

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PEACE-BUILDING IN THE NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA

¹Kasikoro Zideke Ph.D & ²Boubai Joseph Jackson

**Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

Contact details: ¹kasikoredu2018@gmail.com, ²boubaijoe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the role of Traditional Institutions in peace building in the Nigeria's Niger Delta. It adopted the sustainable peace building theoretical framework and relied on qualitative data, with extensive utilization of archives, texts, journal articles, monographs, magazines, and relevant web pages. The analysis was purely descriptive and content based (i.e content analysis), wherein inferences were drawn. It reveals that the role traditional institutions played in promoting and building peace in their respective domain are in diverse dimensions; which include promoting coexistence and harmony, reducing arms proliferation, pipeline vandalism, illegal bunkery activities, kidnapping, sea piracy, among several others in the Nigeria's Niger Delta. It thus, suggest among others that traditional institutions should be furnished with all necessary assistance (including training, funding, freedom from political inducement and a working relationship with the State Security outfits) to enhance their role in peace building and maintenance of law and order within the confines of their jurisdictions in the Nigeria's Niger Delta.

Keywords: conflict, Niger Delta, peace building, post-amnesty, traditional institutions

INTRODUCTION

The present day Nigeria is a creation of several Towns, Cities, Kingdoms, Caliphates and empires that were naturally interdependent of one another into a single political entity (Ganiyu, Ojewale & Oyewole, 2016; Okolo, 2021). These several towns, cities, kingdoms, caliphates and empires were then managed by traditional institutions. Azu (2018) captured that the ancient traditional institutions/systems had a long historical background and readily evolved naturally as a result of the lung for a community to be led by a credible leader in ones; a leader who can protect them positively against enemies, preserve their traditions and custom and ensure the progress of the community at all.

With the existence of these various political entities gave a good template and solid structure upon which the colonial master under Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard annex and unified the various empires and kingdoms into a single vibrant territory called Nigeria through the amalgamation of 1914. Prior to the amalgamation of 1914, these distinct ethnic groups have their own functional traditional system of administration that performed the functions of law making, law execution and law adjudication. The three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria are; Hausa Fulanis in the Northern region, Igbos in East and Yorubas in the West (Azu, 2018).

The Hausa Fulani in northern Nigeria established the emirate system, with the Emir in charge and all power surrounding him. The Emir performs religious, legislative, executive and judicial functions at the same time. Each emirate is divided into districts led by Hakimi, appointed by the emir. The Hakimi are responsible for collecting taxes, maintaining law and order in the region, and retaining a portion of the tax revenue for regional administration. There is a village-level management system in which the district chief appoints a village chief to lead the day-to-day management of the village. The village chief collects taxes and resolves minor disputes, while major disputes involving the community are settled by the emir. There is also a village court and an emir court from which cases can be appealed (Ganiyu, Ojewale & Oyewole, 2016).

Whereas, the Igbos according to Ganiyu, Ojewale and Oyewole (2016) had their own political system. Unlike the Hausa Fulanis in the northern Nigeria, the Igbos had no central political institutions. Though, despite the absence of a centralized traditional institutions, political stability was maintained

among the networks of institutions in the Igbo society, these are: The family, which act as the unit of administration and socialization had a patrilineal decent. The father as the head of the family settle minor dispute among family members, performed customary rights and sacrifices; the council of elders (Amala) consist of all heads of the various families and was in charge of the village day to day administration and as such was expected to brief members of his family the resolutions reached at the end of every council of elders (Amala) meeting.

The Village Assembly (Umunna) was another important organ in the local administration, it consists of able body males of the community. The Village Assembly is empowered by custom to deliberate on issues affecting the village, more so, could summon the council of elders if there is any perceived form of maladministration. Thus, it (Village Assembly) acted as a check to control the excesses of the council of elders. The Age Grade is also a vital organ in the Igbo society, it is made up of all male children that have been initiated into manhood about the same period. The age grade performed voluntary services to the village, such as clearing of bushes, building bridges, construction of roads, cleaning and clearing of streams, market square, village squares e.t.c, as well as acted as standing police/army to the village/community (Ganiyu, Ojewale & Oyewole, 2016).

In the western part of Nigeria, the Yorubas traditional society has a combination of the Hausa and Igbo system of traditional administration. The Yorubas traditional society was organized into kingdoms. The Oba was the political head of the entire kingdom. Sovereignty lies in the hand of the Oba and there was absolute loyalty from the people to the Oba. The Oba appoints the Oyomesi (senior chiefs) and they are members of his cabinet. They play the role of advisers to the Oba and also gave their consent to the Oba to exercise his authority. The Oyomesi are in charge of the administration of principal towns, they pledged their total allegiance to the Oba (see Nweke, 2012). The Yorubas have the institution of the Native Army that was also responsible to protect their territory against internal and external aggression. The family heads settled minor disputes within the family, while major disputes involving communities were settled by the Oba and his council. Also, like the Igbos, the Age grade carried out community projects, while the town crier communicates the Oba decisions to the people through beating of the talking drum. Jointly, these institutions performed legislative, executive and judicial functions, while the Oba was mainly responsible for the settlement of disputes between two or more villages which were under the control of the major towns (Azu, 2018; Nweke, 2012).

The above showed that they were some form of governance in traditional African society that provided leadership, maintain law and order, likewise build peace within their respective domains. With the advent of the colonial administration, the powers of traditional institutions were recognized and as such inculcated into the colonial administration as native authority (Ekpo & Ndebbio, 1998). However, since the intrusion of modern democracy in Nigeria from 1999, the role of traditional informal institutions like chieftaincy and the extended family system among others via mediation, reconciliation, pacification, culture, story-telling, joint problem solving, truth-telling and so on in peace building cannot be undermined. Hence, Pkalya, Adan and Masinde (2004) contends that traditional institution like chiefs, elders' council of the community, extended families, lineages, clans, tribes, religious goodwill, local institutions, and ethno-linguistic groups plays major role in peace building process in African, Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular.

However, conflict and grievances in the Niger Delta region pre-dated to the colonial era or beyond. Moreso, the region has been unduly neglected and underdeveloped by the colonial and post-colonial governments even in the midst persistence agitation and or confrontation by the indigenes of the region which has led to one form of conflict or the other (Okolo, 2014; Christmas, 2018). It should be noted that various attempts have been made to address the development challenges of the region, these responses yielded little or no success hence militancy continued unabated in the region. Also, in 2009, former President Yar'Adua proclaimed an unconditional amnesty to the Niger Delta Militants (Aghedo, 2013; Ezeibe & Nnamani, 2013; Kasikoro, 2014). With the embracement of the Amnesty programme by the Niger Delta militant groups, peace became prevalent in the region and oil production which was from 700,000 barrels per day between 2007 to mid- 2009 increase to the

range of 2.4 million and 2.6 million in late 2009 (Onuoha, 2016). Over time, relative peace enjoyed by the all became threatened and this gave raised to different forms of criminalities as it ranged from armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, oil thief, illegal refining of crude oil, pipeline vandalism e.t.c. In fact, these criminal activities significantly affect our national revenue accruing from crude oil (see, Onuoha, 2016; Owonikoko, 2018).

Notably, these could be deduced to several reasons for instance; years after the implementation of the amnesty programme, it shows the programme was not sustainable to address the development needs of the people of the region, More so, coupled with the response from President Buhari to Dr. Pauline Baker's interviewed that is administration will focus much on the developmental needs of the area he got more votes than the area with lesser votes; and the closure of the Nigeria Maritime University at Okerenkoko; perceived victimisation of Niger Delta son's and daughter's particularly of Ijaw ethnic extraction by the Buhari led administration (such persons as Government Ekpemupolo, a.k.a. Tompolo; Chief, D.S.P. Alamieyeseigha and Patrick Akpobolokemi), withdrawal of all surveillance contract awarded to ex-militants and awarding same to non- Niger Deltas, downsizing the budgetary allocation of the Amnesty programme and the rumour that the programme will be cancelled shortly after, among others (Owonikoko, 2018).

In other to address these above conundrum, Owonikoko (2018) observed that at 2016 many militant groups emerged from the Niger Delta again in furtherance of the struggle towards promoting the development needs of the people. Two of these militant's groups seems to be most dreadful, causing serious havoc to the nation's economy. They are the Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). From their activities, it shows that the NDA seems to be more dangerous and deadly in its operations than the NDGJM. For instance, from January to July 2016, the NDA has recorded about 34 high profile attacks on oil installations in the region.

In the light of the above, scholars, such as Nweke (2012) and Oliver and Odendaal (2008) has come out with significant discourse on how successfully Traditional institutions has contributed to promote and build peace in their respective domain. More so, Traditional institutions such as Chiefs, age-grades and elder's council of the community who are supposed to mitigate in the conflicts in their respective domain to bring about lasting peace have eventually engrossed in the conflicts (Nweke, 2012). Giving this backdrop, the paper is to examined the role of traditional institutions in peace building in the Nigeria's Niger Delta

Conceptual Review

Giving the complexity, ambiguity and plethoric nature of concepts, particularly in the less scientific sphere, it is paramount to define and properly clarify on the use of concepts, thus, the major concepts are addressed herein.

Traditional Institutions

generally traditional institutions are considered to be all those forms of social and political authority which have long existed and serve the society as source of power and authority before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria (Crook, 2005). Peter (2014) on his part explain it as an indigenous political arrangement whereby leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with their native laws and custom to act as custodian of their people's norms, cultures and practices. Similarly, Omole (2016) refers to traditional institutions as those social, economic or political organizations/bodies which derive their power, legitimacy, influence and authority from the traditions of a particular people.

According to Orji and Olali (2010), traditional system refers to the local political regulations, the selection of leaders with confirmed records and the wearing of the headscarf according to their traditional customs and the necessary requirements of the law. The objective of traditional institutions is to preserve the customs and traditions of the local people and to make decisions on issues related to the political movements of the people of all societies throughout the country.

However, traditional institutions played a significant role in managing conflicts rising between or among the public in their various communities using laws and customs of society.

Furthermore, a study by Nweke (2012) states that traditional institutions are guardians of their people's norms, cultures and practices. In most African settings, as in Nigeria, the appointment of people into various traditional institutions is hereditary, or elected or chosen by the relevant traditional ruler or king-maker. This is in line with the dependency theory's belief that traditional rulers should have autonomy in society, rather than being treated as human beings by politicians, which will help them exercise power within their respective jurisdictions to maintain democracy. How traditional institutions are chosen varies across societies. For example, in African society as a whole, especially in the context of Nigeria, it varies from one ethnic group to another as well as communities to communities (Ali & Bukar, 2019; Osakede, 2015).

Ali and Bukar (2019) coined that traditional institutions are symbols of the rights, privileges, laws, customs and traditions of indigenous peoples, including but not limited to the Sovereign Ruler and his Parliament. Nigeria's traditional institutions include chiefs in parliament, elders in parliament and title holders who can be appointed based on their contribution to the growth and development of the community, while the executive, legislative or judiciary has little power (Orji & Olali, 2010).

The above point of view is in line with the theory of servant leadership, which states that leaders should serve the people first and then serve the people. The theory focuses on transcending selfish rulers to help their followers. This focuses on leadership qualities such as honesty, respect, humility, kindness, commitment and patience (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004; as cited in Wooi & Ismail, 2017).

Peace building

The concept peacebuilding was first used in the 70s by John Galtung, in one of his presented documents when he recommended for the establishment of peace building structures to promote a sustainable peace to tackle the root causes of violent conflict and more so, promoting indigenous institutions for peace management and conflict resolution (Galtung, 1996). This implies that peacebuilding is targeted at constructing a better society. A report from the former Secretary General of the United Nations Boutros Brotros- Ghali in 1992 titled 'An Agenda for Peace' popularized the concept of peacebuilding in the international scene. For him, he sees peacebuilding as an action put to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict.

Christmas (2018) contended that peacebuilding focus on outside interventions that are designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict within a country by establishing a sustainable peace. He inferred further that peacebuilding activities addresses the remote and immediate causes of violence, create in the mind of the people a peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize the community politically cum socio-economically. In the same vain, Albert (2001), viewed peacebuilding as an art that repairs relationships, institutions, and social facilities and put in place possible schemes that can help bring back the disputing parties or communities together once again. More so, the concept can also be perceived to mean to preserved and ensure an enduring peace in the society, by treating the root causes of the crisis and genuinely reconciling the aggrieving parties (Nwolise, 2005).

Call and Cousens (2007) define peacebuilding as actions taken by international or national actors to institutionalize peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict (negative peace) and a small amount of participatory politics (as a component of active peace) Can be sustained without international peace operations. Peacebuilding can also be conceived in terms of prevention, proactiveness, problem solving, meeting human needs, and ending oppression and inequality (Christie, 1997; Okolo, 2014; Wessells, 1992; Abu-Saba, 1999).

Peacebuilding is crucial in every society in the sense that it integrates the civil society. The peace builder moves to bring warring parties together in a harmonious and integrated manner, i.e., peace building sees that the relationship that has been sour among old combatants is restored and strengthen to foster better friendly relationship. Peacebuilding at the end of it, establish institutions

and socio-facilities aimed at aiding the former disputing parties to respect each other needs and interests for a peaceful society in order for meaningful development to take place.

From literature survey, the term Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding are interchangeably used by scholars. Peacekeeping can be described as the deployment of national or multinational troops quell and gain control of a potential armed conflict between or within a state so as to bring peace. It is a military tactics of observing a cease fire and force separations after inter-state wars and one that incorporates a complex model of both military and civilian, working together to build and restore peace in a conflict torn region (Cheng - Hopkins, 2010). While peacemaking entails several approaches that revolved around negotiation, conciliation, reconciliation, etc., required to get parties at variance, especially those that resorted to violence or potential violence, to agree to cease hostility.

Peacemaking in essence, allow for harmonious relationship that permits discussion, negotiation and promotion of understanding to resolve gray areas that triggers the conflict in the first instance. Peacemaking attempt to bring out the nitty-gritty of the facts that is causing the grievances, over reaction, etc., that led to the disputes and resolve them mutually with agreements to maintain and work towards keeping the peace at all time by both parties (Chrismas, 2018).

Every Peace-building process seek to uphold these 10 basic principles as postulated by NOUN (2006), which are:

- Reflect on Values: Peace-building requires ongoing personal and organizational reflection on how peace building programs connect withier values.
- Addressing basic needs and rights: Peacebuilding helps people meet their own needs and rights while acknowledging the needs and rights of others.
- Analyzing conflict and violence: Peacebuilding requires constant analysis of the causes and dynamics of conflict and violence, as well as resources for peace.
- Long-term planning: Peacebuilding goes beyond short-term, crisis-oriented, designing social change over years and decades.
- Transforming entire systems: Peacebuilding transforms personal, relational, cultural and structural levels.
- A coordinated approach and actors: Peacebuilding requires a coordinated approach that reflects responsibility, accountability and the participation of many different actors.
- Identify and create power: Power exists in all relationships. Peacebuilding requires all people to be aware of their power and work with others to create nonviolent forms of power to meet their needs.
- Empowering others: Peacebuilding strengthens and builds on local efforts and empowers others to act. Peacebuilding is based on participatory democracy and self-determination.
- Seeing culture as a resource: Cultural values, traditions and rituals can be a resource for peacebuilding.
- Innovate and use creativity: Peacebuilding uses a variety of communication and learning styles, rather than relying solely on words or conversations to develop creative solutions to complex problems.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The theory employed to explain the puzzle of this paper is the sustainable peace building theory. The theory was propounded by John Paul Lederach in 1997. Lederach (1997) developed a peacebuilding framework based on an understanding of peacebuilding for sustainable reconciliation within societies. Thus, according to Lederach, peacebuilding can be achieved by creating structures, processes, and personnel training within a generational time frame.

In view of this, Peace building then is targeted at managing and preventing armed conflict and also to sustaining peace when an organised violence has actually ended (Lederach, 1997). In this regard, peacebuilding is a multifaceted endeavour that encompasses all activities directly related to this goal

within 5 to 10 years. Peacebuilding should create favorable conditions for economic reconstruction, development and democratization as a prerequisite for a legitimate democratic order. Methodologically, the paper adopted the qualitative research method, with extensive utilization of archives, texts, journal articles, monographs, magazines, and relevant web pages. The analysis was purely descriptive and content based (i.e content analysis), wherein inferences were drawn (Eneanya, 2012; Okolo & Boubai, 2021; Boubai, 2021).

Conflict/Violence in the Post Amnesty Niger Delta

It has been pointed out that the purpose of amnesty for Niger Delta militants is to restore sustainable peace, create an enabling environment and accelerate sustainable development (Dada, 2017; Nwankpa, 2014). More importantly, Dudu and Odalonu's (2016) concept of amnesty is directly relevant to this study. According to them, the amnesty is a strategy to end insurgency or armed activity, bring peace to the troubled Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and promote oil production and eventual development in the region. It aims to ensure peace and reconciliation in order to facilitate uninterrupted oil exploration, thereby increasing revenue to be used to address widespread underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. The Niger Delta's amnesty rests on three main concepts: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).

Before the amnesty, create the conditions for building trust between the people and the government, thus laying the foundations for post-conflict peacebuilding. The DDR process came with a declaration of amnesty for militants, presumably a prerequisite for peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria (Moshood, 2016). The region's belligerence stems from a defense technique and response strategy that enhances cooperation among the region's ethnic groups who see the government as a common threat. The cause of post-amnesty problems is concurrently highlighted with the prospects for sustainable peace in Nigeria's Niger Delta as displayed in table 1

Table 1: Causes of Post Amnesty Violence and the Prospect of Sustainable Peace Building.

S/N	The Factors that instigate Militia Resurgence and Violence in the Face of Amnesty in relation to Peace-Building Programme in Nigeria's Niger Delta.	The Prospects for a Sustainable Peace in the Nigeria's Niger Delta.
A.	Socio-Political issues	
	Failure to engaging other viable community actors in the process of peacebuilding	Inclusion of community stakeholders in the peace building process.
	The federal government of Nigeria was reluctant to dialogue properly and address issues that are at the root of the crisis.	All of these include dialogue between the federal government and stakeholders to address the root causes of belligerence, which is important in peacebuilding activities.
	Some ethnic groups are politically marginalized (favor politics). For example: Seats allegedly offered to ex-militants were offered to relatives of non-ex-militants and major politicians for overseas training.	Create equal opportunities for all segments of society when implementing amnesty programs, regardless of ethnic affiliation or identity. Build a peaceful system.
	Our Rights Syndrome': Many ex-militants and young people in the Niger Delta widely believe the oil belongs to them. Therefore, they should have absolute rights.	All levels of government (local, state and federal) need to fulfill their obligations to citizens as this will help to change the din

		of absolute rights in the Niger Delta
	The Crisis in the Northern part of Nigeria (Bush Fire Effect),	The federal government and its National Security Agency (NSA) should address national insecurity and weapons proliferation accordingly. Otherwise, peacebuilding will remain problematic.

Table 1 Continue

	Most of the terms of the agreement were reached before the boy laid down his arms and were not met by the federal government.	The government and all other authorities involved in the implementation must abide by the terms of the amnesty agreement with the former militants in order to realize Niger's desire for stability in the Delta.
	The early renaissance was fueled by ex-militants who were skeptical of the existing DDR structure, able to build the desire and trust that would meet their needs without participating in international organizations	The presence of international conflict change agents or experts is key to post-conflict peacebuilding activities to build trust across communities in multi-ethnic divided societies such as Nigeria's Niger Delta.
	The amnesty programme ignores fundamental principles of international good practice in conflict resolution. It was advertised as a "comprehensive" demobilization programme, but did little to address reintegration. There are no provisions for mediation, dialogue, reconciliation or institutional reform. Amnesty does not resolve local-level disputes within and between communities over natural resources and thus remains a breeding ground for open sores and re-radicalization.	Amnesty programmes should recognize and make use of the fundamental principles of international good practice and diplomatic instruments for conflict resolution, including the provision of mediation, dialogue, reconciliation or institutional reforms to resolve local-level disputes within and between communities.
	Lack of synergy between the government and Niger Delta stakeholders (ie traditional rulers, regional politicians and radical leaders)	Peacebuilding activities with sufficient synergy between the government and Niger Delta stakeholders (i.e traditional rulers, regional politicians and

		radical leaders should be involved).
	Unhappy with the federal government's move to terminate some security contracts awarded to former armed leaders without dialogue.	The federal government should have a dialogue on the issue before taking action that could lead to distrust.

Table 1: Continue

B.	Socio-Economic Issues	
I	Channeling state support through former armed leaders in the oil industry's political economy is fueling the recovery.	Financial support from the government or oil companies should be transferred directly to the treasury accounts of the Niger Delta states for tracking and accountability.
ii	The community did not develop. There are no good roads, schools, electricity and healthcare facilities.	Infrastructure and living conditions are the main activities of any peacebuilding plan and should be given high priority by peacebuilders in the Niger Delta.
iii	The federal government does not compensate communities, families, victims and property damage affected by the conflict.	Governments should ensure that amnesty programmes cover commensurate reparations for conflict-affected communities, family victims and property damage, and should address these activities with a high level of integrity and accountability.
iv	Corruption permeates the reintegration programme as the Amnesty Office outsources the training of ex-militants at the training centre to private agencies.	The government should ensure that the Amnesty Office is decoupled from such corrupt private institutions and re-engage reputable and transparent institutions/or institutions in the training of former militants.
v	The money for the former militants was not paid directly to them, and in most cases, they were short-collected. Corruption of Diaspora Leaders. The former warlords took the money, paid their infantry a paltry sum, and their children were angry.	The government should ensure that subsidies are paid directly to beneficiaries to cut off corrupt individuals or leaders who undermine peace-building activities in the Niger Delta region.
vi	Economic integration issues. Some ex-militants and non-combatants have failed to find paid employment after training.	The government needs to financially empower trained Niger Delta people with microfinance to practice their training.

Table 1 Continue

vii	Government officials and contractors misappropriated budgets for reintegration programmes.	Government officials and contractors need to be transparent and accountable as obligation holders or obligation providers.
viii	Lack of people-centred or directed development	Governments at all levels should carry out people-oriented

		development. Developments that will positively impact the lives of the entire community. During this process, public opinion should be allowed in all policy stages/processes (development, implementation, monitoring).
ix	The Nigerian government is trying to end an amnesty programme and to stop the monthly payments to ex militants.	The termination of the amnesty program should not be the sole decision of the government, all stakeholders need to be involved and come to a consensus.
x	Many youths are not been trained, they need training and entrepreneurial skills.	Empowerment training should be organized for Niger Delta people and should be extended to all unemployed Nigerian youth.
C.	Environmental Issues	
	The rate of oil pollution and damage to biodiversity in the region (ie water pollution, air pollution and land pollution) must be addressed.	Federal government environmental regulators shall ensure that the operations or activities of MNOCs are environmentally friendly and shall comply with current environmental laws, guidelines and regulations. MNCs should also undertake regular corporate social responsibility in the regions where they operate in accordance with international best practices to avoid further dissatisfaction. Environmental problems that are dangerous and may damage ecosystems should be prevented. All the spots affected by pollution need to be remediated in-line with standards of environmental laws by the so-called polluters.

Source: Ebiede (2017); Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016); NwajiakuDahou (2014). Also see Olu-Adeyemi and Makanjuola (2019)

The above table is quite apparent on the causes of the post Amnesty problem in the NDR. It must be noted that none of the above issues are less important. However, for the prospects enumerated, the Nigerian federal government needs to draw on ideas such as Knott and Diamond (1996) and Adekanye (2007).

The term peacebuilding was the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General in his 1992 Peace Agenda, which also covers post-conflict peacebuilding. Boutros-Ghali as captured in Olu-Adeyemi and Makanjuola (2019) believe that Conflict transformation is the result of peacebuilding and, ultimately, the work of the parties to the conflict. His framework focuses on social institutions, not just armed factions or official governments, and peacebuilding activities are not limited to points in a series of violent events.

Peacebuilding is about creating the tangible and intangible conditions that make a system accustomed to conflict a peaceful system. Therefore, in order to build peace, a viable infrastructure

or foundation is required on which it could be built, therefore the activities regarding peace-building in most cases are about creating or ensuring infrastructures (Olu-Adeyemi & Makanjuola, 2019)

The Role of Traditional Institutions in Peace Building in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at Large

Traditional Institutions in the Nigeria's Niger Delta have played vital role in building peace in the region, particularly in the post amnesty era. Notably, a common objective of all men in human history is the enthronement of peace despite this, conflict is inevitable in all society. The Niger Delta region is not exempted from this situation. However, the nature of conflicts in the Niger Delta can be classified into four: Inter-community conflict; Intra- community conflict; community versus oil companies conflict and community versus (federal or local) government conflict (Nweke, 2013). The conflict in the Niger Delta has threatened the national economy as disruption in the oil production affects the country's crude oil supplies. More so, it has led to loss of lives and property, hence destructive to the regions potentials of sustainable development (Ibaba, 2008). In order to address these challenges, successive administration has introduced and implemented policies and programmes to curtail the violence and insecurity in the region.

It is worthy to note that the crisis in the region is pre-dated to colonial days and beyond, this, traditional institutions had been on the fore of resolving conflicts in order to maintain peace. Hence, the colonial government in response to the needs and aspiration of the ND people set up the Henry Willinks Commission to allayed the fears of the minorities. The commission recommended for the establishment of a special board to deal with the developmental challenges of the people of the Niger Delta.

This led to the formation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1961. Other policy measures introduced include the 1.5% Commission (1981), the Petroleum and Mineral Area Development Commission (1992), the Niger Delta Development Commission (1999), the Niger Delta Coastal State Joint Commission for Social and Economic Development (2006) and the Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee (2007). The oil multinationals in the region has also injected a lot of billions of naira as social responsibility to community development in order to promote peace in the Niger Delta area (Ibaba, 2008).

In spite of these policies and programmes to address the developmental challenges of the Niger Delta conflicts have continued unabated with grave consequences for the communities, oil companies and the Nigeria state as oil production output decline by 50% and was costing the government close to four billion naira (proximately \$19 million) per day in counter- insurgency operations (Crisis Group Africa, 2015). It is instructive to note that in order to end the insurgency and resolve the protracted security challenges cause by the violence conflicts in the region, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the able leadership of Late President Yar' Adua on June 25th 2009 granted an unconditional amnesty to the Niger Delta militants agitating for their rights (Okolo & Kasikoro, 2021; Aghedo, 2013; Ezeibe and Nnamani, 2010; Kasikoro, 2012).

The conditions for granting the amnesty captured on the willingness and readiness of the militants to surrender their arms, unconditionally denounced militancy and take an undertaking and received Presidential pardon. While, the federal Government also pledge to commit to the programme through the programme blueprint, instituted programmes like disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant ex- agitators (Ekumaoko, 2013; Ibitoye, 2014). The time frame given by the federal government for the acceptance of the amnesty programme lasted up till October 4th, 2009 (Nweke, 2013). With the embracement of the amnesty programme, the region was engulfed with relative peace, without addressing the main issues that propelled the conflicts in the region.

The failure of the government to properly address such issues awakened the traditional Institutions (or rullers) to improve their efforts as regards peace building in the post amnesty Niger Delta (Otunola, 2021). In the light of the above, scholars, such as Nweke (2012) and Oliver and Odendaal (2008) has argued extensively on how successfully Traditional institutions has contributed to

promote and build peace in their respective domain in divers perspectives minimise pipeline vandalism, arm proliferation, sea piracy, illegal bonkers activities, etc. Giving these efforts, Nweke (2012) firmly asserted that traditional institutions such as Chiefs, age-grades and elder's council of the community have in various dimensions mitigated conflicts and violence in their respective domain to bring about lasting peace in the Nigeria's Niger Delta

Concluding Remark and Policy Suggestions

Traditional institutions are considered to be all those forms of social and political authority which have long existed and serve the society as source of power and authority before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria. The role of traditional institutions such as Chiefs, age-grades and elder's council of the community, in promoting and building peace in their respective domain are in different dimensions. These include promoting coexistence and harmony as well as reducing arms proliferation, pipeline vandalism, illegal bunkery activities, kidnapping, sea piracy, among others in the Nigeria's Niger Delta. It is therefore imperative to suggest that:

- traditional institutions should be furnished with all necessary assistance to enhance their role in peace building and maintenance of law and order within the confines of their jurisdictions in the Nigeria's Niger Delta.
- traditional rulers should also be engaged by the government in training/seminars programs in order to be acquainted with advance methods of peace building
- legislation/policies should be taken to ensure that traditional institutions are void of political interface and inducements to function optimally in peace building in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.
- traditional institutions/rulers should ensure to look beyond their respective traditions to work closely with the formal law enforcement/maintenance agencies, such as the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Civil Defense and Security Corps, among other, for optimal peace building process in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.

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