SDN

Our work in the Niger Delta

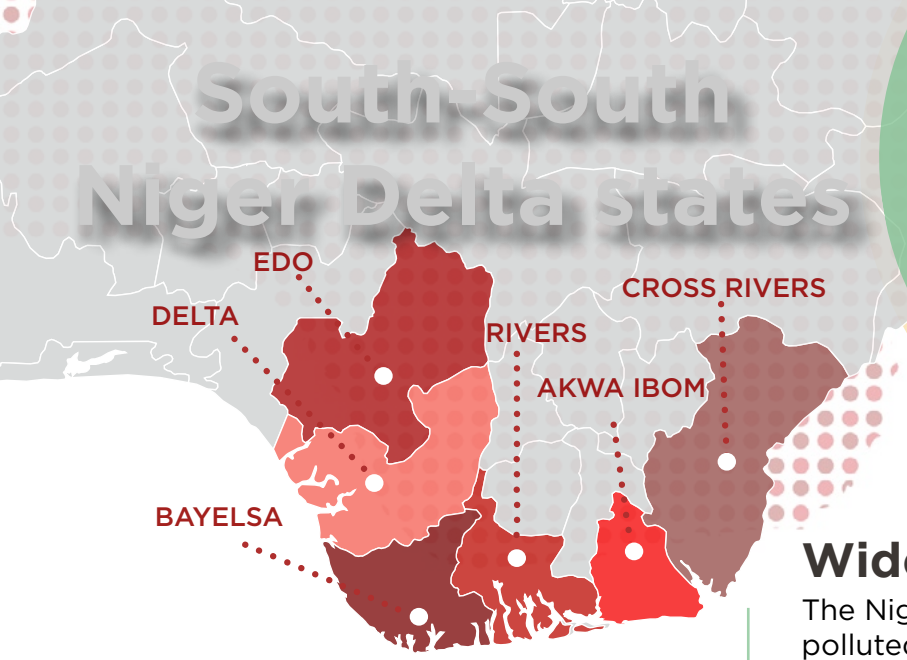
Who we are

Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) is a charity working in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. Our office is based in Port Harcourt, and is assisted by a small team in London, UK. We were established in 2004.

What we do

SDN supports the efforts of those affected by the negative impacts of the extractives industry and weak governance in the Niger Delta. We work with communities and engage with governments, companies, and other key stakeholders to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights—including the right to a healthy environment. Guided by principles of participation, inclusion and non-discrimination, SDN promotes the perspectives and experiences of those living in the Niger Delta at the centre of all of our work, and encourages transparency and accountability between all actors in the region.

South-South Niger Delta states



Where we work

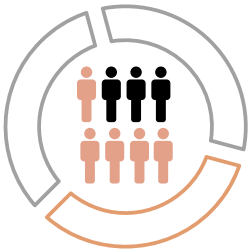
Our work focuses on the Niger Delta, particularly those states responsible for the highest levels of oil and gas production: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

Lack of livelihood options:

The oil and gas industry has dominated the regional economy and stifled the development of other livelihoods. The revenues it generates have reduced the incentive for government and businesses to invest in the wider economy. This also means young people are more likely to enter dangerous livelihoods such as oil theft and criminal gangs, which are widespread across the Niger Delta.

Unemployment rate regularly exceeds

35%

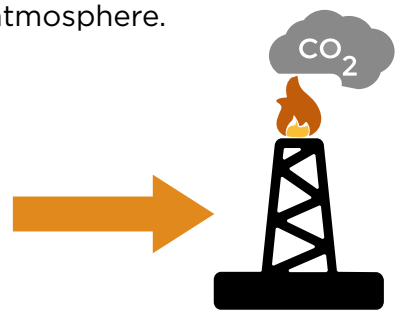


Widespread pollution:

The Niger Delta is one of the most polluted environments on Earth. Millions of barrels of oil have been spilled over decades and recent research estimates that children are twice as likely to die in their first month of life if their mother lived near an oil spill before conception. Huge quantities of natural gas are also wasted through flaring each year—in 2018, flared gas had the potential to generate more energy than the total amount of electricity consumed in Nigeria, and this emitted an estimated 25 million tonnes of CO2 in to the atmosphere.

25 MILLION

tonnes CO2 from gas flaring in 2018



Weak governance and lack of basic services:

Mismanagement of Nigeria's natural resources, weak regulation and high levels of corruption have undermined development in the region. Oil companies operate well below the standard of other countries, resulting in high levels of pollution. The huge revenues from the oil and gas industry have been squandered. Corruption was estimated to cost $1,000 per person in 2014—equivalent to 1/3 of GDP.

44%

People in Nigeria said they paid bribes for public services in 2018

Conflict:

The Niger Delta has experienced waves of militant conflict since the 1990s as groups vent grievances and vie for control of oil and gas revenues. With a very high number of illicit small arms and light weapons reportedly in circulation in Nigeria, everyday violence is common, including criminal, intra-communal, and other conflicts. 1/20 households experienced a bereavement due to conflict between 2010 and 2017.

20%

Households affected by conflict from 2010-2017

Our Focus

1

Protecting the environment

We aim to reduce the negative environmental impact of the oil and gas sector, and demonstrate clean energy alternatives. Our work includes documenting, and making public, the extent of pollution, working with the Nigerian environmental regulators to strengthen their work, and supporting the National Assembly to improve environmental legislation.

2

Promoting good governance

We support local civil society organisations and the public to hold government and the oil companies to account and aim to ensure everyone in the Niger Delta can participate in free, fair, and credible elections. Our work includes election observation and reporting, supporting women to engage in politics, and working with communities to engage government to access budgets and plans, and to demand better services in response to their needs.

3

Fostering sustainable livelihoods

We strive to demonstrate the potential of economic opportunities outside of the oil and gas sector, and support vulnerable young people who are making a living in risky ways to enter safe, decent work. We work in some of the most difficult locations in the Niger Delta running livelihoods projects to demonstrate their potential to communities, development donors, the government, and the private sector.

4

Supporting peace and security

We advocate to persuade the government and oil companies to listen to the concerns of those living in the Niger Delta, and to deliver long-term development interventions. Our work includes supporting dialogue and mediation between local communities, policy work with government, and working with at-risk groups to reduce local conflict and intra-communal violence, such as cultism.

Protecting the environment

Highlight

Documenting and improving the response to oil spill pollution

In 2013, SDN developed the Oil Spill Monitor, an online tool used by the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA, a government regulator) to record and manage the response to oil spills, and make this information public. In 2019 we updated the Oil Spill Monitor to improve its functionality to become the central tool used to record and respond to oil spills.

> *Having oil spill records published publicly... has improved transparency in the oil and gas industry. The platform has also increased the pace with which decisions are taken by providing readily accessible data for officers to query anytime, anywhere.* - Mohammed Gumsuri, Senior Environmental Scientist, NOSDRA

The Oil Spill Monitor has been used by academics, civil society organisations, and the public to understand the impact of oil spills in the Niger Delta—one study shows that children are twice as likely to die in their first month of life if their mother lived near an oil spill before conception. Before the Oil Spill Monitor, it was difficult for the public to access information on oil spills. Now this data is available, it has improved the relationship between NOSDRA and communities, who were previously sceptical about its work; improving transparency and ensuring an effective response to oil spills.

> *The creation of the oil spill monitor has enhanced transparency and hence, synergy and trust between government and host communities.* - NOSDRA staff member

Oil Spill Monitor and Gas Flare Tracker Update project, supported by the Facility for Oil Sector Transformation, 2018-2019

Technical assistance to the **Nigerian Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency**

Highlight

Promoting good governance

Supporting communities to hold government to account

SDN works with communities, supporting them to hold government to account. Conflict, corruption, and mismanagement of government resources are common in the Niger Delta, but through holding government to account, change is possible.

For example, SDN worked with Nonwa community in Rivers State to develop a Community Monitoring and Advocacy Group (CMAG). This 'CMAG' worked with its community to collectively define Nonwa community's development priorities.

SDN supports CMAGs, like the one in Nonwa community, to access government budgets and plans—where available—and to engage with government agencies to highlight their concerns and demands, holding them to account on what they have committed to deliver.

Nonwa's Community Secondary School building had been unfit for use since 2015; the roof was leaking and collapsed, and its doors and windows were broken. The CMAG established that the school's renovation was a clear priority for the community. With SDN's support, Nonwa CMAG persistently engaged with local government and relevant ministries until they were successful in getting the school building renovated. It is now functional again, sending a powerful message to both the Nonwa community and government.

> *We are recognised by our Community Head and Chiefs in Council as a group that represents the Community. We will not relent in chasing our duty bearers to ensure development comes to this community.* - Collins Ndegwe, Chairman Nonwa CMAG.

Environment and Governance Framework for the Niger Delta project, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2016-20

Fostering sustainable livelihoods

Highlight

Promoting digital sector livelihoods in Port Harcourt

In 2017, and in collaboration with the Ken Saro-Wiwa Foundation, SDN established the Ken Saro-Wiwa Innovation Hub in Port Harcourt, the largest city in the Niger Delta. Ken Saro-Wiwa, after whom the Innovation Hub is named, was a prominent writer and environmental activist, who was hanged by the military government in 1995 for his actions promoting human rights and protesting against Shell's activities in Ogoniland.

The Innovation Hub provides mentoring and training to individuals and groups trying to create or improve their livelihoods through the digital technology sector, with the aim of fostering a self-sustaining digital business community in Port Harcourt. Since 2018, the Innovation Hub has delivered workshops to over 3,000 participants, become one of just seven digital innovation hubs to partner with Facebook for their Nigeria programmes, and developed four start-up businesses, which now employ 22 people. These start-ups have also secured in-kind investments from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Delta State Investment Agency, and two won places on the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Programme. One of the start-up participants of the Innovation Hub applies digital technology to advance agriculture in the Niger Delta, and reflects:

> *I was among those young entrepreneurs that starts their businesses with just ideas and zeal, without practical knowledge on how to structure a business. The [Innovation Hub] Mentorship Programme is equipping me to build a sustainable business and helping me to tackle the challenges that comes with my business.* - Okorode Christian. Founder, Millionaire Farms Ltd

Niger Delta Stabilisation Programme, supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2017-2020

Highlight

Supporting dialogue between government and ex-agitators, and promoting long-term development

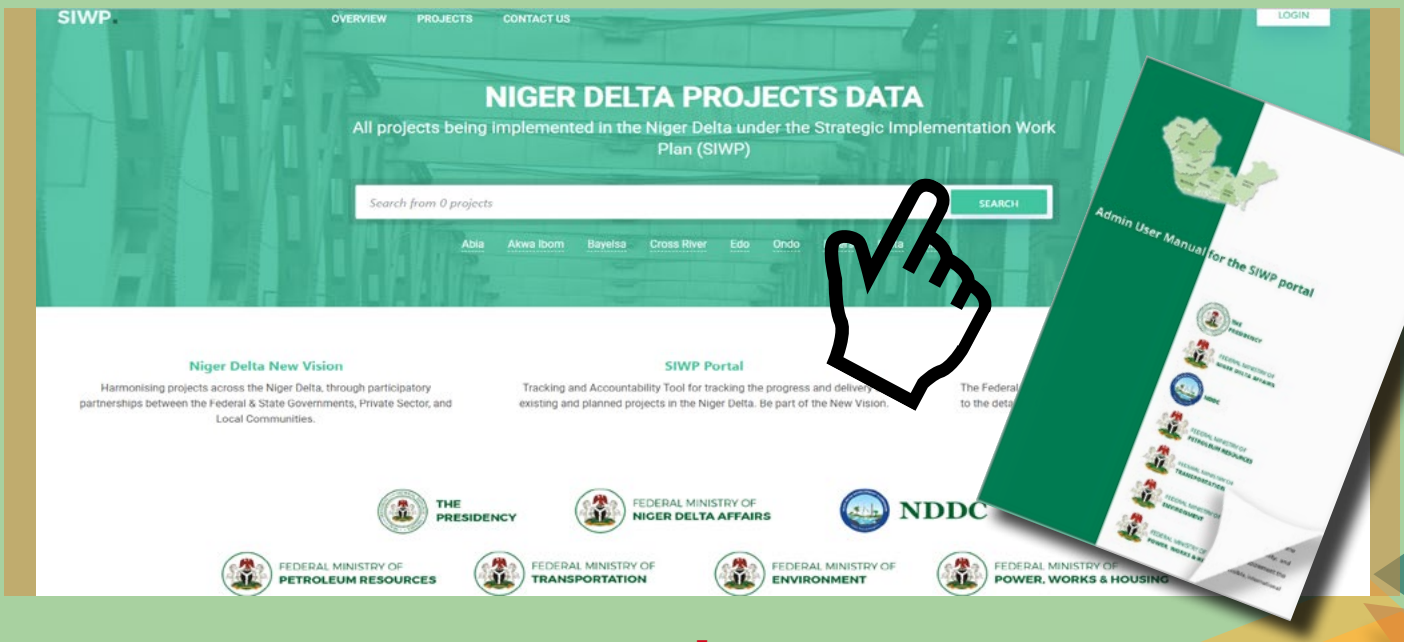
Supporting peace and security

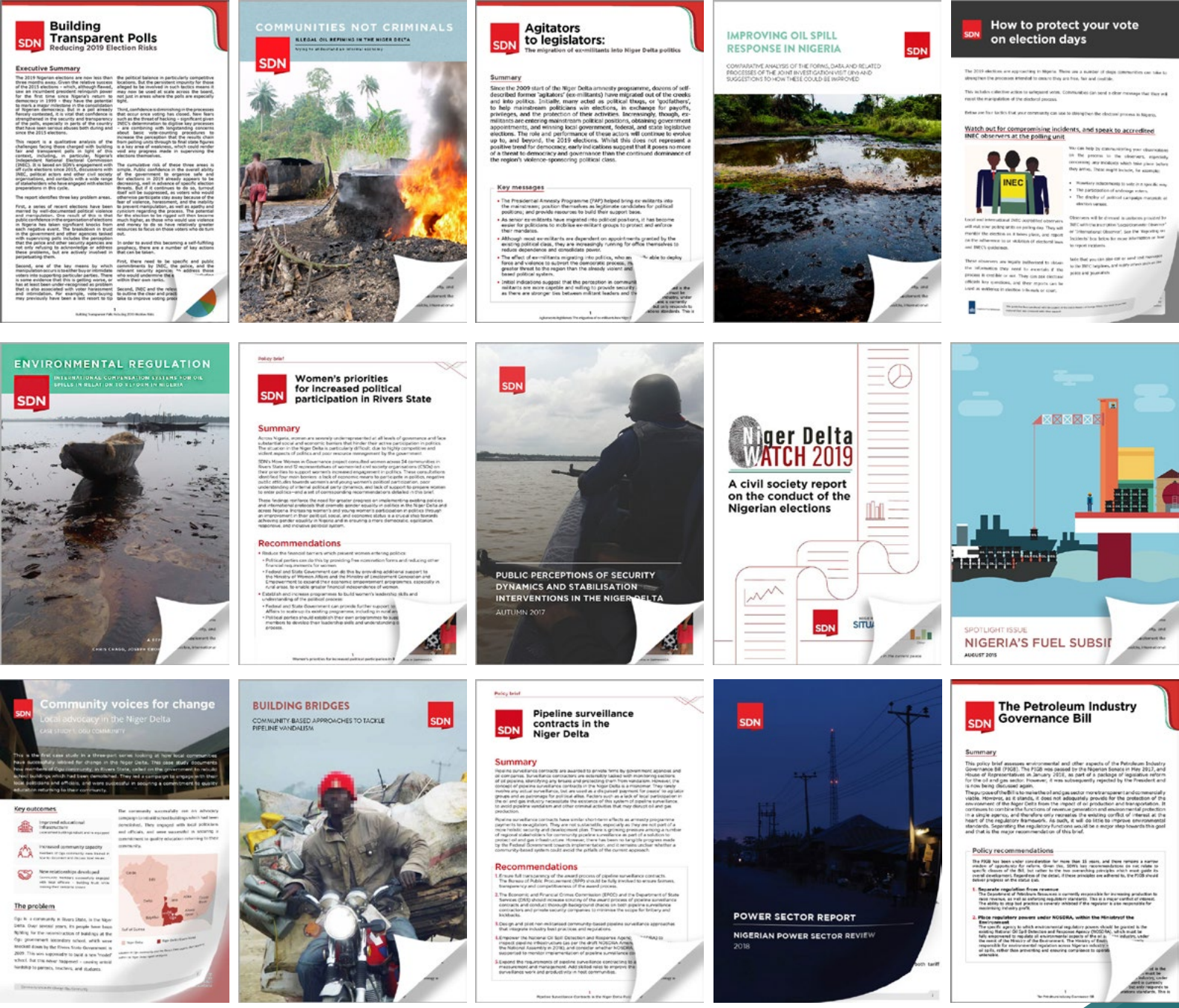
After a sharp increase in militant activities and the bombing of oil pipelines in 2016, SDN, alongside others, promoted and supported dialogue between the Federal Government and ex-agitators.

This resulted in the Strategic Implementation Work Plan, an initiative of the Office of the Vice President and the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on the Niger Delta, to establish a coordinated plan for long-term peace and development. SDN worked with government ministries to produce this plan, and we are the only NGO with observer status in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Niger Delta. SDN is continuing this high-level collaboration, working with the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, to set up a public online portal to increase the visibility of development projects in the Niger Delta and the status of their progress. SDN is also working with representatives from the Niger Delta region, such as the Pan-Niger Delta, Forum to improve how they consult and communicate with communities across the region and represent their interests to Federal Government.

SDN's trusted, independent position, and our local presence, means we are often relied upon to bring different groups together and find solutions.

Niger Delta Stabilisation Programme, supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2017-2020





Selected SDN research and publications, visit our website for more information.

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