akwa Ibom State and also to the Opobo people of Rivers State with their main occupation as fishing.

Agana community has no history of violence, though the Andoni Clan has had a negative history of political violence due to the Ataba community crisis (a neighboring community to Agana) with scores of tens of people death more than a year ago, with fear among the locals that such reoccurrence maybe possibility if circumstances that led to a crisis such as that of Ataba not addressed and checked. There is a White Paper on the Ataba crisis released to the Rivers State Government by the Judicial Commission former Governor Peter Odili had set-up to looked into the crisis, but the document (White paper) is not yet accessible to members of the public. The people of Ataba in January 2007 convened what they called “Ataba Massacre Memorial Day” a one-year remembrance of their deaths after the crisis.
Below are the four (4) locations covered during the project:

1. Sime – Tai
2. Yeghe – Gokana
3. Agana – Andoni
4. Rukpakwolusi – Obio Akpor

On the above, the first two being control locations, while the last two being treatment locations. However, NDEBUMOG officials accompanied the PSI Team to all the above locations during the Pre-campaign enumeration survey in January 2007.

After the completion of the Pre-campaign enumeration survey, the actual campaign Against Election Violence in Nigeria (CAEVIN), targeting Rivers State in particular was commenced by NDEBUMOG on the 14th of February, 2007 with a visit of NDEBUMOG officials to the Paramount Ruler of Rukpakwolusi Community, His Royal Highness, Chief C. C. Okocha. Items taken to the Paramount Ruler during the visit was to include 30 pieces of Campaign T-Shirts, 30 Fez Caps, 20 stickers and 20 Handbills accompanied by a notification letter to the Rukpakwolusi Council of Chiefs of our Intentioned to embarked on Campaign Against Election Violence in the Community between 14th and 17th of February, 2007. Responding, Chief C. C. Okocha was delighted his Community was chosen for the project and expressed the disposition of the community to participate during the project.

Upon arrival at the community on the 15th February, 2007, our Team was very pleased to see women and Elders adoring the Campaign T-shirts, Fez Caps, including the Posters pasted at
strategic places within the community. The campaign proceeded successfully until the 17th February, 2007 with our use of Riders, Mascots Against Election Violence, open Truck with Public Addressed System, including another team of 15 persons campaigning on foot during the project. Importantly, 15th February was especially dedicated to the distribution of T-shirts and Fez Caps and other campaign materials to the original 50 Sampling Houses Surveyed during the Pre-Campaign enumeration survey. However, the last day of the campaign of Rukpakwolusi Community witnessed the storming of the community by “Niger Delta Freedom Fighters” led by militants of the Niger Delta People Volunteers Force (NDPVF) shooting sporadically into the air in a convoy of vehicles at exact location where the community had gathered to witnessed the Drama Against Election Violence, which also was a component of the project. When the militants alighted from their vehicles, some of them recognized the presence of Commonwealth of Niger Delta Youths leadership at the venue and actually didn't harassed anybody, but requested to be part of the process in requesting that Campaign materials Against Election Violence also should be distributed to them and was complied with on the directive of the Project Co-ordinator for Rivers State, Mr. George-Hill Anthony. Interestingly too, some members of the Rukpakwolusi Community expressed delight seeing some boys considered as “violently notorious” in the community, joining to campaign against election violence in the community.

NDEBUMOG Program Assistant (Wisdom Progress) left, with Nglass Nkariojio of NDEBUMOG with other officials of the organization during a campaign visit to Chief C.C Okocha resident, the Paramount Ruler of Rupkakwolusi Community of Obio Akpor Rivers State Nigeria.
The campaign was rounded-up at Rukpakwolusi Community with the Elders and Council of Chiefs requesting for another set of campaign materials, as others reserved for them was emptied to Niger Delta Militants. Following the request, another set of 30 T-shirts, 30 Fez Caps, stickers and Handbills was dispatched to the Community on Sunday 17th February 2007 with Chief C. C. Okocha taking delivery and quoted as saying “a good NGO is noted when you see them keep to their words and promises to communities”.

Lastly, we proceeded on the project to Agana Community in Andoni Local Government of Rivers State on the 23rd of February 2007. NDEBUMOG exhibited high level of cautioned due to enormous risk and challenges surrounding executing the campaign in Agana Community.

The challenges were:

a. Agana is a Community not accessible by Road but only by water through Riverine Transportation, mostly by ferries, speed boats or local canoes.

b. Agana is a Community embroiled by Chieftaincy dispute and therefore posing a challenge of who to deal with in terms of leadership in the Community.

Accordingly, at overcoming the leadership crisis in the Community, NDEBUMOG Secretariat dispatched a letter of notification for the campaign to the Community Development Committee (CDC) Chairman of the Community, Mr. H E. Linus and copying all the Elders of the Community (including those contesting for the Chieftaincy of the Community), but with our letter technically avoiding addressing any of the Elder as “a Chief”. The Campaign materials was also cleverly distributed to Elders of the Community and CDC Chairman in a way not to generate conflict, since little issues as such has ignited sporadic conflicts in some communities within the Niger Delta going by our experiences in working within the region and mediating at some community conflicts.

Going by the above cautioned, NDEBUMOG succeeded at endearing the entire Community to the project with the Community providing free accommodation, free feeding at some instances, security and up to even making a proclamation requesting for the returned of all their indigenes in the neighboring Fishing Settlement to all returned to witnessed and joined the Campaign. Happily, community participation at Agana was in (both successful) analysis higher than that of Rukpakwolusi. We didn’t however forget the 50 sampling houses as the kingpin of attention during the campaign.

There was also a Safety Sensitization Meeting convened for the Campaigners and their supervisors before they depart to Agana, especially, on issues of safety and security when traveling on a fast moving Speed Boats, like the one that took the team to Agana from Kaa Waterside in Ogoniland. The team exhibited a high level of cautioned as was instructed and traveled safely to and from Agana during the project without any major security or safety calamity.

There was however a request for the replication of this project in other communities within our Niger Delta area. Another issue of note is the sufficiency of Campaign Materials during the project.

There are Digital pictures and Videos loaded into CDs which have captured all segments of this important project.

We thanked Action Aid International- Nigeria for their confidence upon us to handle this tasked.
May God Bless our Country-Nigeria.

For: Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group (NDEBUMOG)

George-Hill Anthony, FCBPA
National Co ordinator and State Co ordinator for CAEVIN Project, Rivers State.

Dated 9th June 2007.
Port Harcourt –Nigeria.