RIV – INTRODUCTION TO RIVERS STATE

Rivers state is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. Its capital is Port-Harcourt. It occupies 4°45′N 6°50′E of the earth's surface. It was formed in 1967 from the Eastern Region of Nigeria. In 1996, Bayelsa state was created out of the state now leaving it with the following ethnic groups: Ikwerre, Ibani, Opobo, Eleme, Okrika, Kalabari, Etche, Ogba, Ogoni, Engenni, Ekpeye, etc.

Rivers State is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia, and Anambra States, to the east by Akwa-Ibom State and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta States.

The Inland part of the state consists of tropical rain forest; towards the coast the typical Niger Delta environment features many mangrove swamps.

History of Rivers State

In the early days of the colonial period, several protection treaties were signed between various indigenous communities and the British colonial government. Between 1941 and 1952, agitation for the creation of rivers province began with the formation of the Ijo Rivers Peoples League. By 1953, the Council of Rivers Chiefs was birthed as a replacement body for the league, the same year, another organisation, the Calabar Ogoja Rivers (COR) State Movement became existent.

The Council of Rivers Chief was later renamed in 1954 to Rivers Chiefs and People Congress and in 1956, the organisation became known as the Rivers Chiefs Peoples Conference. Until 1958, hopes of an independent state resonated with the region, and lingered consistently in the minds of the natives. During the constitutional conference that year, the country's nationhood was affirmed while an agreement was reached on some measure to mitigate the fears of the ethnic minorities in the area. Around this time, the COR State movement had broken away to press their own case. Thereafter, the British launched a commission led by Sir Henry Willink to look into the misgivings of these autochthons. The Willink Commission initiated the conception of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB). The purpose was to tackle the problems of underdevelopment, however, this failed to rise to the expectations of the masses. After much discontent,

some of the people attempted to take the extralegal route to achieve their goals.

In February, 1966, Isaac Boro, Sam Owonaro and Nottingham Dick alongside their supporters proclaimed a "Delta Peoples Republic." The rebellion was immediately crushed by the Federal and the old Easter Nigeria government. On 27 May, 1967, under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon, decree No. 14 was issued, allowing the creation of Rivers State. From then on, complaints about political marginalisation, environmental degradation and economic pauperisation remained among the Ijaw groups, such that a separate Bayelsa State was carved out of Rivers State by the military government in 1996.