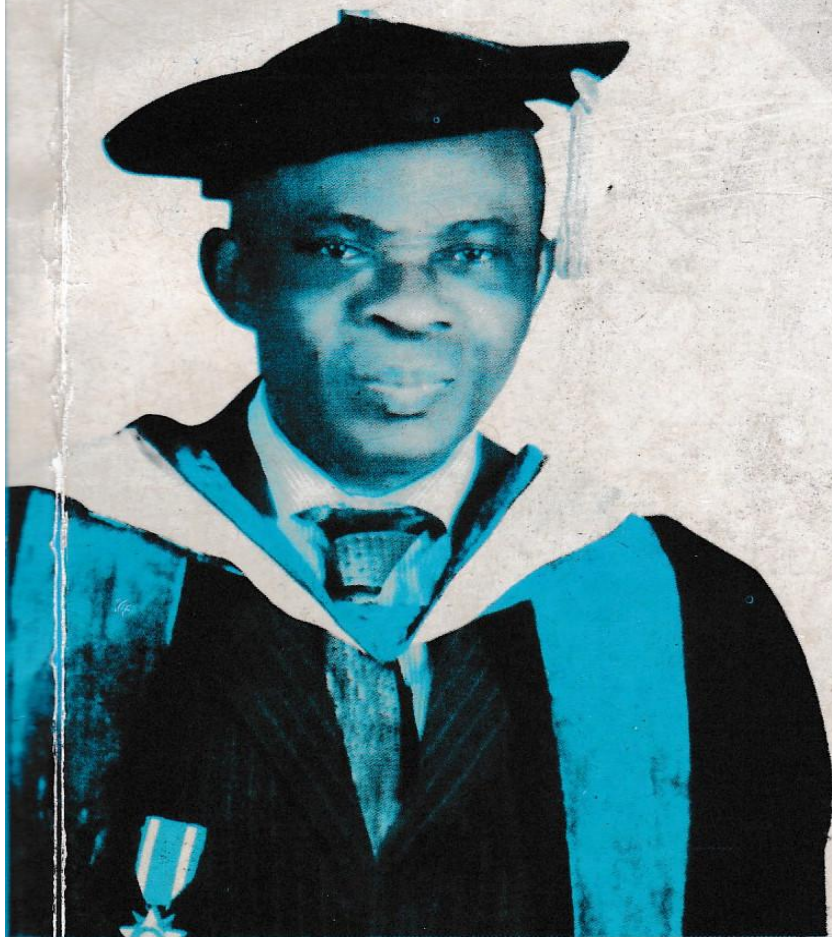


# SOCIOLOGY ON THE ASCENT

## *A FESTSCHRIFT*

In Honour of  
Professor Ekong Edem Ekong, OFR, FNRSA



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# **THE CHALLENGES OF CARE PROVISION FOR THE ELDERLY IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: THE NIGER DELTA REGION OPTION**

By

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## **Introduction**

The thrust of this presentation is to fill some gaps in the collaborative works of scholarship and practice in the provision of care for the elderly or seniors in an age of globalization. As studies in applied gerontology and development increasingly assumes mostly a comparative dimension, it becomes a development imperative posing some posers like:

- What will, for example, the US and Nigerian societies be like in 2030?
- While care-giving and provision are established and legislated norms under OAA in the US, what happens to care-giving in a society in transition like Nigeria?

As we advance more into this new millennium, more Americans and Nigerians than ever before will be in their 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> decades of life by 2030. For example, by 2030, those born in 1946 (known in the U.S. as baby boomers) will be 84 years and those born in 1964 will be 65. In the U.S., by 2030, there would be 71.5 million people aged 65 and older while the Nigerian projection will be about 7% of the population (FIFARS, 2004; NBS, 2005).

With the increasing graying of the population in the two climes, attention of demographers, economists, sociologists and gerontologists are increasingly drawn to the care needs of the elderly age cohort in an age of globalization.

## **Elder Care Provision in the US and Nigeria**

- In the US since 1935, under the Older American Acts (OAA), the state system provides social security that serves as cushion for senior

Americans. This social security serves the interest of all Americans in the senior age cohort.

- In Nigeria, the NPF and Pay as You Go (PAYG) prevailed until the Pension Act of 2004. This retirement benefit serves the interest and is enjoyed only by workers.
- In the US, such regulatory policies and programmes as
  - Rail Road Retirement Scheme
  - Veteran Benefit Services
  - Food Stamps, Congregate Meals, Home-Delivered Meals Programmes, Shopping Assistance Programme, Food Banker, Brown Bags Programme.
  - Community-based Services like Senior Centres, Meals-on-Wheels (MOW), Adult Day Care and Family Care-Givers Programmes, Medicare, Medicaid, Senior Housing etc are provided for the care and good of the elderly.
- In Nigeria, policies aimed at “packaging” the elderly are still in the drawing board.
- In Nigeria, beside the pension scheme that became more manifest during the Pension Act of 2004 under President Obasanjo's administration, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) serves only workers in government and established private employs.
- Pockets of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) such as The Presby Care, T. B. Joshua's The Synagogue of All Nations, The Catholics, etc provide care services to the elderly in Nigeria as opposed to replete of such in the USA.

### **The Challenges of Elder Care Needs**

As a result of changing times, changing economic and political fortunes and an increasingly shrinking world occasioned by issues and challenges of globalization, the elderly across cultures are confronted with care needs that range from:

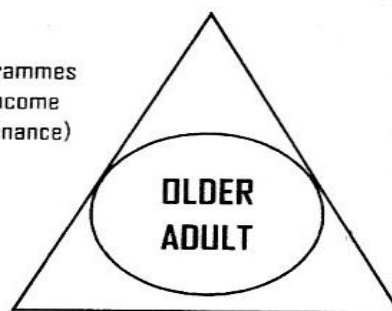
- Health care delivery
- Health care coverage
- Chronic illness and disability care
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Facilitative services e.g. Information and Referral (I&R), transportation, housing.
- Food and nutrition to enhance wellness
- Physical activities to enhance graceful ageing.
- Counselling and education.

- Screening and prevention of diseases
- Injury control.
- Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Individual Activities of Daily Living (IADLs).
- Poverty reduction programmes e.g. micro-financing of programmes.
- Projects involving the elderly to adapt and adopt the norms/values of the new age cycle.
- Livable social security programmes of pension, NHIS, etc.

These could be represented in the Diagram below:

**Community Needs/Services**

- Information and referral
- Counselling and educational programmes
- Volunteer and intergenerational income assistance programmes (micro-finance)
- Senior centres



**Long-Term care Needs/Services of Care Management**

- In-home services e.g. Atakpo care at Ibiaku Mbiakong Uruan
- Respite/Adult Care services
- Nursing Homes e.g. The Presby Care, etc.

**Support Services**

- Nutrition
- Mental health
- Housing
- Health and wellness
- Transportation
- Legal

In consideration of the picture of the elderly presented thus far, it is safe to predict that as society advances towards 2030, the age cluster of those 65 years and older will impact on social policies and services. In agreement with the observation by Wacker et al (2008), the elderly in Nigeria and other climes moving towards 2030 will, unlike the generations before them, be better educated, better off financially and will as a collectivity be beneficiaries of programmes, projects and policies currently in the legislative nurseries particularly in the third world and excluding advanced economies like the OECD countries where care needs and provision for the elderly is a norm.

As the gap in social inequality and mobility increase in terms of access and appropriation of the resources and wealth of the nations, quite a relatively high number of the elderly will live below poverty line which will no doubt have implications for the financial wellbeing and quality of life of the elderly across ethnic or geo-political divides in later

life in Nigeria. This is as a result of the impact the economy would have on care-givers at the levels of filial piety and non-formal levels of family, friends and neighbours that are inevitably caught in the web of globalization.

### **Issues and Challenges of Globalization and Political Economy with the Niger Delta Region (NDR) in Focus**

As a widely used concept, globalization conveys the idea that we all increasingly live in one world such that individuals, groups, nation-states and others become interdependent. Globalization means economic integration of nations and shrinking of national borders. It means opening up and reaching the 'ends of the earth' at no time with little or less costs. For Gobarchev, globalization means “Glasnost and Perestroika” – break the barrier of seclusion and inclusiveness and reach out to people on the other side of culture or of the world.

As used in debates in politics, business, human rights, political economy, the media and intellectual cross-currents, globalization finds expressive utility in the works of World Bank (2000) via Thomas Friedman, UN Programme in Public Administration and Finance – Fifteenth Session (2000), Okereke and Ekpe (2002: 170-182), Giddens (2006: 50) and Essoh et al (2007). In today's world, globalization seems to be on the tips of everyone's tongue.

### **Issues and Challenges of Globalization and Political Economy**

- Essentially, globalization
- Influences global production processes.
- Influences international distribution of labour
- Impacts today's world economies driven by corporate citizens a.k.a MNCs and TNCs as are replete in Nigeria and elsewhere in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world economy.
- Exerts remarkable influence on the politics and economies of states where the states or countries serve in most cases, mediating and supervisory roles to ensure that the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as they affect human rights, business and other phenomena are enforced as enshrined in Chapter Two, for example, of Nigeria's Constitution – 1999.
- Make states serve mediating and supervisory roles in the wheel of growth and development.
- Involves global circulation of goods, service and capital.
- Serves as channel of flow of information, idea and people.
- Entails increased international cooperation and competition between



firms and governments of nation states.

- Fosters accelerated technical change.
- Increases international flow of science and technology.
- Increases specialization and national skill endowments of countries.
- Enhances insurgency and counter-insurgency among states e.g militants in the NDR (MEND, MOSOP, the Egbezu Boys), Boko Haram, Isis, Alshabab, etc.
- Facilitates cross border or international terrorism (Hezbollah, Isis, Alquaeda, etc.), crimes and spying.

Involves and or means the breakdown of bi-polar politics occasioned by Post-World War II development.

### **The Niger Delta Region-Its People, Culture, Resources, Political Economy and the Elderly**

- Of the 36 states of Nigeria, six make up the core Niger Delta or South-South Geopolitical zone of Nigeria viz Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States.
- Of the 140.3 million peoples that the 2006 population census provided for Nigeria, some 40 million are in the Niger Delta Region (NDR).
- It is an area of many ethno-linguistic groups like the Uruan-Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Bini, Ogoni, Ikwerre, Itshekiri, Annang, Oro etc.
- In terms of location, resources (human and material) and image, Essoh (2004) and Akpan (2011) agree the NDR is quite strategic-economically, militarily and geopolitically.
- It is very rich in hydro-carbon, solid minerals, maritime facilities and tourism potentials.
- Beside being a gift both to Nigeria and Africa by extension, the Niger Delta Region (NDR) has considerably shaped Nigeria's geo-political boundaries and political economy.

### **This strategic importance of the NDR are manifested in its historic character thus**

- During the slave economy – a global phenomenon –the NDR sowed the seed that crystallized into the industrialization and urbanization of modern Europe and the Americas.
- While Europe and America benefitted from the capital flow-being an ingredient of globalization –the NDR wallowed in poverty, penury and strife.
- With the abolition of slave trade in 1807 (following the activities of Wilberforce and Lord Mansfield's Judgment), the NDR participated

- in the new economy that emerged- i.e Legitimate Trading (LT).
- The NDR via LT alone supplied the West-Britain, etc. with over 75% of its palm produce needs which consolidated the gains of the industrial revolution capped with industrial expansion and scientific stimulations for the British and its allies.
  - The gains from the staple economy fuelled the machinery of imperialism (i.e. the integration of new regions into an expanding economy) for Britain, etc. while the NDR shrank in clout and influence.
  - With this followed colonialism and Christian missionary activities in which the NDR served as the dominant administrative possession of Britain.
  - The devices of colonial rule in Nigeria which came in the forms of Consular, Protectorate and Company Rules were constructed and experimented in the NDR before being fanned out to other Nigerian areas.
  - The NDR- then known as the Oil Rivers Protectorate- bore the burden of financing the administration of the other two protectorates all of which eventually got merged or amalgamated on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1914 under Sir Lord Captain Frederick Lugard.

**To this end;**

- The NDR thus became the dependable platform upon which modern Nigeria was created.
- Nigeria's status as the giant of Africa is a result of the image, pride of place and the legacy of the Niger Delta Region – a legacy that culminated in her national sovereignty in 1960 and post-independence era.
- With petroleum oil “discovered” in commercial quantity in Oloibiri (NDR) –in 1956, Nigeria became a petroleum economy.
- By 2010, Nigeria at 50 years (Golden Jubilee) as a sovereign state, the NDR – the treasure base of Nigeria, - solely became the pivot of nation building of Nigeria.
- Petroleum oil, from the NDR, accounts for about 98% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and mechanism of internal infrastructural provision.
- The NDR is the bedrock of Nigeria's development efforts.
- Corporate citizens with international characters –Exxon –Mobil, Shell Petroleum, Chevron, Total, Intel, MTN, Airtel, First Bank, UACN, Julius Berger, MCC, RCC, CCECC etc are major players/actors in the political economy of the NDR and the extant rule the nation state.



## **The Charms and Perils of Globalization and the Elderly in the NDR**

**The charms and perils of globalization with the accompanying effects on the elderly in the NDR can be felt in the areas of:**

- Global circulation of goods,
- Services
- Capital flow
- Information flow
- Migration
- Urbanization and industrialization
- Intrigues and deceptions
- Playing to the gallery, failed and fulfilled promises criss-cross the terrain of the NDR.
- These impact on the Elderly and significant others in the population earlier cited.
- With environment and culture contacts, the age cohort of those 65 years and older find themselves trapped, controlled and dominated by western ideals to the detriment of African realities.

## **The Challenges and Care Needs of the Elderly in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

- Environmental pollution.
- Destruction of the flora and fauna caused by oil & gas exploration and exploitation.
- Lack of senior and other care centres.
- Lack of Filial Piety.
- Gap in the companionship from formal and informal care givers to continue bonds of humanity.
- Lack sense of being wanted and share from graying wisdom of the sages.

Arising from issues and challenges raised in the preceding discourse, the elderly in the NDR are confronted with care needs ranging from:

- Health care delivery
- Health care coverage
- Chronic illness and disability care
- Health promotion and diseases prevention
- Facilitative services e.g. I & R, Transportation, Housing.
- Food and Nutrition to enhance wellness
- Food and Nutrition to enhance wellness
- Physical activities
- Counseling and Education

- Poverty reduction programmes
- Livable social security programmes e.g. pension, NHIS, etc.
- Activities of Daily Living as well as individual activities of daily Living – both of which suffer serious gaps from care providers where they exist at all.

### **The Charms and Perils of Globalization & the Elderly in the NDR**

- ✓ Contact with western culture and civilization has thrown up a number of phenomena.
- ✓ Such contacts negate African traditional political culture and principles of primogeniture which emphasize gerontocracy as opposed feudalism, fascism, oligarchic formation and appropriation of state power to the exclusion of the elderly, ideological distortions, democracy or dictatorship of neo-imperialism, neo-colonialism and other “isms” that are incomprehensible to the elderly African of the NDR.

The above notwithstanding, the elderly in the NDR share in the benefits of globalization in such spheres of activities as:

- e-mail
- Phone calls
- Western Union Money Transfers
- Simultaneity of Information & Technology Transfer

Culture contacts associated with Modernization, Migration, Urbanization, Industrialization with Weberian Ideal type construct of bureaucratization and democratization.



## **Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

The attempt in this chapter has been to capture the principal essence or ingredients of globalization with its accompanying role in “annotated” form in the political economy and care needs of the elderly in the NDR with its long & short term implications. In the process, both positive and negative elements of globalization were highlighted and the convergence that today's world becomes possible, practicable and operational because all hands across cultural divides ought to be on deck to move the nation states to the next level. The challenges arising from the social environment of the NDR were summarized. It is therefore recommended that:

- Globalization in its present form be allowed to enhance sustainable development and economic integration of the nation states of the world with the NDR on the front row in Nigeria
- The elderly and other age cohorts in the NDR should work in tandem with major actors (state and foreign) for enculturation, acculturation and cultural diffusionism for innovations needed to match the NDR with other world communities using the trappings of globalization.
- The conclusion reached – at the 2007 survey of The State of Older People in Africa – by MIPAA in Nairobi be applied to the Elderly of the NDR.
- The wise counsel of Thomas Friedman (2000) that “globalization should not leave the poor behind” find utility in this study with reference to our NDR.
- States in the NDR & the MNCS, TNCs as well as the Nigerian State (The power and economic elites) should invest in and deepen the social trampolines and safety nets that protect the have nots, know nots and left behinds of the NDR.
- Also, the care needs of the elderly in the NDR as outlined earlier be met with a view to enhancing their aging gracefully.



Oil and Gas activities in Niger Delta Region



Sense of Togetherness



Nigeria showing Niger Delta Region



Economic activities in Niger Delta Region



The Elderly age cohort in the Niger Delta Region



The Elderly in a Globalized World



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