

## **Enlightenment and Empowerment a Requisite for Nigerian Content Act Implementation.**

With the passing of the Nigerian Content Act on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2010 the primary persons concerned in the Niger Delta may not be in the full picture of what good luck, fortune and divine favour has been bestowed upon them.

What does this mean to the youth? Quite a lot if they have an understanding and the right competencies to deliver quality goods and services within the context of the law and the high technology requirements of the industry.. Unfortunately to the youths, this is not necessarily the case. The law means little of nothing to someone who is unaware of its benefits, neither enlightened nor empowered to use the law to ones advantage. There is a need to invest in creating awareness through the print and news media. Fliers and posters are required in the languages of the area to announce to the communities the importance of a sound education, good character, values and how this can ensure that they tap into opportunities that abound in the petroleum industry. The job positions available through welding, fabrication, engineering, logistics, marine, engineering, procurement, operations, production, etc activities require a highly specialised and skilled workforce for successful operations and as such these youths should be prepared and nurtured to take up these positions with time.

To the aged in the Niger Delta this should be a breather: jobs, employment, and wealth will return to the communities if the employable are aware, empowered and enlightened. The environment which had been degraded would have to be remediated to ensure that it is healthy enough to live in a non-toxic environment. Gas flaring would become history when the toxicity becomes an issue to leaders that live in these locations and companies that operate and maintain residence and offices in these communities.

Clauses 25, 27, 28(1) and Clause 10, subsection (b) recommends the location of offices to catchments areas and giving Nigerians first consideration for training and employment in the work programme for Oil and Gas projects.

Inspite of what the law requirements are, any right thinking operator would require some level of confidence in the ability of the community to maintain peace, order and tranquillity before they could be encouraged and beneficially engaged to set up their business in such communities.. The onus thus lies on the community leadership structure and government to guarantee this minimum requirement.

This implies that a proactive operator company or project promoter would see investment in human resource capital as a primary commitment it must make to enjoy successful operations in Nigeria. By inference the brightest and the best, hardworking, focussed, committed, diligent and determined Nigerians who work hard at their education, enlightenment and empowerment will benefit from a merit-based system that produces the workforce for the industry.

The above submissions, inferences and thoughts would only come to pass if:

1. The Niger Delta leadership does begin to think long-term and take the bull by the horn to restore peace, tranquillity and safety to the area.
2. The leadership in Nigeria put the restoration of human dignity, morals and value before their short-term unsustainable gains which manifests in a myopic, get rich quick syndrome. .
3. The Presidency, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Niger Delta Ministry and NDDC commit themselves to transparency, honesty and integrity in the award of contracts

ensuring that every kobo released for Amnesty related programmes and the rehabilitation of the Niger Delta and its people are judiciously spent.

4. All contract awarded under the largesse of Amnesty, Resource sharing or Niger Delta rehabilitation are made public, published in the papers as an indication of the commitment of leadership to transparency and accountability.
5. Education, Enlightenment and Empowerment of youths in the area of industry awareness, career counselling and the development of the workforce of tomorrow is made the priority of all.
6. Law and order is restored and the attitude of of zero tolerance for abandoned or failed projects is inculcated into leadership.
7. Bribery and corruption should become a crime that is punishable with a long-term jail sentence and total disgrace to ones family and people.
8. As a matter of urgency, the stake holders and in particular the Federal Government, State Governments in the sub region as well as IOC's should go into partnership for the rapid development of vocationals, through skills acquisition programmes.

We look forward to the use of enlightenment and empowerment programmes designed for the indigenes of the community as a vehicle of Nigerian Content that will transform and rehabilitate Nigeria and the Niger Delta.

#### **About the Author**

Dr. Ibilola Amao is the Principal Consultant with Lagos-based Lonadek Oil and Gas Consultants, a firm of technical consultants with their core competence in the area of due diligence, human resource capital development, technology transfer, systems implementation and engineering support services. For more information or to reach Dr. Amao you can email her at [lolaamao@lonadek.com](mailto:lolaamao@lonadek.com) or visit [www.lonadek.com](http://www.lonadek.com).