

ON DELTA STATE'S FACTS BEHIND THE FIGURES, 1999-2004

by

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Introduction

On Friday, November 11, 2005, at Asaba, in a document entitled **Facts Behind the Figures, 1999-2004**, the Delta State Government presented its performance record since the inception of the James Ibori administration in May 1999. The readiness of the Delta State Government to subject itself to detailed analysis and scrutiny by the public is a welcome development in our desire to assess the performance of governments in Nigeria.

Facts Behind the Figures, 1999-2004 is a modest attempt at accountable leadership and good governance in Delta State. It is a first step, albeit an important one. To enhance its credibility, however, the document needs more robust analysis and completeness. I will draw attention to these areas later in this piece. Before we do that, it is perhaps pertinent that we examine the need for an appropriate periodisation of socio-historical and political documents. A period of study is chosen for specific reasons. The government did not offer any plausible explanation for choosing the 1999-2004 period in the report under review. Since it is expected that Governor Ibori will present a second report at the end of his 8-year term in 2007, it would have made more sense, in terms of periodising his regime, for the current report to account for the 1999-2003 period, his first term in office. But if the intent was to provide an up-to-date account of the government's performance, then we wonder why the government did not opt for the 1999-2005 period instead. The key here is to acknowledge the need for a meaningful periodisation.

The Issues

■ Size of the Civil Service

By civil service in Delta State, we include the respective figures for "Civil Service, PPEB, HMB, and Others" as contained in the report for a grand total of 39,042 in 2004. Given the population of the state and its geographic size, this number of civil servants would seem to be excessive. Let us compare this with the Province of Ontario in Canada.

COMPARING DELTA STATE, NIGERIA, WITH ONTARIO, CANADA

	DELTA STATE	PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
Territory	18,000 sq. km	1,000,000 sq. km (*)
Population	4,000,000	12,439,755 (October 2004)
Civil Service	39,042 (2004)	62,000 (September 2005)

(*) **NOTE:** Ontario's territory is larger than Nigeria's territory of 923,768 sq. km.

It is instructive to note that, while Delta State's territory is 1.8% of Ontario's, and its population is 32.15% of Ontario's, its civil service is 62.97% of Ontario's. If the Province of Ontario with

such a vast territory, with a significant proportion of it in harsher terrain than that of Delta State, and with a population thrice that of Delta State, can be effectively and efficiently managed by a civil service of 62,000, the size of Delta State's civil service is bound to raise serious policy questions. It is preposterous for the government to blame the "advent of democracy" for the increase in the size of its civil service. The increase is a reflection of the absence of a vibrant private sector in Delta State. Thus, the public sector of the State presents itself as the inevitable employer. While this phenomenon is replicated across the country, it, however, indicates the inability or failure of the Delta State government to attract and retain private investment to the state. In the absence of a robust private sector, the process of industrialization and economic development would be a difficult task. A more focussed and sustained strategic approach would be required to ensure the influx of private sector investment in the state.

As the government is the main employer in the State, it is important that each segment of the state population is equitably represented in its civil service. Just as Delta State demands its just share of the national cake, each local government council of the State also has the right to demand its just share of the Delta cake. To address this issue, the **Facts Behind the Figures** of the Ibori administration would need to provide a breakdown of its civil and public servants by local government of origin in each state sector - ministries, educational institutions, health institutions, etc. Such information should also include the population of each local government as a measurement of its representativeness in Delta State's public institutions. This revelation will expose the real **facts behind the figures**.

■ **Renewed Federalism**

The revenue accrued to Delta State as reported in **Facts Behind the Figures, 1999-2004** vividly illustrates the fiscal injustice of the federal government's fiscal allocation system vis-a-vis Delta State.

According to the report, between "1999 and 2004, the actual revenue received from the Federation Account was N244.35bn. This is estimated to be approximately 4.6% of the revenue derived by the Federation from Delta State during the period. Over N170bn or approximately 70% of the statutory allocation released to the state was in respect of 13% derivation."

Proponents of federalism have argued for the restoration of the federal principles as were practised in Nigeria before the advent of military rule in January 1966. How much do states like Katsina, Borno, Jigawa, Nassarawa, Taraba, for example, contribute to the federation account? And how much do they receive from the federation account vis-a-vis Delta State? The formula used to calculate this allocation system needs to be revised in favour of states like Delta State whose resources sustain Nigeria's economy. Each federating unit must exercise exclusive jurisdiction over its natural resources - oil and gas, diamond, gold, agriculture, etc. - and pay corresponding taxes to the federal government. In line with this proposal, references to state, local government and state capital must be deleted from the Nigerian Constitution, as these are areas of exclusive state jurisdiction. If a state, like Kano, for example, elects to establish twice the number of local governments as Delta, then it must be able to generate its internal resources to cater for those local governments and must not expect to do so at the expense of any other state. The overbearing dependence of states on federal allocation to sustain their existence is injurious to federalism. Contiguous states that cannot survive on their own should consider fusion as an alternative. The

idea of creating impoverished states in order to acquire a lion's share of the "national cake" must be discarded.

■ Expenditure Profile

While it is encouraging that "Delta State Government recognizes that efforts must be directed towards reducing Recurrent Expenditure in favour of Capital Expenditure which benefits the majority of the population," we are compelled, however, to comment on this vexing issue. The critical element is the absence of a defined formula in resource and budgetary allocation with reference to capital projects for the local government councils. Granted that politics is about who controls the power to allocate and distribute resources, it is nevertheless vital that such dispersal of public good be based on a sense of justice, if the State's critique of federal fiscal injustice is to have any credibility. The place to measure this is the government's expenditure profile of capital projects in the state's local government councils.

We question the formula used to determine the value of capital projects in the various local government councils of Delta State. For example, while N10,273,551,659 of capital projects were expended in Ethiope West, N15,916,260,040 in Oshimili South, N5,483,064,003 in Ughelli North, N5,871,353,758 in Uvwie, N9,222,187,780 in Warri South and N6,290,187,119 in Ndokwa East, it is baffling that Sapele and Okpe local government councils attracted only N4,120,514,611 and N2,091,972,108 respectively, for a combined total of N6,212,486,719 for the entire Okpe Kingdom. The combined total for Ethiope West and Ethiope East is in excess of N16,000,000,000, like that of the combined total for Oshimili North and Oshimili South, for example. What is the population of these areas compared to that of the Okpe Kingdom (Okpe and Sapele local government councils)? Is the allocation of capital projects a determinant of the access to political power in Delta State? If correct, is this not the same practice at the federal level that is justifiably vilified by Delta State?

Since the Delta State Government has invited public review of its performance, one area that needs exposure is the contracting sector. Transparency must be total and not selective. Thus, it is imperative that the Delta State Government publishes the list of contractors it had awarded contracts to since 1999, indicating the following: -

Name of contractor.

Value of contract.

Local Government origin of the contractor.

Political affiliation of the contractor.

Nature of the contract.

When the contract was awarded

Anticipated completion date.

When the contract was actually completed.

Quality of work.

This will provide the public with a critical source of determining the fairness, equity, non nepotism, and non-partisanship of the Delta State Government. It is public knowledge that governments in Nigeria - **local, state, and federal** - use the award of contracts as a political tool, and that the culture of political contracting is inextricably linked to corrupt business practices.

Thus, as a regime that has chosen the path of transparency and accountability, it is in the interest of the Delta State Government to provide this vital information. The government should also direct local government council chairmen to provide similar information in their respective jurisdictions, with an analysis of the impact of their governance on their respective population and community - employment generation, small business opportunities, public sanitation, markets, etc.

In the breakdown of actual recurrent expenditure for the period under review, we note that overhead cost accounted for 40%, personnel cost accounted for 38% and consolidated cost consumed 22%. One of the reasons adduced for the high overhead cost was the increase in the number of “official vehicles” and the cost of servicing them. How much was spent on servicing these “official vehicles?” How many official vehicles are assigned to each government official, including the governor, the deputy governor, the commissioners, legislators, advisers, permanent secretaries, local government council chairpersons, etc? Is there a mechanism in place to check against the fraudulent use of “official vehicles?” The report failed to grapple with these vital questions which could have pointed us to potential areas of waste in the polity.

The report made several claims which are difficult to substantiate. For example, we are told that “existing government primary schools have been rehabilitated, equipped and adequately staffed,” that “schools have been transformed as a result of massive rehabilitation, reconstruction and provision of furniture, equipment and social amenities . . . ,” and that in the Health sub sector “existing hospitals and health centres have been renovated and equipped...” and that “some of the most significant developments in the Health Sector comprise the renovation and upgrade of the four Specialist Hospitals in Agbor, Sapele, Warri and Ughelli...” While I cannot account for other local government councils, my investigations review that the reference to “rehabilitated, equipped and adequately staffed” primary schools does not apply to schools in either Sapele or Okpe local government councils, as most of these schools are still without chairs, tables, books, etc. Furthermore, we have not witnessed “renovation . . . upgrade . . . and equipment” at the Sapele Specialist Hospital.

The section on “**Capital Expenditure by Ministries and Government Agencies.**” contains separate entries for the environment: - N16,240,000 for the Environmental Protection Agency and N1,261,116,394 for the Ministry of Environment. It would have helped if the report had clarified the areas of jurisdiction of these environmental bodies, regarding their overlap and duplication.

■ **Comparative Development Indices**

The report made profound statements which need to be clarified by further investigation and analysis. According to the report, from 1999 to 2004, the percentage of homes in Delta State with portable water rose from 31.7% to 52.1%, the percentage of homes with refuse disposal facilities rose from 45% to 74% , and the percentage of Deltans classified as poor dropped from 62% to 42% respectively. Based on our knowledge of Delta State, it is difficult to rely on these claims. For example, on what minimum salary is the poverty level based? What percentage of the workforce has permanent employment? If 74% of homes have refuse disposal facilities, then how do we explain the filth and refuse that are at every street corner in towns and villages of the State? In fact, what do we mean by “refuse disposal facilities?”

■ **Sanitation and Waste Management**

The report described the situation of sanitation and waste management in Delta State as “ugly.” It also stated that “this is a Local Government responsibility.” The pictures in the SANITATION section of the report vividly demonstrate the appalling state of sanitation and waste management in the various local government councils. Since this is an area of local government jurisdiction, it is imperative that citizens hold their respective local government councils accountable for this file.

Concluding Remarks

As noted in the introduction above, the publication of this report is a welcome contribution to the debate on transparency and good governance in Delta State. And as I have shown in the above pages, there are several blanks that need to be filled by the Ibori administration. Some of the properties of good governance are equity, equality, justice, fairness, objectivity and transparency. These are evident in the distribution of capital projects and employment, for example. In order to address these questions, the Ibori administration would need to provide the details requested in the above pages.

If **Facts Behind the Figures** is an accountability of the Ibori leadership, it is also an empowerment for Deltans to monitor the performance of their elected officials. Citizens should seize this opportunity to ask their local government council chairmen to account for their stewardship in their respective jurisdictions, with an analysis of the impact of their governance on the population and community - employment generation, contracts awarded, small business opportunities, public sanitation, markets, etc. The failure of electorates to monitor and comment on the performance of their elected representatives is a major drawback in any polity. This failure has emboldened successive Nigerian governments - local, state, and federal - to constantly raid the treasury of the respective jurisdictions. An inept or corrupt leadership flourishes because of the support it derives from the followership.