

## Recreation: A Panacea For Youths Restiveness In The Niger Delta Region Of Nigeria

Muhammad, Sanusi Abdul

School Of Science, Department Of Physical And Health Education, College Of Education, Minna

[titus\\_matthew@yahoo.com](mailto:titus_matthew@yahoo.com)

**ABSTRACT:** The Niger Delta struggle is at the root of most of our national discomfort. Urgent steps should be taken in order to improve the standard of living of people of the Niger Delta region. If not they would continue to be restive and dependent on what they cannot get through illegal means. The initiative of the federal government to give the people a sense of belonging by setting up the Niger Delta Ministry is commendable, and it is hope that if the objective is faithfully implemented, and youths engage in recreation activities it will go a long way in curbing youth's restiveness in the region. This paper therefore, highlights oil mineral producing areas development commission, concept of recreation, rationale for recreational pursuits and importance of recreation in curbing youth's restiveness. It concluded that youths spend their leisure in unwholesome activities, and recommended provision of recreation facilities, supervision of recreation facilities and equipment, and employment of recreation experts for effective management of the programmes and facilities among others." [New York Science Journal, 2010;3(1):50-55]. (ISSN:1554-0200)."

**Keywords:** Recreation, Youths, Restiveness, Niger Delta

### INTRODUCTION:

The Niger Delta struggle is at the root of most of our national discomfort which continues to manifest in forms of corruption, insecurity, and poverty. The Niger Delta region where much of the national wealth comes from has absolutely nothing to show for the long year of predatory oil exploration and exploitation by multinational oil firms who pay taxes to the Federal Government of Nigeria. From coast to coast in the swampy communities of the oil rich Niger Delta, you cannot fail to notice the tell-tale signs of absolute environmental degradation and utter neglect. From Edo to Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States, the story is the same [Gab, 2005].

The suffering of the Niger Delta people has for long existed. Even before independence, there was sufficient evidence that the land and waters in the areas had become polluted through the rapid spread of a dark, greasy substances left there, of course, by some environmental hostile multinational companies which have for years, made billions of dollars drawing oil from the land in the hinterland [Buchly,20has06]. The once lush green vegetation has for long metamorphosed into lifeless brownish

trees and grasses. Consistent flow of hazardous chemical mixture into the belly of the earth from the oil companies ensure that the land no longer brings forth fresh and healthy produce. All the lands have now got to show are nothing but metal pipes some of which rise over 30 feet above the ground level, sending out smoke and flames from flow stations [Ibrahim, 2007].

Such gas flares have become a daily companion of millions of Nigerians inhabiting the Niger Delta axis of the country. Indeed, for the people of this area, it is a story of absolute neglect in the hands of a country which makes its wealth from their land. Much of the farm lands have been destroyed, and making a living out of fishing has long become unending illusion, no thanks to the oil-polluted rivers and sea. The communities in the areas also lack basic social amenities like roads, electricity, schools, hospitals and portable water. The unfortunate irony is that these are communities whose lands produce the nation's wealth, yet their lives present a perfect picture of object penury. The communities believe the oil companies who engage in explorations on their land and water have paid negligible attention to their problems. Government too, the people believe,

has been treating them like foreigners in their own lands. All the people are asking for is that part of the wealth realized from oil exploration should be used to develop their area by providing basic social infrastructures and linking all the satellite towns within the riverine areas with roads.

#### **Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC).**

The establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board, by the Federal Government in 1992 established the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) supported with billions of naira, that was meant to improve the lives of the people of the Niger Delta in the areas of farming, fishing, supply of electricity and potable water, construction of road and canals, health facilities, communication facilities, and for viable transportation, and the like. But the Commission lost focus and credibility and was accused in several quarters of non performance and being a conduct pipe through which millions of naira was siphoned in to the private pockets of some people with connections in government who saw it as an opportunity to grab their own share of the so-called national cake (Otoabasi, 2007). OMPADEC left behind a chain of uncompleted grandiose elephant projects to the amazement of not a few. The problems of the Niger Delta people are numerous and crippling. They have not collectively disagreed to agree; only few people in power have been making decisions, agreeing for the whole people in the region. That is the reason for all these troubles.

#### **Concept of Recreation**

Recreation is refreshment of body and or mind through engagement undertaken during ones leisure time (Mohammad, 2006). Like all working machines, the human body and mind have to be maintained periodically. Indeed, largely because of the special circumstances of humans in the civilization that they have fashioned for themselves, periodic recreation has become an essential element in the maintenance package available for the optimum lubrication and prolongation of human life and enhancement of quality and output in human labour.

The place of recreation in the life of man cannot be overemphasized. It is indeed, part and parcel of living process. There has always been innate urge for man to engage in one type of recreational activity or the other during his work free period. Some people recreate for fun and relaxation, others recreate to lose weight and stay fit. There are still others who recreate for revitalization of health. Recreation is not a panacea to the attainment of high level of health, but combined with other factors which affect health it

can elevate health for normal individual. Contrary to the popular idea about recreation, it is not physical .Any worthwhile activity could constitute recreation. Recreation activities are therefore, limitless. They are the most useful way to use up one's leisure, and they have both rehabilitative and therapeutic values [Muhammad, 2006].

Kehinde (1986) explained that recreation is any activity performed during non- working hours i.e. free-time. Olowoyo (1986) agreed that recreation is concerned with those activities in which a person takes part during hours other than work. He explained further that the individual has chosen that activity to voluntarily engage in it, because of the outcome of such participation that develops mental, moral, physical and social qualities contributing to a better life. <http://rwuhp.tripod.Com/ca/ampark/senior/intro.html>. (2002) agreed that recreation is rooted in a Latin word "recreatio" which refers to restoration or recovery. She said that the term implies the re-creation of energy or the restoration of ability to function. George [1996] submitted that recreation like any word is an abstract symbol having many meaning depending on the context in which it is used. From these various definitions, one could deduce the following characteristics of any recreation activity- it should be an activity engaged in during one's free time, it should be enjoyable, it must be voluntary and constructive. We should not expect any reward from it. There should be moral, social, mental, or physical advantage of such recreational activities, if continued for a reasonable length of time.

#### **RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA**

The cultural richness of Africa opened a wide avenue for recreation after a day's thrill. Recreation as well as physical exercises being undertaken by an average African during cultural festival like dance, acrobatic and gymnastic displays are often done for enjoyment and refreshment. Horse racing, Ayo game and other forms of recreational activities are also rampant among Africans. In a traditional African society, the child jumps, climb trees or mountains, rides a horse or donkey, dance or sing and also performs balancing acts because his siblings or elders do such. Through playing games, sports and traditional religious festivals, the African child develops physical, emotional and social assets, which will serve him good when he grows. In Nigeria, despite the fact that our ancestors were mainly wanderers, they still had time to recreation in order to strike a balance in the wheel of life which is one of the physical needs of man. The fast growing amount

of leisure time in Nigeria underscores the need for recreation pursuits. The modern sophisticated living brought about by technological innovation and scientific discoveries has drastically reduced man's working hours. Udoh and Igbanugo (1980) have established that an average Nigerian spends about 40 hours a week at his job, 50 hours a week for sleep, 25 hours a week for personal care and still has surplus of 44 hours per week as his free time. How surplus free time is utilized is very important because it may bring social problems if not properly utilized.

### **RATIONALE FOR RECREATIONAL PURSUITS**

The social interaction and relationship that exist in dual and group activities during leisure hours in recreation centre help to reduce tension and stress of everyday interaction with the social and cultural environment. Joyful emotions are stimulated which gives mental growth and happiness. Okunrotifa (1995) opined that recreation in essence is to refresh an individual. Martain (1988) observed that recreation is a worthwhile socially acceptable leisure experience that provides immediate satisfaction to the individual who voluntarily get involved in an activity. Recreation improves health of the participants and prepares them for the work ahead. It has been established that recreation cuts down drastically the many hours lost in going to health clinic (Okafor, 1986). Recreation improves the efficiency of workers. Many developed countries like Soviet Union have long realized the influence of recreation on the health of the worker. Soviet Union has set aside a specific period in-between working hours for compulsory recreational engagement for all workers. The practice is paying them huge dividend in terms of productivity and efficiency [Muhammad, 2006].

**Importance of Recreation in Curbing Youths Restiveness:** Implicit in the definition of youth is the fact that he is inexperienced, impatient, easily bored and dissatisfied. Peer influence overrides any other influence and the youth is vulnerable to manipulation by his peers. The press is full of news ranging from youth violence demonstration, use of drugs and alcohol, thuggery, armed robbery, rape and other violent crimes. Prominent Nigerians have decried the spate of youth restiveness. Newspaper report implicate the youth in violent crimes. For example, Dennis [2008] reported that there were allegations that Itsekiri youths attacked four Ijaw communities in

Warri North Local Government, leading to the death of seven persons. Similarly, Hallah [2003] had reported the governor of Bayelsa State as saying that youth's waywardness had earned the Niger Delta notoriety in hostage-taking and piracy. On his part, Iniwo [2004] reported that the Minister of Education stated that youth restiveness requires a national solution. He further said that the need to build the self-esteem of the youths and harness their potentials so as to channel them to positive programmes for national development had become imperative.

The involvement of youths in recreation plays a facilitative role in both character development and the socialization process [Dunn, 1996]. Involvement in recreational activities such as sport impacts the youths positively and helps them to imbibe the societal norms, which are part of the sport programme. In this regard, Dennis [2008] sees youth sport as a vehicle for developing self-discipline, good character, and good citizenship, while Coakley [1993] conceptualizes it as an activity from which overall social development can occur through the production of cultural practices. Alfred [2006] agreed that participation in recreation provides opportunities for youths to interact with others and to expend energies in a positive way. Youths who are active in sports are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility and are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Benito, 2004). From the foregoing, if the youths are exposed to worthwhile recreational activities in the correct ways, they will imbibe virtues such as respect, responsibility and hard-work which are the basis of strong personal character. Therefore the need, to build positive recreational experiences and maximize the availability of facilities to meet the playing needs of the increasing number of youth participants to prevent youth's restiveness in the Niger Delta cannot be over emphasized.

Recreation can provide employment to the youths in the Niger Delta region in order to prevent restiveness. The leisure industry is one of the largest sectors of the UK economy, employing over 3 million people and with an annual turnover of \$90 billion. Sport and physical recreation account for over \$10 billion of consumer expenditure each year (<http://w.w.w.tpl.org/tier3cdl.efm?Content-item-id-890&folder-id-728>). [2004]. Omoruan (1996) observed that when the economy in Nigeria took a nose-dive, many economists proffered what they conceived to be the best prescription to the ailment but all seem to be oblivious of the redemptive potentials of tourism as a foreign exchange earner. It

is necessary to reflect on tourism which has continuously brought huge revenue in foreign currency to those countries which care to tap the great potentials tourism trade has in stock. Records on international tourism showed that of all foreign exchange earners, tourism comes next to crude oil. In some developed countries like the United States, Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Mexico, tourism accounts for more than one-third of all export earnings from goods and services. If man-made resorts and parks can be so harnessed to earn such foreign exchange, the economic benefits derivable from these natural resources will be monumental if fully tapped.

Awosika (1986) stressed that today we live in a time of economic realities. It seems that national concerns such as inflation, unemployment, deficits spending and high interest rate are having increasing significance on each and every Nigerian. He said that the focus has been on how the country could remedy its ailing economy, but we must recreate. He recommended that Nigerians should go "re-economic". Going re-economic will mean recreating despite economic depression. Sometimes, hobbies which were originally embarked upon for pleasure have been known to see people through the boredom of unplanned retirement. Today persons like "Zebrudaya" are paid heavily for their participation in the drama series and in some cases paid by advertising agencies to promote a particular product. One can say that in many cases people's hobbies or recreation can turn out to become their paid jobs or professions or something they can fall back on in case of retirement or even retrenchment.

A new concept of correctional reaction for providing a helping thrust towards psychological rehabilitation of the prison inmates and juveniles delinquents is getting popular. Odeyemi (1997) opined that the major part of recreation provided in U.S prisons includes sports and other physical activities to meet inmate needs for free-time pursuits. Participation in these activities provides check for despairs, frustration and destructive behaviour. In America and Europe the provision of adequate public recreational facilities has helped in no small way to keep a large number of the idle youths out of the streets. Many of the idle youths who would have become criminals in the society have learned how to play games or recreation and some of them have even made a profession out of such games (Famayo, 1997). Crime has now surpassed unemployment and economic troubles as the primary concern of most Americans (<http://w.w.w.tpl.org/tier3-cdl.cfm?content-item-id-890&folder-id->

728[2004]). The reflective response from political leaders is to promise more police on the streets and longer jail terms for offenders. But that approach is expensive and not necessarily effective. Violent crime in most cities has increased even after additional police officers have been hired. Congressman Bruce Vento is among an increasing number of political leaders who insists that perhaps there is a better way to fight crime. (<http://w.w.w.funoutdoors.com/Rec00f2000>). Urban recreation and sport programmes are proven, commonsense, and cost effective means of preventing crime and delinquency (<http://w.w.w.tpl.org/tier3-edl.cfn?Content-item-id-890&folder-id-728.f2004>). Although criminologists have found no way to measure directly how much crime is caused by a lack of open space and recreation opportunities, plenty of evidences showed that crime frequently drops sometimes drastically when these things are improved. Yet investments in parks and open space have generally been considered a low priority. As Niger Delta continues to witness rising crime and distress, it is becoming increasingly clear that support for parks and recreation is not a luxury, it is an investment in the security, health and the stability of the region. For the same money that would put one police officer on the street, the region could hire three recreation leaders who would have a much greater impact on keeping youths out of troubles and reducing crimes (<http://w.w.w.co.missuola.mt.us/measures/recreationbenfits.html.f2000>).

## Conclusion

This paper highlights the fact that the youths spend their leisure in unwholesome activities. Such activities include drinking alcohol, sexual promiscuity, cultism, and involvement in violent crimes. It is evident that engaging in a worthwhile recreation programme will occupy the youths meaningfully and help them to develop positive attitudes. Meaningful recreation activities can only take place where the right facilities are available.

## Recommendations

Considering the dangers associated with youth restiveness and the fact that recreation can provide acceptable outlet for the excess energy of the youths, the following recommendations are made:



- (1) Efforts should be made by the communities and government to provide recreation facilities in all the communities.
- (2) The communities and government should develop recreation programmes that meet the needs of the youths, and faithfully execute such programmes.
- (3) The recreation facilities and equipment should be effectively supervised to ensure that only desirable activities are carried out on them.
- (4) Recreation experts should be employed in the communities for effective management of the programmes and facilities.
- (5) Government should create enabling environment for the youths to gain employment through recreation.

## REFERENCES

Alfred, D.S. (2006). How to Step Niger Delta Youths Restiveness. Posted to Web: Tuesday, April 11.

Awosika, B.Y (1986). It pays to play with Recreation, During, Economic Recession, Go Reconomics. Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of NAPHER at University of Uyo.

Beninto, A.T [2004]. Promoting Moral Growth through Campus Recreation. [http://w.w.w.mines.edu/stu-life/pub/issueII/page % 2010. Pdf](http://w.w.w.mines.edu/stu-life/pub/issueII/page%2010.Pdf).

Buckly, K (2006). Health and fitness at work. Canberra. Department of Sports, Recreation and Tourism.

Coakley, J. (1993). Socialization and Sports. In R.N. <http://w.w.w.tpl.org/tier3-cdl.cfm>? Content- item-id- 890 & folder-id- 728. (2004). The link between Recreation and crime prevention. Healing America's Cities. The Trust for Public Land Publications.

Ibrahim, U. (2007). Niger Delta and resources control problematic interrogating the conventional approach to the vexed question. In A.Olayemi and U.F. sati (Eds.); Historical Perspectives on Nigeria's Post-colonial Conflicts. MacMillian Publishing Company.

Iniwo, J. (2004) Youth Restiveness Requires National Solution. This Day. February 25.

Kehinde, G.O. (1986). The role of recreation in the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of Education in Nigeria .Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of NAPHER at University of Uyo.

Singer, M.Murphey, & L.K.Tennant (Eds.); Handbook of Research on Sport Psychology. New York: MacMillan.

Dennis, O. D. (2004). Provision of Recreational Facilities in Schools: A Panacea for Youths Restiveness. *Education Today: A Quarterly Journal of the Federal Ministry of Education*. 1, (1).44-48.

Dunn, J.G.H. (1996). An Examination of the Relationship between Athletic Ability, Organized Team Sport Participation, Social Satisfaction, and Peer Group Acceptance in Elementary School Children. SASK Sport Research Programme.

Famayo, M.O. (1997). Recreation Programme and Its Importance. *Journal of Physical Education and Research*. 2, (3). 345-348.

Gab, A.E. (2005). Curbing Youths Restiveness in the Niger Delta. Posted to the Web: Monday, June 6.

George, T. (1996). Leisure and Recreation Management. London. E and Spoon.

Hallah, T. (2003). Bayelsa State Governor Decries Youths Restiveness. Daily Trust. August 8.

<http://rwuhp.tripod.com/ca/amparks/senior/intro.html>. (2002).

<http://w.w.w.co.missuola.mt.us/measures/recreation/benefits.html>. (2000). Benefits of Recreation.

<http://w.w.w.funoudoors.com/recOO> (2000). The role of outdoor recreation in addressing National Concerns. America's Outdoor Recreation.

Martin, E.A (1998). Social Games for Recreation. New York, A.S. Barnes and Co.

Mohammad, S.A. (2006). Contributions of recreation to health as perceived by staff of tertiary Institutions in Niger State, Nigeria. An Unpublished P.hd. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Odeyemi, H.J. & Akinremi, S.A. (1997). Recreation facilities in social communities. *Journal of Physical, Health Education and Recreation*. 2, (1). 349-351.

Okafor, O.A (1986). The relationship between sports participation and academic performance. An unpublished B.SC project, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Okunrotifa, E.B. (1995). Contemporary Trends in Special Sports Education Programmes. Akure, FAM-

FAL.

Olowoyo, G.O. (1986). A Handbook of Physical Education, Sport and Recreation. Zaria. S.Akeome and Co.

Otoabasi, A. (2007). Conflicts and Crises in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Strategies for Crises Management and Conflict Resolution. In

A.Olayemi & U.F Sati (Eds.); Historical Perspective on Nigeria's Post-Colonial Conflicts. MacMillian Publishing Company.

Udo, C.O. & Igbunago, V.C. (1986). Leisure extent, use and significance in a University community. Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of NAPHER at University of Uyo.

6/5/2009