

Waterfront Regeneration in Niger Delta and its Impact on Waterfront Settlements in Port Harcourt Metropolis

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Abstract

The study analyze waterfront regeneration in Niger Delta and the problems bedeviling regeneration of the waterfront settlements in Port Harcourt, with an objective of ascertaining the socio economic, land use and physical development characteristics of the waterfronts. It also identifies constraints militating against effective regeneration of the waterfront settlements and examines how effective were past efforts in addressing the problems of waterfront has been. Data were gathered from owners of buildings and heads of households in the various selected waterfront settlements using Cluster sampling to group the settlements based on their location while simple random sampling technique was used to select seven waterfront settlements with the use of questionnaire and personal interview. Data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages for the research questions. Findings reveals that the major constraint to waterfront regeneration was the fear of losing their houses, and failure of successive Governments to fulfill their promises, the preferred approaches for regeneration were transformation, complete clearance and revitalisation respectively. The study therefore suggest that Government should create a special purpose entity that will be responsible for the regeneration of the various waterfront settlements, the community should fully be involved in any regeneration project from the inception to the completion of the project and the government should draw up development plans with timelines for regenerating each settlement.

Keywords: Regeneration, Waterfront, Waterfront Regeneration, Waterfront Settlements

1. Background

Most of the children born in the waterfronts are exposed to the criminal activities and are endangered with this unhealthy situation. This may lead to most cities in the Niger-Delta region especially in Port Harcourt running the risk of losing the next generation. The practical implication of leaving the waterfronts in their present state is that more than sixty percent of the population of Port Harcourt will continue to live in sub human conditions without any form of infrastructure.

Waterfront settlement, also called waterside started as informal settlements where farmers and fishermen who brought in food and fish from the hinterland and riverine communities to Port Harcourt to sell, made their temporary homes during their trips. Waterfront settlements were not popular in the city of Port Harcourt until after the civil war. They actually started as a small group of houses but have grown over the years to very large settlements with some of these settlements having populations' well over ten thousand persons. Waterfronts settlements are now found all around the coastlines of Port Harcourt.

Obafemi and Odubo (2013) put the total number of waterfront settlements in Port Harcourt to be Forty-nine (49) and estimated the population of the waterfronts to account for about 65% of the city's population. On his part, Kio-Lawson (2014) put the total number of waterfronts settlements at thirty-two. Amnesty International (2010) estimates the population of the waterfronts settlers to be between 200,000 and 500, 000. The very high crime rate in the waterfront settlements, presence of mafia style gangs and the use of the waterfronts as easy gateway for militias and criminals into and out of the city of Port Harcourt undetected, and absence of any form of infrastructure in these settlements have been a major concern to succeeding governments in Rivers State so far. In fact the living conditions in the waterfronts areas are subhuman.

The social and environmental problems associated with them had been nightmarish to both government and residents of the city. Though it has been established that "housing famine" in the city has been responsible for their springing up, the continuous astronomical increase in the city's population had fuelled the expansion of these informal settlements (Kio-Lawson, 2013). The city of Port Harcourt has grown from a population of 235,093 in 1963, to a

population over 1.5 million people (NBS, 2012). As a result of the growth due to the influx of people into Port Harcourt from the rural areas and other states in Nigeria in search of blue collar jobs, there was an increase in rental and land values beyond the reach of the low income earners. This rapid growth is as a result of the Rivers State being host to several multi-national oil companies.

The resulting implication was a high cost in renting residential accommodation in the city especially in the planned residential areas (Kio-Lawson, 2013). The difficulties in affording the high rent charged by private landlords compelled some residents to move away to provide “a roof over head” at the waterfront along the coastline where land is less desirable and cost of erecting a home is relatively low cost (Kio-Lawson, 2014). There are many more waterfront settlements scattered across the Creeks in Rivers State and other major Cities in the Niger Delta.

In developed countries, waterfronts are focal points in many cities, with the wealthy and very influential in the society owning houses or living in them. They are areas of natural beauty, commercial potential and desirability. These areas have high value commercial and residential properties with great investment potential. In developed countries waterfronts are developed with modern infrastructure like good road network, electricity and water supply etc. The waterfronts in the developed countries are continuously being regenerated to meet their needs of the twenty- first century and having sustainability in mind.

In Rivers State, an attempt by the erstwhile administration in 2008 planned to carry out a comprehensive regeneration of all the waterfronts was met with street protests, litigation and violence as past attempts at urban renewal led to mass displacement of the inhabitants of the waterfronts. During the Military era, the Rivers State government also tried to deal with the waterfront settlement problem by building Low income housing estates at for example Aggrey road waterfront and Ndoki waterfront to improve the environmental condition and enhance the quality of life of the average resident but the houses were eventually sold to the highest bidders with very few of the waterfront dwellers benefitting from the scheme. The study therefore undertakes to analyze the problems bedeviling regeneration of the waterfront settlements with a view to proffering solutions so that the waterfronts can be redeveloped and

regenerated without massive displacement of the inhabitants and with minimal government support. The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Ascertain the socio economic, land use and physical development characteristics of the waterfronts.
- ii. Identify constraints militating against effective regeneration of the waterfront settlements.
- iii. Examine how effective were past efforts in addressing the problem of waterfront.

2. Literature review

2.1. Meaning of waterfront and urban regeneration

Waterfront regenerations were driven by the obsolescence and abandonment of vast land and industrial areas in the cities which have been entering a postindustrial phase, including areas of former port activity freed up by the industrialization and containerization of port activity (Bruttomesso, 2001). Bruttomesso identifies three types of activities (3Rs) which waterfronts normally require; Recomposition i.e. giving a common unitary sense to the different parts, both physical and functional, of the waterfront, Regeneration meaning to revitalizing urban areas which can be of considerable size and often centrally located; and Recovery: the restructuring and restoration of existing buildings and structures.

Tsenkova (2002) stresses that a successful urban regeneration should incorporate social and environmental policies and this has resulted in the shift from urban renewal and revitalization to comprehensive urban regeneration. Roberts (2000) defines urban regeneration as a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject of change.

Couch and Fraser (2003) looks at regeneration as being concerned with the re-growth of economic activity where it has been lost, the restoration of social function where there has been dysfunction, or social inclusion where there has been exclusion and the restoration of environment quality or ecological balance where it has been lost. On their part Gibson and Kocabas (2001) cited in Turok (2004) states that urban regeneration is a holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach that embraces the three aims (the three e's- economy, equity and

environment); maintaining economic competitiveness, reducing inequality and protecting and embracing the environment and that suggest a new generation of partnerships for policy development and delivery that includes innovative configurations of public, private and Non-Governmental Organizations sectors into more equal relationships. The Urban Land Institute (2014) defines regeneration as the process of improving an existing urban area in order to upgrade its physical, functional, economic, social, and environmental situation. Regeneration has self-betterment in mind, it is the tool that cities use to challenge their deficiencies, correct their missteps, and remake them. Through urban regeneration, a city can more fully live up to its potential.

Mathews (2004) cited in Nubi (2012) sees regeneration as deliberate, well designed and coordinated interventions to re-engineer a competitive future for deprived Nations and Communities over a given period of time. This is usually an economic, social, cultural and environmental intervention of in-wards investments to improve the quality of lives and infrastructure. Mathew's views on regeneration agree with the views of other authors cited but he introduces the dimension of intervention, which may be Government or Community initiated. Nubi (2012) the purpose of regeneration is usually to address a combination of Local needs and priorities which have to do with the following; Poverty and deprivation and youth unemployment, Low skill levels, uncompetitive industry, Bad Housing and a rundown physical environment, Loss of Community values and social cohesion, high crime and drug misuse and Urban renewal and redevelopment.

2.2 Comparative analysis between United Kingdom and Nigeria Regeneration from the London Dockyard and Regeneration Projects in Nigeria

Table 2.1: Comparison of regeneration in United Kingdom and Nigeria

Comparable variables	United kingdom	Nigeria
Institutional structure	Local government	Local government
Level of urban redevelopment	Urban regeneration	Urban renewal
Government role	Facilitator	Initiator and implementer
Urban regeneration approach	Public-private partnership	Government led
Level of public participation	From the beginning	Nil

Source: modified from Edmond (2012)

The brief comparison above shows that certain key elements for successful urban regeneration are still missing in the Nigeria context. These are in the area of roles of government, the approach been employed and involvement of the public. To start with, Nigerian government should begin to play the roles of facilitator as against that of implementer. The level of corruption among the Nigerian politician coupled with the supports usually been received from the civil servants is enough to show that Nigeria government should not be directly involved in the implementation of some key projects such as urban regeneration. This has a direct link with the types of approaches been adopted. Since there are now federal laws on the use of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Nigeria, government at all tiers should be encouraged to adopt the use of PPP in the execution of infrastructure, housing and other developmental projects. This will make the project to be private-driven and allow the government to concentrate on other demands of governance. Also, the involvement of the public in a programme like urban regeneration cannot be over emphasized. The community should be enlighten and carried along in the implementation of urban renewal projects. This can be done through the

community heads and other organized local institutions within the community. This will help build confidence in the community and made them feel as part of the projects thereby reducing the level of negative agitation and restiveness, if any.

2.3 Constraints militating against the effective Regeneration of Waterfronts in Port Harcourt

Some of the constraints that have militated against the effective regeneration of the various waterfronts scattered all over Port Harcourt are discussed below:-

i. Lack of resettlement plan for the displaced residents

Urban regeneration plans in Nigeria usually lack any plan on how to effectively accommodate the masses displaced (Shuaeeb, 2013). In carrying out regeneration programs, the Government does not usually have any prior plan to provide temporary accommodation for those who are displaced by the exercise. The settlements are usually hurriedly carried out by the Government. The inability to adequately accommodate further increases the growth of the informal settlements and exposes the populace to untold environmental hazards (Shuaeeb, 2013).

This creates a vicious cycle as those who are displaced move away from the demolished sites due to lack of accommodation and starts a news settlement all over.

ii. Lack of policy towards the regeneration of the waterfronts

Policy implementation and development of regeneration programs have successfully been carried out in developed countries to tackle environmental issues (Mustard and Ostendorf, 2008). In Nigeria very few states (if any) have a well thought out plan for the regeneration of informal settlements. In the case of Rivers there no Agency or ministry of Government that is specifically charged with the planning and implementation of waterfront regeneration policies. The ministry of Urban development tends to oversee the programmes of waterfront regeneration when there is an attempt at regeneration. There are not laid down policies or programs to regenerate the waterfront, they are only done at the discretion of the Governor.

iii. Lack of adequate information on the number of persons (or households affected by regeneration projects

In carrying out regeneration exercises government do not normally have adequate data on the number of person, households and structures affected by the project. They hurriedly demolished the settlements without taking note of the number of persons affected; they propose numbers of housing units they have to provide as alternative relocation areas without having a correct data on the number of persons affected (Obefemi and Odubo 2013).

The lack of accurate data affects planning which ultimately led to failure of the project, as the people not housed moves to start a new settlement.

iv. Ethnic sentiments of riverine and upland divide and minority ethnic group politics

The politics of Upland and Riverine in Rivers state is a major constraint in the successful regeneration of the various waterfronts settlements. The Riverine people who have most of the houses in the waterfronts see such exercises as been targeted at them and an attempt to displace them. Unfortunately the last unsuccessful attempts to regenerate the waterfronts were initiated by Governors from Ikwerre ethnic nationality, an upland part of Rivers State. Also the Okrikans who own part of Port Harcourt see it as an attempt by the Ikwerres to eject them from their land. The Ogonis too have raised similar objections (Kio-Lawson, 2014).

v. Failure of past efforts by government in waterfront regeneration

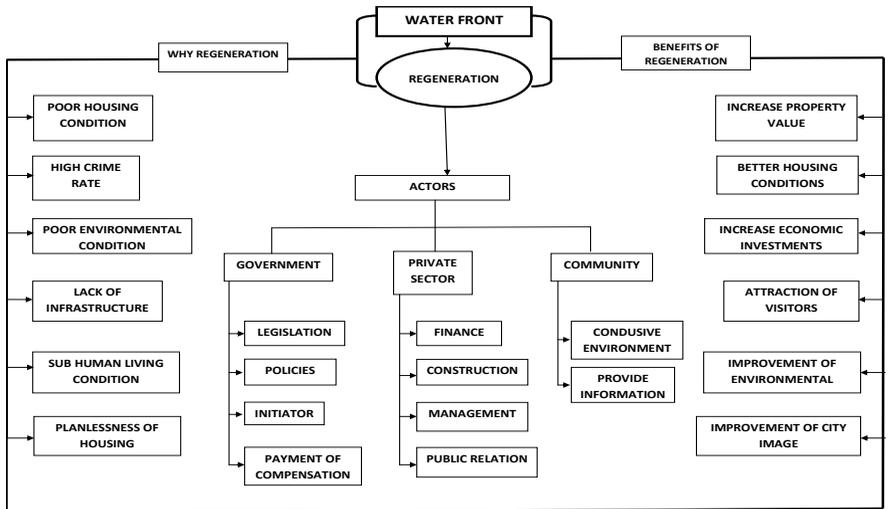
The failure of past regeneration programs have made the inhabitants to be skeptical of these programs of Government. They point to past unfulfilled promises of settlement by Government in similar exercises as the reason they oppose current regeneration efforts. The waterfront dweller point to failure of past efforts as been responsible for all the fears they have expressed about the perceived insincerity of The Rivers Government to keep their promises. These fears were proved when the Government suddenly demolished some waterfront settlements without fulfilling any of its promise (Obafemi and Odubo, 2013).

2.4 Peculiarities of the Port Harcourt Waterfront Settlement and challenges

Maxlock Consultancy (2009) in a study of the Port Harcourt waterfront outlined the peculiar characteristics of the waterfront to include:

- ❖ **Topography:** The waterfronts are located on low lying reclaimed land that is susceptible to flooding from the Bonny River during high tides. They are located about 3 metres above mean sea level.
- ❖ **Tenure:** The land is usually owned without any form of title and most buildings are occupied by Landlord and tenant families with the rental income providing an important financial main stay to the Owners.
- ❖ **Social Capital:** The communities are usually self-regulated and organized around mutual and economic values. They have a high degree of social cohesion.
- ❖ **Ownership:** The Communities are developed with no formal government interest or participation. They are responsible for reclaiming the land, provision of amenities like electricity.
- ❖ **Poor Sanitary conditions:** The waterfronts are characterized by poor sanitary conditions wastes are mostly dumped into the surrounding River or Creek.
- ❖ **Absence of infrastructure:** There is a near absence of basic social amenities that will make for a comfortable living. There are no roads, pipe borne water, schools and open spaces.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors Concept Design, 2018

The waterfronts settlements in the Niger Delta area are characterized by poor housing conditions, high crime rate, absence of infrastructure, poor environmental conditions and sub human living conditions; they are generally slums and derelict land providing opportunity for regeneration to link the rest of the city an expanse of water seen as supporting amenity and leisure activities. This era witnessed regeneration been solely carried out by the government but this is changing and government is now the initiator while the private sector carries out the regeneration in line with the urban regime theory. Waterfront regeneration is now based on Public Private Partnerships with the community fully involved in the process, while the government provides legislation and sets up the partnership the private sector carries out the actual construction. The schematic diagram above helps to explain the various actors in the regeneration process, the role they play and the benefits derivable from the process.

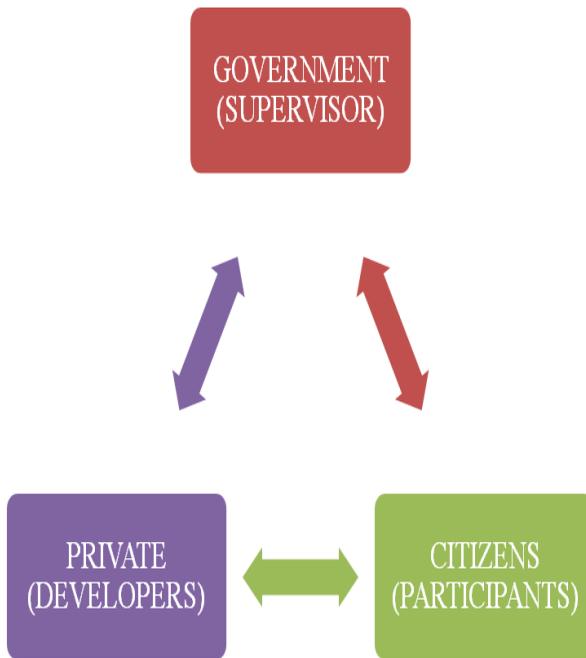


Figure 4: Public-private partnership with Residents participation

Source: Edmond (2012)

3. Methodology

The population for this study comprises of the owners of buildings and heads of households in the various selected waterfront settlements in Port Hacourt. This is because the houses in the settlements are owned by household heads and where they do not own the houses, they have lived in the waterfront settlement for a considerable period of time. Thus, would be able to provide relevant information for the study. The study adopted both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data used for this study was gathered through the use of survey methods, questionnaire and interview on waterfront regeneration using Cluster sampling to group the settlements into seven (7) based on their location while the Simple random sampling technique was used

to select seven waterfront settlements. The study identified 125,000 household out of the 5,000 population using Yamane formula to calculate the appropriate sample size. The actual sampled for the study were calculated and accumulated to (406). Each of the seven (7) settlements was administered with 58 questionnaires out of which a total of 374 which formed (92.1%) were filled completely and returned. The data collected was analyzed statistically using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

4. Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Table 4.1 below shows that the respondents of Bundu waterfront had 44.2%=Poor which is the highest rating to Government's previous efforts at regenerating the waterfronts in Port Harcourt. Urualla waterfronts came next with 41.8%=Poor. This is followed by Andoni Waterfront with 40.60%=Poor. The residents of Bishop Johnson Waterfront, Capt. Amangala Waterfront, Etche Waterfront and Akokwa waterfront all rated Government's previous efforts at regenerating the waterfronts as very poor with 32.80%, 39.0%, 29.6%, and 22.4% respectively. On the overall the waterfront front dwellers rated the Government's previous efforts at regenerating the waterfronts as very poor.

Table 4.1: Mean Rating of the waterfront dwellers on Government's previous efforts at regenerating the waterfronts in Port Harcourt

S/N	Place of Residence	N	Mean	S. D	% MEAN	MEAN Rating
1	Akokwa Waterfront	50	1.12	0.96	22.4.00 %	Very Poor
2	Urualla Waterfront	55	2.09	1.02	41.80%	Poor
3	Bundu Waterfront	50	2.21	1.33	44.20%	Poor
4	Capt Amangala Waterfront	57	1.9	0.77	38.00%	Very Poor
5	Etche Waterfront	56	1.21	1.48	29.60%	Very Poor
6	Bishop Johnson Waterfront	50	1.64	1.51	32.80%	Very Poor
7	Andonni Waterfront	56	2.03	1.47	40.60%	Poor
	Total	374	1.74	1.38	34.90%	Very Poor

Source: Field Survey 2017

NOTE: 80 and above= Excellent. 70-79=Very Good, 60-69=Good, 50-59 =Fair. 40- 50=Poor, Below 40=Very Poor

Table 4.2: Constraints militating against effective regeneration

S/N	Constraints militating against effective regeneration of waterfront	Frequency	Percent
1	Fear of losing houses	168	44.9
2	Government do not fulfill promises	90	24.1
3	Lack of regeneration policy by Government	66	17.7
4	Ethnic sentiments	50	13.4
	Total	374	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 4.2 shows that among the possible constraints listed for study, Fear of losing houses got the highest frequency of 168 making 44.9 %. This is followed by the option that Government do not fulfill promises made to the people (24.1%), then Lack of regenerating policy by Government. Ethnic sentiments have the least percentage of 13.4%.

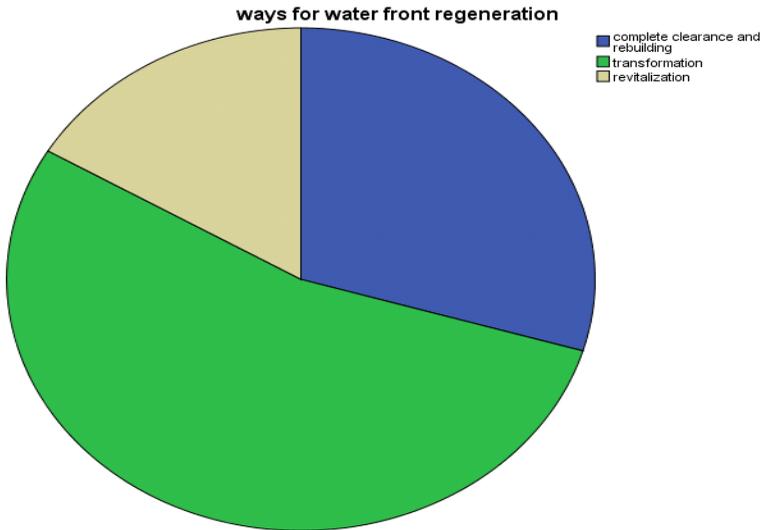


Fig. 4.1 Pie chart showing ways of waterfront regeneration

Figure 4.1 shows that (53.9%) of the respondents are in support of transformation approach towards the regeneration of the waterfronts, 110(29.9%) of the responded opted for complete clearance and rebuilding of the structures while only 62(16.5%) are in support of a revitalization approach.

Table 4.3: Frequency and simple percentage table showing the responses on some ways regeneration can be achieved in terms of Community Participation and Real Estate Ownership/Development

S/N	Ways of Regeneration	Not Effective F %	Fairly effective F %	Effective F %	Very Effective F %	Total F %
1	Private Sector	102 (27.4)	54 (14.4)	54 (14.3)	164 (43.9)	374 (100)
2	Government	73 (19.6)	37 (9.8)	67 (18)	197 (52.6)	374 (100)
3	Community	241 (64.4)	31 (8.4)	46 (12.2)	56 (15)	374 (100)
4	PPP	38 (10.3)	42 (11.2)	65 (17.4)	229 (61.1)	374 (100)

Source: Field survey 2017

Table 4.3 shows that out of the four ways waterfront regeneration can be done, the respondents preferred Public -Private Partnership more, with 229 (61.1%) seeing that method as the most effective approach. This is followed by Government Management with 197(52.6%) before Private Sector involvement having 43.9%. the least preferred is Community participation with 56(15%)

5. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Research findings

The study revealed the following

- i. The major constraint militating against the effective regeneration of the waterfront settlements of Port Harcourt is the fear of the dwellers losing their houses in course of the regeneration process.

- ii. The waterfronts are inhabited by low income earners who cannot afford the very high cost of accommodation in the city of Port Harcourt
- iii. Most of the buildings in the waterfront settlements of Port Harcourt are built with modern building materials.
- iv. The waterfront dwellers prefer transformation of the buildings as against mass clearance and rebuilding as an approach to regenerating the settlements.
- v. They dwellers are more inclined to the regeneration being carried out through public private partnerships as against government being solely responsible.

5.2 Conclusion

The continuous increase of the number of waterfront settlements and the menace caused by these settlements is becoming very worrisome and disturbing; it has become increasingly important that a solution be found to this problem. It is important at this point to know that regeneration of these settlements is no longer the sole responsibility of the state governments, as governments in developed countries have longed shifted from being an initiator and implementer to an initiator only, while the private sector takes the responsibility of financing and implementation of regeneration projects. It is appreciated that there is no quick fix solution to the problem of waterfront settlement but it will involve a wide range of planning, consultation and a strong political will for the waterfront to be successfully regenerated if the following recommendations is not taken with levity:

- i. The Rivers State Government should set up an agency with the responsibility of setting up partnerships for the purpose of regeneration of the various waterfronts settlements in Port Harcourt. This is because partnership is becoming the modus operandi of waterfront regeneration and it has proved to be a powerful instrument for accelerating the process of regeneration. The private sector should be encouraged to invest in regeneration programmes while enabling environment should be provided just as it is been done in other developed countries.
- ii. Community participation is essential for the success of any regeneration project. The community should be involved from the inception of the project, its implementation to its completion; with this the unnecessary litigation and protest as a result of waterfront regeneration will be avoided. However, there should be a census of households and the inhabitants of the

settlement; with this the government or the investor can plan for alternative accommodation such as high rise building and avoiding compensation payment.

iii. A special purpose entity should be created with the specific aim of managing the implementation of the regeneration project. This company will have to be independent from public authorities and private interest and the company will ensure that planning goals and objectives are met during the implementation phase of the project.

iv. There should be a department in the ministry of urban development with the responsibility of approving and monitoring development in the various waterfronts, as well as initiating and implementing policies that has to do with regeneration of the waterfronts. Thus, there should be development plans for the various waterfronts settlements as well as setting timelines for the development plans.

v. Mortgage finance banks should be encouraged to provide long term finance to investors that are willing to invest in the regeneration of the waterfronts and to the dwellers to enable them buy buildings in the area when the process is completed as this would go a long way in solving to continuous challenges of urban renewal and regeneration caused by waterfront in the Niger Delta region.

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