

Beyond Public Relations? Transparency Initiatives and the Challenges of Resource Governance in Nigeria

Ukoha O. Ukiwo¹

¹University of Port Harcourt, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

uukiwo@hotmail.com

Drawing from comparative experiences of resource rich countries which show that institutionalization of transparency in the governance of natural resource wealth contributes to the mitigation of the corrosive effects of the resource curse, the Nigerian federal government and some state governments in the oil-rich Niger Delta have introduced some policies aimed at institutionalizing transparency and enhancing the governance of resource revenues. Principal among these are the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Public Procurement Act, the Bayelsa Expenditure and Income Transparency Initiative (BEITI). This paper critically examines the successes and failures of the reform initiatives and the prospects of Nigeria escaping the resource curse. The paper argues that although some public relations dividends have accrued to the adopting governments, the country is yet to experience progress in the governance of oil revenues. Underlying factors such as the character of the unreformed state, capacity deficits in the bureaucracy, the entrenchment of patronage politics, poor engagement of civil society and the duplicitous role of oil multinational corporations combine to undermine the reform initiatives. The paper concludes that the prospects for reform of the governance of oil revenues would depend on the outcomes of the ongoing struggles for democratic accountability and resource control in Nigeria as well as the strengthening of international institutions for monitoring the operations of oil MNCs.