MAINSTREAMING PEACE BUILDING APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UMUORIE UKWA WEST L.G.A, ABIA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

*E*nvironmental resource-induced conflicts are a universal phenomenon. In the Niger Delta area of Nigeria comprising of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Ondo, Imo and Abia; the exploitation of natural resources, especially crude oil, is a known driver of conflict and violence. However, much of the studies on oil-induced conflicts and their management in the region have focused on the core oil-bearing states of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. More has to be done on the other states of the Niger Delta, with regard to the peace building efforts to manage conflicts and promote sustainable development. This led to choosing Umuorie community in Ukwa west, Abia state in this study. A total of one hundred questionnaires were designed while forty two was administered, this is due to the crisis at the time of visit. This paper examined the nature of oil-related conflicts in the area, the peace building approach between the parties involved (oil companies and communities), for sustainable development. The response revealed specific conflicting issues to include oil spillage, gas flaring, lack of transparency among community leaders and the oil companies, companies' breach of MOUs and issues of infrastructural deficits. There was a general ineffective engagement between the parties, similarly, the peace building initiatives by government were not effective for promoting sustainable development. Therefore this paper recommends proper interface between host communities and oil companies for improved commitment on sustainable peace and development. Human capital and physical development in host communities should be promoted. Root causes of conflict must be addressed; Peace building approach should be mainstreamed and adopted instead of Military force in conflict management.

Keywords: Oil conflict, Peace building, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Many parts of the African region are experiencing conflicts over natural resources (Blench, 1996; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002; Addison. LeBillon and Murshed, 2003)violent conflict is on the increase as a result of exploration of natural resources. The exploration and exploitation of oil has posed negative impact to the environment and also the livelihood of people in Niger delta region of Nigeria, The Niger Delta is also the location of massive oil deposits, which have been extracted for decades by the government of Nigeria and by Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs). (Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Ojua,2013) had written on the exploration and exploitation of oil but little has being done to resolve the conflict experienced by the host communities and this has affected development in oil producing communities. The Niger Delta is rich with a diverse mosaic of ecological zones, five of which are the Mangrove Forest and Coastal Vegetation Zone, the Fresh Water Swamp Forest Zone, the Lowland Rain Forest Zone, the Derived Savannah Zone and the Montane Zone. Exploration and Exploitation (EE) has been on-going in Niger Delta region, but there seems to be a wide gap between the host communities and the company in terms of resolving conflict, efforts put in place over the years has failed. As a result of approach to resolve conflict in the region. Nwosu (2017) asserted that effort of the federal government to resolve conflict in the Niger Delta region have not been very effective in addressing the issue. This has contributed to poor development; most of these conflicts vary from community to community and their experiences as host communities in the hands of oil companies have lingered on more than expected.

The efforts of the government in Niger Delta area have made significant difference, before the Amnesty programme oil production was as low as 700 thousands barrels per day; now, it has increased to 2.6 million barrel per day (Jegede, 2013). Therefore government interventionist agencies, such as ASOPADEC, NNDC, Amnesty Programme have contributed to improving the challenges; yet the agitations of the community indigenes have shown that the non-execution and abandoned projects, awards of non-existing roads/bridges, poor execution of its projects, non-functionality of the few executed projects poses serious conflict and lack of human capacity development programmes among others (Okeugo,2014).

This study focused on the oil related conflicts, approach to peace building and initiatives in place of sustainable development. Destructive environmental changes from oil and gas extraction such as oil spillage and gas flaring

have posed a serious threat to host and neighbouring communities. These exploitative and destructive human activities in host community have affected the source of livelihood of the people through the devastation of their farmland, rivers and vegetation, which has led to the introduction of an increasing escalation of conflicts .The high increase of intercommunal violence, due to growing scarcity of resource and poverty can frustrate the sustainable development process in Africa Ntalaja, (2002). Human activities and those done in oil producing area seem to put the entire globe on environmental risk and has increased the conflict which can be seen as a struggle over values, Claims to status, power and scarce resources. In this context, conflict is considered as obstacle to progress, political stability and economic prosperity as a result of destructive impact in the society(Best 2006). The objective of this paper is to identify the nature of oil related conflicts, peace building initiatives in the area and peace building approach for sustainable development.

REVIEW OF LITRATURE

The Concept "Peace building" became known globally in Boutro- Ghali's, "An Agenda for Peace" which he wrote in 1992 as the United Nations Secretary General, which became a model for peace building process. Peace building looks at the root causes of conflict and does not only take care of the triggers but addresses the root causes of the conflict in order to generate a true and sustainable reconciliation, peaceful co-existence and conflicting parties.

According to Boutros-Ghali in his An Agenda for Peace categorized peacebuilding into two: Pre-Conflict and post Conflict peacebuilding. He defined pre peacebuilding as measure such as 'the control of arms, demilitarisation, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social and economic development.' According to Albert (2001), Peace building is an act of: "Repairing" relationships, institutions and social facilities and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing communities to be united once again" Dimensions of peacebuilding include: socio-economic, good governance, reform for justice, and security institution

Violent conflict is one of the major challenges of development in Sub Saharan Africa in achieving sustainable development and this poses a great challenge to oil producing states of Niger Delta. Violent conflict makes chronic

poverty even worse – from household to national level – and can create a downward spiral.

Many parts of Africa are experiencing increased conflicts over natural resources (Blench, 1996; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002; Addison, LeBillon and Murshed, 2003; These tensions involve all social levels: from families, neighbourhoods, communities, ethnic or religious groups, private enterprises, voluntary associations and nation-States, to global entities such as donor agencies and conservation groups. Conflict, according to many scholars is inevitable, It is considered as an obstacle to progress, political stability and economic prosperity as a result of destructive impact in the society (Best, 2006).

Peace building is a long term process that occurs after violent conflict has slowed down or brought to a halt. Lederach, (1997) underscores the importance of the concepts of transformation and sustainability. When building peace, the primary goal is to move a population from "a condition of vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and well-being". The latent stage is, during a process of confrontation and negotiation, transformed into dynamic and peaceful relationships.

On the other hand, nature does not recognize political boundaries and therefore has a great role in building peace across boundaries. This refers to natural endowments such as water, oil, etc. However, Late Kofi Annan's speech at the World Day for Water 2002 emphasized that: "the water problems of our world need not be only a cause of tension; they can also be a catalyst for cooperation. If we work together, a secure and sustainable water future can be ours."

The establishment of Environmental cooperation was to bring together ecological issues into political initiatives, such as the Environmental and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) through the combined auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). A first important step was to highlight the significance and recognize the theory of environmental peace building which is built on two concepts: 'cooperation and peace building.

STUDY AREA

The study area covers the oil rich community of Umuorie Ukwa west, Abia State. The primary sources of data was through administering questionnaires to fifty respondents comprising of men, women, youth

and focused group; discussion among labourers of SPDC Imo River station workers in Ukwa west while the secondary source of data was obtained from the Abia State Oil Producing Development Commission (ASOPADEC), Niger Delta Human Development Report, published and unpublished work and internet. The study population consists of the community members and Imo- river flow facility of Shell Petroleum Development Commission.

The Ukwa West local government Area takes the lead in Oil exploration activities in Abia State Crude Oil and Gas were first explored in 1958 at Owaza in Ukwa West Local Government Area in Abia State. This translated in discovery of Oil in commercial quantity given birth to its acquisition in 1964, an exercise which has hitherto opened discovery ways to other Communities in Ukwa West and its environs such as: Umuorie, Ozar, Umunteke, Umuokwor, Umuazuba etc. In further explanations, Ukwa East which was remarked as Oil and Gas explorative Local Government owning to the presence of Oil and Gas pipe lines, Cap wells with Christmas trees a prospective wells in bearing Communities such as: Ohuru, Obohia, Obeaku, Akwete, Azumini, Akirika etc. while Ugwunagbo Local Government Area, with the same nature, has Communities such as: Akanu, Obeaja, Obegu, Obuzor, Uzuaku etc. Ukwa West is the major Oil and Gas producing area of Abia State, Owaza Community playing host to PHC2 District flow-station owned by Shell Petroleum Development Company Limited (SPDC). (FENRAD). One of the known sources of livelihood for families especially the women is weaving a very durable wrapper called "Akwete cloth".

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study consists of Umuorie community and Imo River flow facility of SPDC. The data came from both primary and secondary sources; the primary data were obtained through a designed questionnaire. A total of forty four questionnaires were administered to men, women and youth, SPDC staff on the environmental issues, causes of conflict, peacebuilding approach in the community. Secondary data were used to obtain information and analyse data from the Niger Delta Human Development report, Abia state oil producing Development Commission (ASOPADEC) and also materials from internet and other published and unpublished works on conflict management, peace building and sustainable development. The interviews were conducted separately to get full information, using a designed questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The data collected were analysed using simple descriptive and percentage terms, in the table below "Y" refers to community members while "X" refers to oil company.

Table 1.
The major environmental challenges in the community are oil spillage and gas flaring.

No of Respondents	Oil Spillage	Gas Flaring	% No of Yes
X(14)	X(14)	X(14)	100%
Y(28)	Y(28)	Y(28)	100%

According to findings of the study, Oil Spillage is the most common and controversial of all the environmental impacts of oil exploitation. In the case of oil spills, Nigeria has the highest number of oil spills in the world; between 9 million and 13 million barrels of oil have been spilled in the Niger Delta (although the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) puts the amount of petroleum spilled in the area between 1976 and 1996 at 1.8 million out of a total of 2.4 million) (Ajodo,2012). A UNDP report states that more than 6,800 spills were recorded in the area between 1976 and 2001 while the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) places the quantity of petroleum spilled into the environment yearly at 2,300 cubic metres, with an average of 300 industrial spills annually. The World Bank however believes that the amount of oil spills could be ten times higher than the officially released figures. Erosion, canalisation, intra- and inter-communal conflicts between hosts communities are also some effects of oil explorations in the region. This has led to protests by the indigenous people, leading to full blown conflicts. According to constitutional rights projects (CRP, 1999) oil spills are uncontrolled release of any product relating in oil production including crude oil, chemicals or waste caused by equipment failure. Agricultural farmland has been affected by the Oil spill which is one of the challenges faced by host communities of oil companies in the Niger Delta Region Ukwa west inclusive. This led to poor farm produce, soil degradation, erosion and low farm yield (Okeugo, 2014). Spills are potentially the most devastating to agricultural land and water resources (UNDP, 2006). Oil spillage has exposed most local people to unnecessarily hardship, in order

words, spills and leaks do not only pollute groundwater sources and destroy agricultural lands and fisheries, they also pose an immediate threat to human life, which has always been a source of agitation and conflict in the oil bearing areas which the companies give little attention. In this regard, conflicts emerge as a result of failure and reluctance ofoil companies to meet key demands of host communities (Odobo, 2018).

Secondly, Gas flaring is the deliberate burning of natural gas produced which creates ceaseless and high intensity flame. The World Bank report shows that the gas flaring has been known as the singular highest contributor to problem of global warming and climate change. It has been estimated that the total emission of carbon dioxide (CO_2) from gas flaring in Nigeria amounts to about 35million tons per year; it is on record that Nigeria flare the highest amount of gas in the world (WorldBank report, 1995, 2000, 2001).

Table 2
The table below describes the major causes of conflict in the community among others

No of Respondent	Unemployment	Employment	% of Yes	% of No
X(14)	4	10	71%	29%
Y(28)	21	7	25%	75%

From the table above 29% of the company staff stated that there is unemployment while 71% agreed that there is employment but due to lack of transparency among opinion leaders some slots meant for indigenes are sold out to non-indigenes; 75% of the community members argued that there is unemployment because the companies give slots to non-indigenes while 25% a greed that employment was given but it's mainly to labourer instead of qualified indigenes qualified for higher positions.

Other causes of conflict include lack of amenities, the company staff response stated that basic amenities has being provided to the community while the community members are not satisfied with the provision of amenities provided, they request construction of modern library, equipping laboratories and provide recreation centres in the community.

Also lack of transparency among Community leaders has contributed to most of the lapses experienced in development and project implementation at community levels, funds mishandled by those in authority; this has led to poor relationship between the both parties. Breach of Memorandum of understanding by the interventionist agencies in the Area has also breach the contract on the signed document in the MOU, through the abandonment of massive project in the oil producing communities of Ukwa west, According to an indigene of the community, he disclosed that the NDDC has reneged in all agreements it had with people which, according to him, included the building of a multi-million civic centre/multi-purpose hall at Ugwuati, a modern sports complex at Okeikpe, 132/133kv electricity substation at Ikpokwu, Obokwe district hospital as well as the reconstruction of Ugwuati-Obokwe-Uratta-Aba road amongst other agreements and most of these projects has being abandoned for over ten years(Nwosu, 2017).Oil has become a source of conflict especially in the Niger Delta region among state, companies and local communities. As a result of the activities of the oil company in the community the major oil related conflicts in the community are oil spillage and gas flaring, also lack of transparency among communities leaders and breach of MOU. According to Nwosu (2017) the pain inflicted in the area by oil companies has call for serious attention, a note of warning to the Niger Delta Development Commission and the oil exploring companies situated in the Ukwa west is pushing them to resort to violence over the continued neglect of their communities by side-tracking them in the scheme of development projects.

Peacebuilding efforts and process in managing conflict

Conflicts has been occurring in the community over five years within the community and this has led to most prominent persons in the community to relocate, due to the high level of kidnapping, according to the respondents the following has been put in place in resolving conflict between the community and the company.

This work adopts the peacebuilding definition by United Nation's Policy Committee in 2007, peacebuilding: [It] involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and sustainable development.

The misinterpretation of conflict transformation exercises especially in communities is often taken that conflict has

been resolved totally; this kind of assumption is a misleading factor in peace building process. It explains why many conflicts that have been "de-escalated" re-escalates a few months or years after cessation of hostilities (Albert, 2001).

The damages done in the communities is so enormous that it takes a gradual process to resolve, According to Albert (2001) No intervention project –no matter how well designed would remove all the problems at once; the problems would have to be removed gradually. Peacebuilding process is not about just building infrastructures in communities but it takes a longer period of time to execute. In oil producing community like Umuorie peacebuilding has to do with " repairing" relationships, institutions and social facilities and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing communities to be united once again. Without these tasks, there could be a relapse into destructive conflict in the society (Albert, 2001).

In spite of recurrent failures, and in order to show its commitment to ending the crisis and ensuring the development of the area, the Federal Government established some other Commissions such as the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) which was in operation from 1992 to 1999. OMPADEC was set up by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration under the chairmanship of Chief Albert Horsefall. Like its predecessors, it failed to achieve its mandate owing to official profligacy, corruption, excessive political interference and lack of transparency. After this, the Niger Delta Environmental Survey was set up in 1995, followed by the Niger Delta Development Commission, established in 2000 by President OlusegunObasanjo with a vision 'to offer a lasting solution to socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta Region' and a mission 'to facilitate the rapid and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful' (Niger Delta Development Commission,2000).

The establishment of this agencies has not yielded marginal impact in the oil producing states this is because their project centred initiative(income-based) rather than integrated rural and human capacity development initiative (human based). At the state level, Abia State Oil Producing Areas and Development Commission (ASOPADEC) and NDDC has contributed little to the peacebuilding process and development of the communities where exploration and exploitation are going on, The ASOPADEC Chairman, Mr Samuel Nwogu, explained that, "The primary objective of the commission is to alleviate the suffering of the oil producing communities and Abia State in general.

Peace building initiative for sustainable development.

The purpose of Peace building process is to achieve a long lasting relationships, sustainable peace and development, the need to mainstream peacebuilding in conflict areas is of utmost importance in order to promote developmental project, unlike the needs that result when there is crisis and disaster which requires an immediate attention, like saving lives or providing relief materials, the process of peacebuilding therefore is a gradual sustainable approach of moving a conflict situation to a peaceful stage.(Lederach ,1997) emphasizes that conflict is viewed as a "dynamic process" and consequently in the process of building peace a "multiplicity of interdependent elements and actions" is needed which all contribute to the "constructive transformation of the conflict". In order words to maintain sustainable development, it is fundamental to protect the lives and property of the people, and respect their fundamental human rights. That is why there is a strong focus on peaceful, just and inclusive societies in the 2030 Agenda – and explicit recognition that "there can be no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace". Where safety is routinely and casually under threat, it will be impossible to generate lasting improvements in most aspects of people's lives. Therefore, Sustainable development is an answer to the improvement of human warfare, a term popularized by our common future, in the 1987 report of the world commission on environment and development. The recent developments in the international peace-building community have sought to address natural resource and environmental issues. Intriguingly, some of these steps have been made by actors not generally focused on environmental issues, demonstrating the potential for peace building to serve as a pathway towards a deeper understanding of natural resources for actors beyond the environmental community. By way definition, Sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising

the ability of the future generation to meet their own need (UNEP, 2009).

Sustainable development and peacebuilding are interconnected, with a three core dimensions the need economy, society and environment the need Economy: Economic sustainability means maximizing society's well-being, economic equity, and eradicating poverty through the creation of wealth and livelihoods, equal access to resources and the optimal and efficient use of natural resources.

Society: Socio-political sustainability means promoting social equity and uplifting the welfare and quality of Vlife by improving access to basic health and education services, fulfilling minimum standards of security and respect for human rights, including the development of diversity, pluralism and grassroots participation

Environment: Environmental sustainability means the enhancement and conservation of the environment and natural resources for present and future generations and to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The Niger Delta region is endowed with vast natural resources, both human and natural; the presence of peace is therefore, required for sustainable development of the region.

Conclusion And Recommedation

Peacebuilding in sustainable development is a process of tackling the root causes and triggers of violent conflict especially resource based conflict. In 1997, following the creation of new post-conflict unit and the establishment of post-conflict fund (PCF) by World Bank with its headquarters in New york, as a way of building capacities to respond constructively to issues related to the transition from violent to peaceful situations around the world (Albert, 2001). Conflict that occur within communities may not benefit from such funds because most of this fund is for large scale wars in which the international community has deep economic and political interest, be it as it may they need to build local capacities in order to achieve a peaceful society is very expedient in oil producing communities.

Therefore, the need for the oil companies to establish individual development fund which could be deployed to partner with oil producing communities and establish small and medium scale enterprises (

SMEs) using locally sourced materials will reduce the poverty level and improve livelihood and sustain development.

Paul Lederach (1997) argues convincingly that "peacebuilding" is beyond "post-accord reconstruction"; he stated that the concept "encompasses, generates and sustains the full array processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships", both in the pre- and post-conflict solutions.

Peacebuilding is not just about infrastructure, it goes beyond that, the term "building" is about creating, constructing, moulding, in order words peacebuilding is about building human skills and capacity for sustainable development. Peacebuilding therefore requires the following:

➢ Provision of Sustainable Skills Acquisition centres

➢ Embracing consultative processes and popular participation in supporting community development

➢ Sensitization among oil companies and communities on the peacebuilding process

In conclusion, the effort of the government in establishing intervention agencies has contributed in development but peace still remains elusive, therefore to foster peace the root causes of conflict must be addressed.

The paper recommends among others the underlying concern is the need to include a more comprehensive approach to peace building especially in oil rich communities and areas, by identifying and supporting structures which tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. Secondly, the need for Participation and constant interface between oil communities and oil companies and a clear commitment by the latter to promote human capital and physical development in host communities and promote the use of peacebuilding and not Military force in conflict management, but to engage stake holders and parties involved on negotiation and mediation

Thirdly, strict adherence to signed memorandum of understanding must be strictly adhered to for sustainable peace and development.

Finally, engagement with conflict affected communities, regions and countries should go beyond relief to relief but involve bottom- up approach to resolving conflict and involvement of local authorities and civil society representatives for sustainable growth and development.

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