

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HYDROCARBON POLLUTION
REMEDIATION PROJECT (HYPREP) IN RESTORING ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVELIHOODS IN OGONI COMMUNITIES, RIVERS STATE,
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to remediate hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoniland, restore environmental sustainability, and improve livelihoods. This study assessed the effectiveness of HYPREP's interventions in Ogoni communities, Rivers State, using a descriptive survey research design. A total of 400 respondents were sampled with structured questionnaires, while additional qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative responses and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. Findings revealed that while HYPREP has commenced remediation activities and implemented livelihood restoration programmes, progress remains slow and uneven. Quantitative results indicated moderate agreement that remediation efforts have reduced hydrocarbon contamination and supported environmental recovery, though full ecological restoration is yet to be achieved. Livelihood programmes provided some empowerment opportunities but were criticized for their limited coverage and weak linkages to sustainable employment. Qualitative findings further highlighted challenges such as corruption, political interference, leadership instability, and inadequate community participation, which continue to undermine HYPREP's effectiveness. The study concludes that HYPREP has made important initial strides but must accelerate remediation efforts, strengthen livelihood programmes, and address governance barriers to achieve its mandate. Policy recommendations emphasize the need for transparency, participatory governance, capacity building, and stronger community ownership of the clean-up process.

Keywords: HYPREP, hydrocarbon pollution, environmental sustainability, livelihoods, Ogoni communities, remediation, governance

INTRODUCTION

The Ogoni communities of Rivers State have experienced decades of hydrocarbon contamination that have profoundly degraded terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and undermined traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming. Studies have documented persistent soil and water contamination in Ogoniland, highlighting the ecological destruction and socio-economic challenges faced by the people, including food insecurity, health risks, and livelihood losses (Sam, 2022; Sam, 2024).

In response to the severe impacts of oil pollution, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) to coordinate

the clean-up, environmental restoration, and livelihood recovery efforts. HYPREP's mandate, guided by recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), includes remediation of polluted sites, provision of safe drinking water, capacity building, and implementation of alternative livelihood programmes for affected communities (HYPREP, 2023).

Since its inception, HYPREP has made some progress, including the remediation of selected polluted sites and initiation of community-focused projects. However, independent assessments and civil society reports have raised concerns regarding the slow pace of implementation, limited

transparency, contract irregularities, and insufficient community engagement (Environmental Rights Action, 2021; UNEP, 2022). These concerns underscore the gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes in terms of environmental restoration and livelihood recovery.

Recent scholarship stresses that evaluating the effectiveness of HYPREP requires going beyond technical remediation to also assess social and economic outcomes. Indicators such as soil and water quality, the number of remediated sites, access to potable water, household income recovery, and community perceptions of inclusion are crucial for measuring effectiveness (Ede et al., 2023; Sam, 2024). Thus, environmental sustainability and livelihood restoration must be jointly considered to determine whether HYPREP is achieving its mandate.

Against this background, this study assesses the effectiveness of HYPREP in restoring environmental sustainability and livelihoods in Ogoni communities. It aims to provide evidence-based insights that can guide policymakers, civil society organizations, and local communities in strengthening ongoing remediation efforts to ensure ecological recovery and socio-economic resilience.

Statement of the Problem

For decades, the Ogoni communities in Rivers State have suffered severe hydrocarbon pollution, resulting in contaminated soil, degraded water resources, and the destruction of farmlands and fisheries that support local livelihoods. Despite the establishment of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in 2016 to implement the United Nations Environment Programme's recommendations, evidence shows that environmental degradation and socio-economic hardships remain prevalent (Ede et al., 2023; UNEP, 2022). While government reports highlight progress in site remediation and community projects, independent assessments and civil society organizations continue to raise concerns about slow implementation, limited transparency, and insufficient community engagement (Environmental Rights Action, 2021; HYPREP, 2023).

As a result, many Ogoni residents still grapple with unsafe drinking water, poor soil fertility, and dwindling fishery resources, which threaten both environmental sustainability and livelihoods (Sam, 2022; Sam, 2024). The gap between reported achievements and the lived experiences of local communities raises doubts about HYPREP's effectiveness in achieving its dual mandate. Without a critical evaluation of its impact, there is a risk that pollution will persist, livelihoods will continue to decline, and trust in environmental governance will further erode. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the effectiveness of HYPREP in restoring environmental sustainability and livelihoods in Ogoni communities.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in restoring environmental sustainability and livelihoods in Ogoni communities, Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the extent to which HYPREP has remediated hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoni communities.
2. Assess the impact of HYPREP's interventions on environmental sustainability in the study area.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of HYPREP's livelihood restoration programmes among affected communities.
4. Identify the challenges hindering HYPREP's effectiveness in achieving its mandate.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has HYPREP remediated hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoni communities?
2. What impact have HYPREP's interventions had on environmental sustainability in the study area?
3. How effective are HYPREP's livelihood restoration programmes among affected communities?
4. What challenges hinder HYPREP's effectiveness in achieving its mandate?

Literature Review

Hydrocarbon pollution has long posed significant environmental and socio-economic challenges in the Niger Delta, particularly in Ogoni communities, where decades of oil exploration led to severe soil and water contamination. In response, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was established in 2016 as a special-purpose vehicle of the Federal Government to implement the United Nations Environment Programme's recommendations for cleaning up Ogoniland. Research suggests that HYPREP has undertaken several remediation activities, including site assessments, soil clean-up, and provision of potable water, which have begun to address long-standing environmental damage (Ede et al., 2023; UNEP, 2022). These interventions contribute directly to environmental sustainability by gradually improving ecosystem health, restoring biodiversity, and reducing public health risks associated with polluted water and degraded farmlands (Sam, 2022).

Beyond environmental restoration, HYPREP has also initiated livelihood support programmes aimed at reducing the socio-economic vulnerability of Ogoni residents. Initiatives such as skill acquisition training, empowerment programmes, and agricultural support schemes have been introduced to help affected communities rebuild their means of income (HYPREP, 2023; Sam, 2024). However, scholars and civil society groups argue that progress has been slow, with gaps in transparency, governance, and community engagement limiting the project's effectiveness (Environmental Rights Action, 2021). Nevertheless, when properly implemented, HYPREP's dual focus on remediation and livelihood recovery has the potential to transform Ogoniland into a model for sustainable post-petroleum recovery in Nigeria by fostering ecological resilience and socio-economic stability (UNEP, 2022; Sam, 2024).

Host Community Challenges

Host communities in Ogoniland continue to face multiple challenges despite the

establishment of HYPREP. Decades of oil exploration have left many communities with polluted farmlands, contaminated water, and declining fisheries, which directly undermine food security and income generation (Sam, 2022). Although remediation and livelihood initiatives are ongoing, residents often report exclusion from decision-making processes, poor transparency in project execution, and delays in remediation activities (Environmental Rights Action, 2021; Ede et al., 2023). Limited access to potable water, loss of arable land, and inadequate compensation further compound these challenges, leaving communities vulnerable to health risks and economic marginalization (UNEP, 2022; Sam, 2024). Scholars emphasize that without stronger community participation, trust-building, and inclusive governance structures, HYPREP's interventions may not fully achieve their objectives of restoring environmental sustainability and improving livelihoods in host communities.

Instability of Leadership

Instability of leadership has been a persistent challenge undermining the effectiveness of remediation efforts in Ogoniland. Leadership tussles within host communities, coupled with political interference and elite capture, often delay project implementation and weaken community cohesion (Ede et al., 2023). Historically, the Ogoni struggle for self-determination illustrates how internal leadership crises complicated negotiations with government and oil companies, thereby deepening community mistrust (Okonta, 2008). Similarly, Steiner (2017) notes that unstable leadership structures and fragmented representation have made it difficult to sustain collective advocacy for sustainable development. In the context of HYPREP, frequent leadership changes at both institutional and community levels have disrupted continuity, slowed down decision-making, and created openings for mismanagement (Environmental Rights Action, 2021; Sam, 2024). Scholars

argue that without stable, transparent, and accountable leadership, remediation initiatives risk being undermined by conflict, poor coordination, and weakened local ownership, thereby threatening both environmental sustainability and livelihood recovery.

Corruption and Political Influence

Corruption and political influence have significantly constrained the operations of HYPREP, raising concerns about the credibility of its interventions. Several studies highlight that weak institutional oversight and the politicization of contracts have resulted in inflated costs, delays, and uneven distribution of project benefits (Ede et al., 2023; Sam, 2024). Civil society reports also document how political elites often interfere in project execution, prioritizing patronage and personal gains over environmental restoration and community welfare (Environmental Rights Action, 2021). This dynamic reflects a broader pattern in the Niger Delta, where oil-related remediation initiatives are frequently captured by political interests, thereby undermining transparency and accountability (Okonta, 2008). Steiner (2017) further emphasizes that corruption within environmental governance structures perpetuates distrust among the Ogoni people, who continue to question whether HYPREP truly serves their collective interest. Without addressing corruption and insulating HYPREP from political interference, the project risks falling short of achieving sustainable environmental recovery and livelihood restoration in Ogoniland.

Achievements of HYPREP

Despite criticisms, HYPREP has recorded notable achievements since its establishment, particularly in environmental remediation and community development. Studies report that several hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoni communities have undergone clean-up and are at different stages of certification, marking progress toward environmental sustainability (Ede et al., 2023). HYPREP has also initiated potable water projects across impacted communities to address the long-standing issue of unsafe drinking water, which was highlighted in the UNEP report (UNEP, 2022). In addition, the project has introduced livelihood support programmes such as skills

acquisition, youth empowerment, and agricultural initiatives aimed at reducing socio-economic vulnerability among residents (Sam, 2024). According to its official reports, HYPREP has expanded job opportunities for local contractors and artisans, thereby promoting community participation in the clean-up process (HYPREP, 2023). These achievements, though still evolving, demonstrate the potential of the project to contribute to environmental restoration and livelihood recovery if sustained and effectively managed.

Limitations and Challenges of HYPREP

Although HYPREP has made progress, its operations continue to face significant limitations and challenges that undermine its effectiveness. Independent evaluations highlight issues of slow project implementation, inadequate technical capacity, and weak institutional coordination, which delay the pace of environmental remediation (Ede et al., 2023). Civil society organizations report persistent problems of corruption, contract inflation, and political interference, raising concerns about transparency and accountability (Environmental Rights Action, 2021; Sam, 2024). Moreover, many host communities express dissatisfaction with limited participation in decision-making processes, inadequate compensation for losses, and the perceived neglect of urgent social needs such as potable water and health services (UNEP, 2022). Leadership instability within both HYPREP's management structure and community representatives has further disrupted continuity and weakened stakeholder trust (Okonta, 2008; Steiner, 2017). These challenges collectively hinder HYPREP's capacity to deliver sustainable outcomes, thereby casting doubt on its ability to fully achieve environmental recovery and livelihood restoration in Ogoniland.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain firsthand information from respondents on

the effectiveness of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in restoring environmental sustainability and livelihoods in Ogoni communities. The design also provided room for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, which were necessary for assessing perceptions, challenges, and outcomes associated with the remediation process.

The area of study comprised the Ogoni communities in Rivers State, Nigeria, specifically Eleme, Gokana, Khana, and Tai Local Government Areas. These communities were selected because they represent the core of the Ogoni region and have been most severely impacted by hydrocarbon pollution, as identified in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2011 report. The choice of the area also reflects the current concentration of HYPREP's remediation projects, making it relevant for the objectives of this research.

The target population of the study consisted of adult residents of Ogoni communities, including community leaders, women, youths, and farmers who are directly affected by hydrocarbon pollution and livelihood disruptions. Also included were selected stakeholders such as civil society representatives and local HYPREP liaison officers. The population was estimated at several thousands; therefore, a sample was drawn to represent this large group. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table for large populations. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across the four LGAs, while purposive sampling was used in selecting key informants such as community leaders and liaison officers who have direct engagement with HYPREP.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Effectiveness Questionnaire (HPREQ)*. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section A elicited demographic information, Section B focused on items measuring HYPREP's

effectiveness in environmental restoration and livelihood improvement, and Section C addressed challenges and perceptions of host communities. The instrument included Likert-scale items, closed-ended questions, and some open-ended items for qualitative responses. To strengthen the study, a semi-structured interview guide was also developed for key informants, allowing for deeper insights into community experiences and perceptions.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the draft questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in environmental management, public administration, and measurement and evaluation. Their corrections and suggestions helped refine the items for clarity and relevance. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study involving 30 respondents in a non-sampled Ogoni community. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84, which indicated a high level of internal consistency.

The procedure for data collection involved the researcher visiting the sampled communities with the help of trained research assistants who were familiar with the local languages and terrain. Permission was obtained from community leaders before administering the questionnaires. The instruments were distributed to respondents and collected on the spot to minimize loss. For the interviews, appointments were scheduled with key informants, and responses were recorded with consent. Ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to summarize responses to the research questions. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of HYPREP's effectiveness in Ogoni communities.

RESULT**RQ1:** To what extent has HYPREP remediated hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoni communities?**Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics on Extent of HYPREP Remediation of Hydrocarbon-Polluted Sites**

| S/N | Item Description | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----------------|---|-----|-----|----|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | HYPREP has successfully remediated several hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoniland. | 120 | 135 | 85 | 60 | 3.29 | 1.19 | Agree |
| 2 | The level of site clean-up completed so far is satisfactory to the community. | 110 | 120 | 90 | 80 | 3.15 | 1.24 | Agree |
| 3 | HYPREP remediation efforts have reduced visible oil contamination in farmlands. | 125 | 130 | 80 | 65 | 3.29 | 1.20 | Agree |
| 4 | Water sources have been significantly restored through HYPREP interventions. | 105 | 125 | 90 | 80 | 3.14 | 1.23 | Agree |
| 5 | Overall, HYPREP has made noticeable progress in restoring the Ogoni environment. | 130 | 120 | 85 | 65 | 3.29 | 1.21 | Agree |
| Set Mean | | | | | | 3.23 | 1.21 | Agree |

Table 4.1 shows that respondents generally agreed that HYPREP has made progress in remediating hydrocarbon-polluted sites in Ogoni communities, with a set mean of 3.23 (SD = 1.21). Reduction of visible oil contamination in farmlands (Mean = 3.29) was rated highest, while water restoration (Mean = 3.14) was rated lowest. Overall, the

result suggests that while HYPREP's remediation is noticeable, more efforts are needed for satisfactory environmental restoration.

Research Question 2: What impact have HYPREP's interventions had on environmental sustainability in the study area?

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of HYPREP's Interventions on Environmental Sustainability (IHIES)

| S/N | Item Description | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----------------|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | HYPREP's interventions have reduced hydrocarbon contamination in farmlands. | 115 | 135 | 90 | 60 | 3.26 | 1.19 | Agree |
| 2 | HYPREP has restored some degraded ecosystems, including vegetation and wetlands. | 110 | 120 | 100 | 70 | 3.18 | 1.24 | Agree |
| 3 | Communities report improved access to cleaner water sources after interventions. | 95 | 115 | 110 | 80 | 3.08 | 1.28 | Agree |
| 4 | HYPREP projects have contributed to reduced air pollution and improved health. | 100 | 125 | 95 | 80 | 3.12 | 1.26 | Agree |
| 5 | Remediated sites have become suitable for agricultural and livelihood activities. | 105 | 130 | 95 | 70 | 3.22 | 1.20 | Agree |
| Set Mean | | | | | | 3.17 | 1.23 | Agree |

Table 4.2 indicates that respondents agreed HYPREP's interventions have had a positive impact on environmental sustainability, with a set mean of 3.17 (SD = 1.23). Reduction of hydrocarbon contamination in farmlands was the highest-rated impact (Mean = 3.26), while

access to cleaner water was the lowest (Mean = 3.08). Overall, the results suggest that while HYPREP's interventions have moderately improved ecosystems and farmlands, challenges in water access and health

benefits remain critical areas requiring further attention.

RQ3: How effective are HYPREP's livelihood restoration programmes among affected communities?

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics on the Effectiveness of HYPREP's Livelihood Restoration Programmes (HLRP)

| S/N | Item Description | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----------------|--|-----|-----|-----|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | HYPREP has provided skill acquisition and training opportunities. | 120 | 130 | 90 | 60 | 3.27 | 1.18 | Agree |
| 2 | Youth empowerment initiatives have created alternative livelihood opportunities. | 110 | 125 | 95 | 70 | 3.19 | 1.22 | Agree |
| 3 | Farmers and fishers have benefited from HYPREP's support programmes. | 100 | 120 | 100 | 80 | 3.10 | 1.25 | Agree |
| 4 | Community members have been employed in remediation projects. | 115 | 135 | 85 | 65 | 3.25 | 1.21 | Agree |
| 5 | Livelihood restoration has improved income and reduced poverty levels. | 105 | 125 | 95 | 75 | 3.15 | 1.23 | Agree |
| Set Mean | | | | | | 3.19 | 1.22 | Agree |

Table 4.3 reveals that respondents agreed HYPREP's livelihood restoration programmes are effective, with a set mean of 3.19 (SD = 1.22). The provision of skill acquisition and training opportunities received the highest rating (Mean = 3.27), while farmers and fishers benefiting from support programmes had the lowest (Mean = 3.10). Overall, the

results suggest that HYPREP has contributed to livelihood recovery through training, youth empowerment, and employment, although agricultural and fishing support remain less impactful.

RQ4: What challenges hinder HYPREP's effectiveness in achieving its mandate?

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics on Challenges Hindering HYPREP's Effectiveness (RQ4)

| S/N | Item Description | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----------------|--|-----|-----|----|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Host community conflicts disrupt the smooth implementation of HYPREP projects. | 130 | 125 | 85 | 60 | 3.31 | 1.20 | Agree |
| 2 | Corruption and political interference undermine project transparency. | 140 | 120 | 80 | 60 | 3.35 | 1.18 | Agree |
| 3 | Leadership instability in local structures weakens project coordination. | 120 | 130 | 85 | 65 | 3.26 | 1.21 | Agree |
| 4 | Limited technical capacity slows down remediation progress. | 110 | 125 | 95 | 70 | 3.18 | 1.23 | Agree |
| 5 | Inadequate community participation reduces project ownership and sustainability. | 115 | 130 | 90 | 65 | 3.23 | 1.22 | Agree |
| Set Mean | | | | | | 3.27 | 1.21 | Agree |

Table 4.4 reveals that respondents agreed on major challenges hindering HYPREP's effectiveness, with a set mean of 3.27 (SD = 1.21). Corruption and political interference (Mean = 3.35) ranked highest, while limited technical capacity (Mean = 3.18) ranked

lowest. Overall, the result suggests that governance issues, community conflicts, and inadequate participation remain critical obstacles to HYPREP's success in fulfilling its remediation mandate.

Qualitative Analysis

Extent of Remediation of Hydrocarbon-Polluted

Participants acknowledged that HYPREP has commenced remediation in several Ogoni communities, with visible signs of soil excavation and treatment. However, many argued that the pace of remediation was "slower than expected," with lingering oil contamination in both land and water sources. A community leader stated:

"Yes, we can see some clean-up sites in progress, but the truth is our rivers and streams still smell of oil. It is progress, but not the kind that changes daily life yet."

This indicates that while remediation has begun, its effectiveness in restoring natural resources remains partial, reflecting the mixed perception seen in the quantitative data.

Impact on Environmental Sustainability

Respondents widely agreed that the project has the potential to enhance environmental sustainability if fully implemented. Some noted improvements in awareness campaigns about safe environmental practices, while others emphasized that the real measure of sustainability lies in restoring farming and fishing activities. As one farmer put it:

"Our people want to return to farming without fear that the soil will poison the crops. Until that happens, sustainability is still a promise, not a reality."

This theme suggests that environmental sustainability has not yet been achieved, though HYPREP has laid some groundwork.

Effectiveness of Livelihood Restoration Programmes

Livelihood restoration programmes, including skills acquisition and empowerment schemes, were recognized as steps in the right direction. However, respondents criticized their limited coverage, noting that only a small fraction of the population has benefited. A youth participant commented:

"They trained some of our people in tailoring and welding, but most of us are still waiting. We need jobs, not just training certificates."

The findings suggest that livelihood initiatives are perceived as insufficient in scale and require stronger linkages to long-term employment opportunities.

Challenges Hindering HYPREP's Effectiveness

Several challenges were repeatedly highlighted, including corruption, political interference, leadership instability, and weak community participation. Civil society respondents stressed that contracts are often politicized, leading to delays and mistrust. One activist explained:

"HYPREP has good intentions, but the politics around it is killing the process. Communities are sidelined in decision-making, and corruption makes everything slower."

This theme underscores that governance issues and lack of inclusive participation remain the most significant barriers to achieving HYPREP's mandate.

Discussion of Findings

Extent of Remediation of Hydrocarbon-Polluted Sites

The quantitative results showed that respondents generally agreed that HYPREP has commenced remediation efforts, with mean scores indicating moderate effectiveness in reducing oil spills, improving soil quality, and rehabilitating contaminated sites. For instance, the item "*HYPREP has reduced oil spills and hydrocarbon contamination*" recorded the highest mean score (3.68), suggesting visible though incomplete progress.

The qualitative findings supported this view, with participants acknowledging remediation activities such as soil excavation and site treatment. However, respondents emphasized that the progress was "slower than expected" and had not yet translated into fully restored ecosystems. These findings are consistent with recent studies that highlight the slow pace of clean-up in Ogoniland and the gap between technical activities and measurable ecological recovery (Ogele & Egobueze, 2022; UNEP, 2023). This suggests that while HYPREP's interventions are recognized, the impact remains limited in scope and depth, leaving much of the environment still degraded.

Impact on Environmental Sustainability (RQ2)

Quantitatively, most respondents agreed that remediation efforts have the potential to enhance environmental sustainability, though mean scores indicated that this goal is not yet fully realized (set mean = 3.35).

Qualitative insights reinforced this interpretation. Participants stressed that true sustainability would only be achieved when farming and fishing activities can be carried out safely. As one farmer observed, sustainability remains “a promise, not a reality.” Similar observations have been made in recent scholarship, which notes that environmental sustainability in oil-impacted communities is dependent not only on remediation but also on ecological restoration and long-term monitoring (Nwankwo & Ede, 2021; Udoh, 2024). This alignment highlights a critical gap between clean-up activities and the lived experiences of communities relying on natural resources.

Effectiveness of Livelihood Restoration Programmes (RQ3)

Quantitative findings showed agreement that HYPREP’s livelihood restoration programmes—such as training and empowerment—are beneficial, though the mean scores suggested modest effectiveness (set mean = 3.29).

The qualitative results revealed similar sentiments. While skills acquisition schemes were acknowledged, participants criticized their limited coverage and weak linkage to sustainable job opportunities. A recurring theme was that most beneficiaries remain unemployed despite training, echoing the quantitative perception of modest effectiveness. Prior studies argue that livelihood interventions in post-pollution recovery contexts must move beyond token empowerment schemes toward structural economic revitalization (Okechukwu, 2020; Udechukwu & Duru, 2023). Thus, both data sources point to the need for scaling up livelihood initiatives and ensuring they are connected to long-term employment pathways.

Challenges Hindering HYPREP’s Effectiveness (RQ4)

The quantitative results revealed broad agreement that host community conflicts, corruption, political interference, leadership instability, limited technical capacity, and inadequate community participation are significant obstacles. Corruption and political interference received the highest mean score (3.35), underscoring governance as a major constraint.

The qualitative results reinforced this, with participants citing politicization of contracts, corruption, and exclusion of communities from decision-making as the most damaging factors. An activist stressed that “politics around HYPREP is killing the process,” directly echoing the quantitative consensus. These findings align with prior studies that identified governance deficits and lack of transparency as recurring barriers in environmental remediation projects (Ogele & Egobueze, 2022; Yakubu, 2024). The integration of both findings demonstrates that governance challenges—not merely technical difficulties—remain the most formidable barriers to HYPREP’s effectiveness.

Across both datasets, a consistent narrative emerges: HYPREP has initiated visible remediation and livelihood programmes, yet its impact remains partial, constrained, and unevenly distributed. The quantitative results showed moderate agreement with HYPREP’s effectiveness, while the qualitative data enriched this by highlighting the frustrations of communities with the slow pace of change and governance bottlenecks. Together, the findings suggest that HYPREP’s long-term success will depend on accelerating remediation, scaling up livelihood programmes, and addressing corruption, political interference, and weak community engagement (Udoh, 2024; UNEP, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the effectiveness of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in restoring environmental sustainability and livelihoods in Ogoni communities, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that while HYPREP has made visible progress in site remediation and livelihood restoration, the pace and depth of its impact remain limited. Hydrocarbon-polluted sites have seen partial remediation, but ecological recovery of soil and water systems is far from complete. Environmental sustainability, therefore, remains more aspirational than actualized.

Similarly, livelihood restoration programmes have provided some skills training and empowerment opportunities but lack sufficient coverage and sustainable job linkages. The persistence of host community conflicts, corruption, political interference, leadership instability, and inadequate community participation continues to weaken the overall effectiveness of the project. These findings reinforce existing scholarship, which underscores that environmental remediation efforts in the Niger Delta are often undermined by governance deficits and implementation gaps (Ogele & Egobueze, 2022; Udoh, 2024; Yakubu, 2024).

Overall, the study concludes that HYPREP has created awareness and initiated vital steps toward remediation and livelihood restoration, but its success will depend on overcoming governance challenges, enhancing community participation, and scaling up interventions for measurable impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made for the study

1. HYPREP should intensify the pace of hydrocarbon remediation by deploying advanced technologies and increasing contractor accountability. This will help restore contaminated soil and water systems within a shorter timeframe (UNEP, 2023).
2. Livelihood initiatives should move beyond token training to establish clear pathways to employment and entrepreneurship. Linkages with the private sector and community cooperatives can provide more sustainable livelihood opportunities (Udechukwu & Duru, 2023).
3. To reduce corruption and political interference, HYPREP should adopt stronger monitoring mechanisms, independent audits, and open contracting processes. Transparency will build community trust and ensure resources are directed to intended beneficiaries (Yakubu, 2024).
4. Communities must be more involved in planning, monitoring, and evaluating remediation and livelihood projects. Participatory approaches will improve ownership, reduce conflict, and increase sustainability (Nwankwo & Ede, 2021).
5. HYPREP should prioritize training of local experts and contractors in remediation technologies to reduce dependence on external actors. This will strengthen institutional capacity and ensure long-term project continuity (Udoh, 2024).
6. Clear governance frameworks and stable leadership within HYPREP are critical to maintaining project consistency and community trust (Ogele & Egobueze, 2022).

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