

# Analysis of Development Models in the Niger Delta

## CASE STUDY ONE: THE AKASSA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

MAY 2014



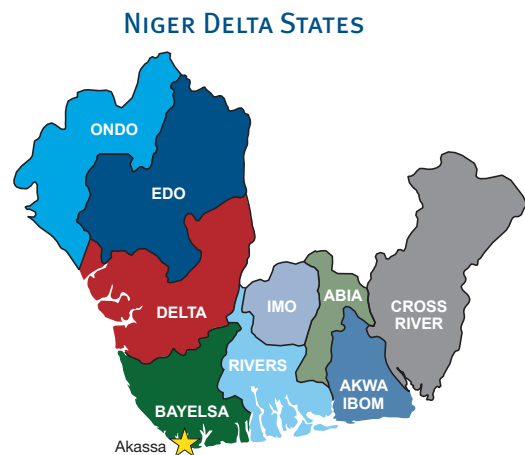
### Introduction

Oil extraction in the Niger Delta contributes significantly to Nigerian GDP and government revenue. Yet, the inhabitants of the resource-rich Niger Delta have not benefited proportionately from these oil revenues. The region performs poorly compared to the rest of the country on social indicators such as education, health and environmental quality. In addition, oil spills from deteriorating pipelines, illicit extraction and sabotage have contributed to environmental degradation, which has exacerbated the region's already low agricultural productivity. Spills often destroy farm lands and bodies of water important to the livelihoods of local communities, aggravating an already high unemployment rate among young people and raising the risk of civil unrest. In an attempt to address these challenges in the region, many top-down strategies for socio-economic development have been implemented; however, ongoing conflict and inconsistent support have hampered these efforts, leaving many of these projects incomplete or abandoned.

The Akassa Clan Territory, located in Bayelsa state in the Niger Delta, is one of the communities most affected by these challenges. The territory is comprised of 19 villages and 121 satellite settlements spread widely throughout forest land, wetlands and barrier islands. The prevalence of scattered, remote settlements makes it difficult to provide social services and promote sustainable human development in the region. In 1997, the Akassa Development Foundation concept was introduced by Pro-Natura, a non-governmental organization, as an alternative to top-down interventions.

### What is the Akassa Development Foundation?

The Akassa Development Foundation (ADF) is a community-led development intervention in the Niger Delta that manages a package of initiatives for the 3,000 households (18,000 community members) in the Akassa Clan Territory. This bottom-up approach to development is based on the premise of community ownership and responsibility for the planning, implementation and monitoring of projects. The organization selects, plans and implements annual development projects, such as health campaigns, infrastructure and conservation programs. The ADF has a 38-member general assembly made up of two members—one



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male and one female—from each of the 19 villages. It also features a nine-member board of trustees in charge of resolving conflicts, and a five-member secretariat that handles day-to-day operations. Moreover, under the general assembly are interest-based subgroups (e.g., women’s group, youth group, group of chiefs) that encourage members to organize around their specific interests, facilitating decision making.

### About the Models of Development and Experiential Learning (MODEL) Study:

The Models of Development and Experiential Learning study is a collaborative effort between the Brookings Africa Growth Initiative (AGI), Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) and Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER). The goal of MODEL is to identify, understand, document and share development models that address a broad range of constraints to economic growth and community well-being in the Niger Delta. As a part of this effort, AGI, NISER, and PIND undertook an assessment of the Akassa Development Foundation, surveying 323 households as well as holding focus group and in-depth interviews in August and September of 2013 in the Akassa community. The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework and an empirical estimation were used to analyze the ADF.

### Important Trends from the Akassa Analysis

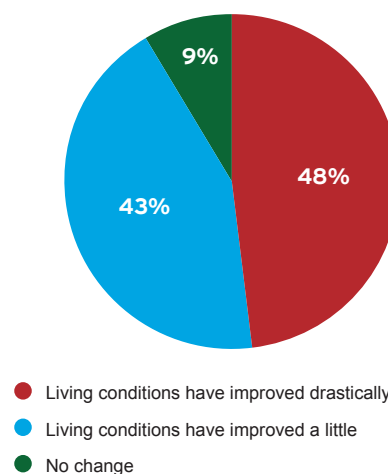
**A majority of respondents are involved in the ADF:** Over half of the respondents are involved or have a member of their household involved in the design and implementation of projects (56 percent) or setting the goals of projects (59 percent). Over 90 percent also report that community members have been asked to discuss and approve the rules that establish function, power and responsibilities in the ADF.

**A majority of Akassa respondents are satisfied with the ADF:** The descriptive statistics from the household survey showed that the majority of household heads were satisfied with the design and implementation of the project—nearly 93 percent. In addition, approximately 86 percent of respondents reported that the distribution of project benefits was equitable. Nearly 48 percent of household heads reported a drastic increase in general living conditions since the ADF was implemented, while 43 percent stated that living conditions have improved a little. Thus, an overwhelming majority of respondents found some level of improvement in the state of general living conditions of the Akassa community.

**Participation is important to satisfaction with the ADF:** Ninety-one percent of respondents felt their level of participation was sufficient. Results from the empirical estimation showed that involvement of the household heads or their family members in setting goals of the project; community involvement in discussing and approving the rules that establish function, power and responsibilities in the ADF; and involvement of households in project design and implementation all positively and significantly affect satisfaction with the ADF.

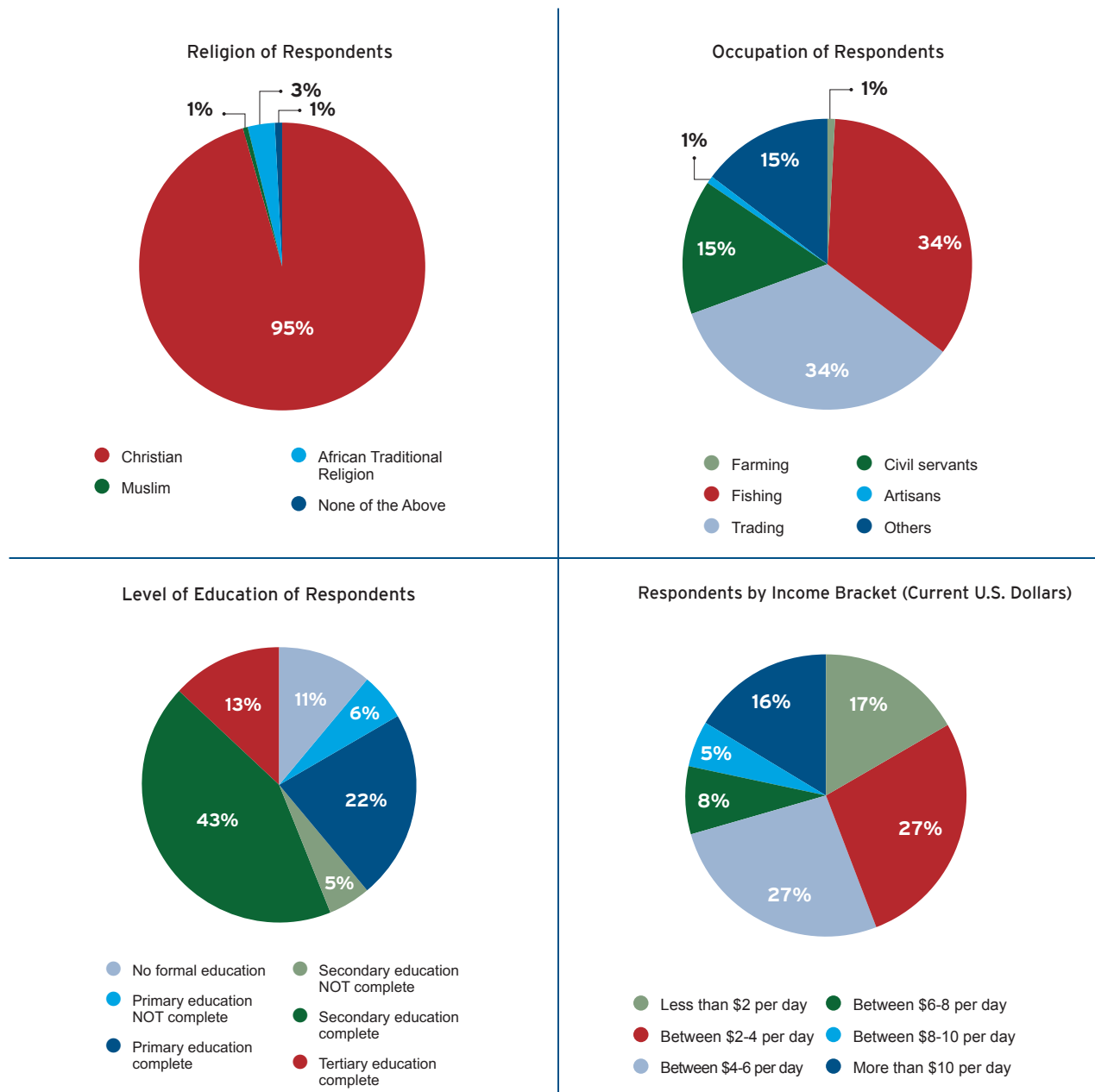
Perceived Impact of Akassa Development Foundation on General Living Conditions of the Community

*What has been the state of the general living conditions of the people of your community since the implementation of Akassa?*



**Akassa households are fairly homogeneous:** Based on the descriptive statistics, 95 percent of the household heads are Christian and 68 percent claim either farming or trading as their occupation. Shared religion can serve as a proxy for common understanding, defined as the extent to which members of a community share the same values, goals and vision. Common understanding is useful in facilitating decision making and levels of trust within the ADF.

**There is a high level of trust within the Akassa community:** A majority of the household heads (69 percent) reported that they believe that their vote counts in the election of political office holders in the Akassa community. This, along with the common understanding fostered by the homogeneity of the community, is another indication that there is a high level of trust within the Akassa community.



**There is no evidence that elite status impacts ADF beneficiary satisfaction:** Community-driven development projects are prone to capture of benefits by the elite (people with higher incomes or more education). In the ADF, income and education level of the household heads did not significantly impact satisfaction. In fact, a measure of the marginal effects of education on satisfaction showed that participants with a lower level of education are more satisfied with the design and implementation of the project. Thus, there is no evidence provided by the survey that elite capture impinges on beneficiary satisfaction within the ADF.

## Recommendations

More than 90 percent of randomly selected Akassa beneficiaries indicated that they are highly satisfied with the design and implementation of the ADF. Due to the high level of beneficiary satisfaction, the Akassa model should be considered as an option for replication in areas contextually similar to the Akassa Clan Territory. Based on the study, policymakers should consider the following recommendations:

**Emphasize community involvement:** Projects designed and implemented by the community are more likely to be compatible with local conditions. In the case of Akassa, when beneficiaries were involved in setting the goals and rules, beneficiary satisfaction with the intervention significantly increased. Further replications of the ADF model should consider how to retain these features from the original concept.

**Consider the level of trust and common understanding:** Policymakers should consider the level of trust and common understanding in communities that are being considered for development interventions similar to the Akassa Development Foundation. It is likely that the homogeneity of respondents is an indication that the Akassa community already has a high level of common understanding, which helps with decision making in the ADF.

## Areas of Further Research

The Akassa Development Foundation provides an opportunity to determine whether other design features of the organization are relevant to satisfaction of the members. The following features are of particular interest:

**The ADF subgroups:** The Akassa Development Foundation's organizational structure is comprised of a series of subgroups, representing women, youth and regional chiefs, among others. This feature appears to facilitate participation. In fact, layered decision making is a design feature of many successful community-led institutions. Further analysis into the perception of Akassa beneficiaries related to layered decision making could illuminate the components of Akassa that contribute to its success.

**The board of trustees:** In addition to the subgroups, Akassa also features a board of trustees responsible for conflict resolution. This board could be analyzed further to determine what types of conflict resolution mechanisms are used by the ADF. It would provide interesting information to determine whether the conflict resolution mechanisms of Akassa are working efficiently and contributing to member satisfaction.

**The ADF processes:** Beyond these examples, further examination of the Akassa Development Foundation's coordination, decision making processes and funding mechanisms could yield a more detailed list of successful design components for policymakers.