



Building Partnerships for Regional Development

The Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD) Forum was created as an umbrella organ for all stakeholders influencing and/or implementing project and service delivery in the Niger Delta region. It was one of the implementation strategies for the efficient and effective administration of the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, which was launched by the Federal Government in 2007.

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Facilitated by the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, with the active involvement of stakeholders, the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan offered an integrated roadmap for sustainable development activities in the Niger Delta Region. The plan provided a pathway for building a rapidly growing economy.

A phased development project, the Master Plan was based on short, medium and long-term projections and plans, broken down into three phases of five years each as a first instance. It was developed from comprehensive scientific analyses of life, development imperatives, challenges and opportunities of the region and covered 27 sectors. These included baseline and demography, education, health, environment and hydrology,

biodiversity and natural resources, financial instruments, law and order, among others, each of which were subjected to detailed study by independent consultants.

Topic specific studies into conflict impact assessment, poverty reduction, community development & governance, HIV/AIDS and youth unemployment were also carried out. On the whole, sector reports on baseline studies were published, alongside the Master Plan, as well as an abridged version of the plan and an implementation guideline.

The Master Plan was designed to achieve the following:

- Diversify the region's economy, by robustly engaging and activating sectors critical for sustainable development. These sectors include: agriculture, information communications technology, tourism and industry/industrialization;
- Improve living standards for the people;
- Improve governance at the critical grassroots level, and at all tiers;
- Improve infrastructure for economic growth and offer a better business environment which will usher in accelerated overall growth;
- Usher in and sustain a better collaboration among stakeholders;
- Ensure an optimum utilisation of available resources for greater impact;
- Usher in a better environment and reduce/contain environmental degradation, by insisting and encouraging better practices in the oil and gas sector, as well as in project delivery; and
- Build a culture of better informed people who will contribute to overall development initiatives and (therefore) sustain development.

Lasting from 2006 to 2020, the Master Plan offered policies and guidelines for development activities of the Federal Government, States, LGAs, communities, the private sector, NGOs and CBOs, etc., providing a time-sequenced framework for development

interventions over 15 years. The plan prescribed the participation of multifarious stakeholders working in a structured manner to achieve synergy. The Partners for Sustainable Development Forum (PSD) was created as a consequence.

Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD) Forum

While the Master Plan did not detail specific financial allocations and project distribution, especially at state, local government or community levels, the implementation guidelines made provisions for such allocations. They reflect shorter term plans of various intervening parties, compliant with the Master Plan (as well as provisions for SEEDS, LEEDS, and regional stakeholder Budgets, etc.).

The Partners for Sustainable Development Forum therefore remains a collaborative network of regional, state, and local forums strategically established to foster collaboration and coordination among diverse stakeholders within the Niger Delta region. The PSD Forum encompasses government entities, private sector organizations, civil society groups, academic institutions and international actors.

At its core, the Partners for Sustainable Development Forum has a clear mission: to propel the region towards peace, security, partnership and sustainable development. This mission is anchored in a profound understanding of the root causes of conflict and poverty in the region, which include environmental degradation, social exclusion and governance deficiencies.

Operationalizing this mission, the forum operates within four distinct thematic areas, each playing a vital role in steering the region towards holistic growth. These areas are: environmental management and restoration, economic diversification and inclusive growth, social development and human security, as well as institutional strengthening and good governance. Guiding its operations is a dedicated steering committee that ensures the effective implementation of the forum's



objectives and meticulously monitors its progress.

Central to the forum's structure is the active participation of stakeholders in the assessment of overall progress and specific advancement of designated programs and projects. This involvement echoes the NDDC's steadfast commitment to stakeholder inclusion, a philosophy that reverberates from the early stages of plan preparation and project conceptualisation, and resonates throughout the continuous monitoring, review, and evaluation processes.

The Partners for Sustainable Development Forum thrives on the support provided by the NDDC's Directorate of Planning, Research, Statistics, and Management Information Systems, in collaboration with such organs in other stakeholder agencies. The Directorate shoulders the responsibility of regional development planning, furnishing essential guidelines, standards, and frameworks for the development plans of States and Local Governments. Moreover, it forms a pivotal link by interacting directly with the Regional Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD) Forum.

Ensuring effective collaboration across governmental tiers, the forum engenders the formation of joint working groups. These groups consist of representatives from the

government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the NDDC. Their purpose is to provide specialized guidance on program design, harmonize budgets and plans, and establish valuable connections with State and Local Forums for Sustainable Development.

A distinctive hallmark of the forum is its alignment with the NDDC Act, seamlessly fitting into the regional development landscape. This is achieved by adroitly merging top-down and bottom-up approaches through the intricate interplay of Regional, State, and Local Partnerships for Sustainable Development Forums.

The Partners for Sustainable Development Forum initiative stands as a testament to collective collaboration and coordination, uniting a diverse spectrum of stakeholders within the Niger Delta region. By addressing pivotal issues such as environmental degradation, social exclusion, and governance gaps, the forum embarks on a journey that is guided by the four thematic areas, propelled forward under the vigilant guidance of its dedicated steering committee.

The overarching objective remains steadfast: nurturing a future of peace, security, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.