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PEACE-BUILDING AS THE PANACEA FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper examines the peace building template as the panacea for development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The study explores the realities in the Niger Delta; the prevailing social conflict in the area and the relationship between peacebuilding and development. In doing this, the study adopted historical and descriptive research method and used the structural functionalism, with human need theories as the frameworks of analysis. From the analysis, it is discovered that the adoption of state building strategies achieved little result, because, state building mechanism is just for regime survival. It was also found that government relied on militant driven solution. This, again, ignored the holistic development desires of the region. Peace can only be built in the troubled region through development. Development in this context should be a process for meeting human development goals of the region while sustaining the ability of the natural systems to continue providing natural resources and the ecosystem for future generation to meet their needs.

Key words: Conflict, Development, Niger Delta and Peace building

Introduction
The long years of poor local service delivery, economic exploitation, social marginalization, political exclusion, infrastructural neglect and environmental degradation have eventually transformed the Niger Delta region into a zone of frustrated expectation and unprecedented restiveness. According to Azigbo (2008), the current conflict in the area which started on a mild pocket of peaceful demonstrations to the office of multinational oil companies by the youth wing of various host communities degenerated into lock-ins and seizure of oil installations. By 1998 the Niger Delta has become "lawless zone, where youths disrupted oil production activities and communities frequently engage with little provocation, in destructive inter- and intra- community strife (NDDC, 2004). The inevitability of Niger Delta conflict and the usual destruction of lives and properties and the resultant destruction of the Nigeria business environment call for

a holistic peace building approach in the area to ensure development. Is the problem of Niger Delta really understood considering the fact that so many pro peace development commissions and militancy driven solutions have been put in place yet, no peace in the area? The dynamics and pattern of addressing conflict in the area through state interventions as noted in the failure of the various commissions in the face of political and economic realities further made peace building process offensive and irrelevant. How can we talk about peace building in an environment where people are made to drink acidic rain, how can we talk of development in the face of polluted air, how can there be development in a dying degraded land? How can we talk about peace building if you ask who benefit from the mining oil in which mountains are leveled, forests are cut, rivers are polluted farmlands are poisoned, whole villages are displaced, families are driven into sickness, livelihoods are lost, and other questions on environmental injustice, you are brutalized and slain? The quest to carry out the study is provoked by the belief that if durable peace is achieve, sustainable development of the region can be guaranteed. The study therefore seeks to identify causes of the conflict and how peace could be restored. The study also examines strategies needed to build peace. The study employed qualitative research method and rely on secondary data. It is organized into sections with each devoted to the treatment of relevance subunits.

Literature and Conceptual Discourses
 The fact that peace is development is obviously undisputable. But, what is disputable is what constitute development. This is because development means different things to different people, depending on their choice, ideological orientation and inclination (Obinozie, 1999). The concept development like many other concepts has varied interpretations. The classical scholars conceived development as a process and programme that would better the wellbeing of the people. It equally involves the enlargement of the existing programmed and projects. Thus it centered on the realization of certain potentialities. The contention of classical scholar is that development basically is associated with physical infrastructural development such as roads, schools, hospitals. Although development from this perspective appears to be restrictive but considering the dearth of social infrastructural and its attendant consequences on the life of the Niger Delta, we have no option than to agree with the position of this thought. However, for and all-embracing approach, we also considered the liberal position that incorporate "good governance, human right economic and political freedom, inner capital enhancement and rule of law (Smith, 1969; Ake, 1993).

From the above, development could be conceived as the process by which people, based on their choice and values create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher level of civilization, reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Seer,1975). It is also seen as the liquidation of poverty, employment generation and satisfaction of basic needs (South – Commission Report, 1993). Meri (1970), conceived development as the increase in per capital income, reduction of absolute poverty and equal distribution of income.

The understanding here is that development involves qualitative improvements in standard of living. The measurement of development is man centered processes that basically address issues that bother on life sustaining facilities such as critical infrastructure, education, economic empowerment and good governance.

The realization of development no doubt, is veritable avenue for peace building. This is aptly correct as Ibeanu (2000) observed rightly that poverty, unemployment uneven distribution of income and resources, political instability are conflict induce factors. By implication, provision of development induce objective factors would diminish material conditions that lead to conflicts. Against this background, the study seeks to examines the relationship between peace and development, and how peace could be achieved in the

Theoretical Considerations
Structural functionalism is a peace building theory that sees society as a complex system where part work together to promote solidarity and stability. It looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the societal structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms (through social structures and social functions). As cleanly postulated by Herbert Spencer, the theory emphasizes the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system, which by extension, deals with creating structural peace building activities through middle level structures. In this way, peace structures, system of behaviour, institutions, and concerted pro-peace actions enhances peace culture. This theory is important as it is all about building societal infrastructures that provides concrete and realistic activities through which a new peace paradigm might expresses itself. These structures are necessary, because political peace in the form of state building interventions can never accomplish conflict transformation by itself. For instance, a signed peace accord does not create peace; it only creates a basis for peace or a legal infrastructure to support peace. Without the corresponding societal infrastructure to support it, the peace will never hold. Thus the activities of structural peace building include development programme which is not in the case of the Niger Delta, the exclusive domain of either government or the multinational, but also the oil bearing community initiative. The essence of this theory is that peace building process in the study area should be integrated in nature, context and functions. Thus the application of the structural functionalism is a call for proactive cross sector partnership approach to development defined by the beneficiaries in the area for the attainment of an inclusive peace. Here again, informed the adoption of the human need theory.

From the perspective of peace building, the human needs theory offers us the opportunity to make a valid distinction between conflict that can be resolved by using conventional forces or power – based negotiation and those whose resolution requires needs and virtues that are not for trading (Burton, 1990). The beauty of this theory as it applies to this study is that, it reveals the logical connection between human needs and problem – solving mechanism (Fisher, 1997; Mitchell and Banks, 1996). Its adoption in this work will help the study identify unsatisfied needs of the Niger Delta people that create conflictual relationship between the state, oil companies and the citizens, as well as

consider methods of accommodating social arrangement to the ineluctable demands of the Niger Delta region. To the functionalists, peace performs social functions that serve the interest of the country's social institution. In this case, no social institution can function in the absence of peace. Peace involves the presence of all objective factors that cause and sustain harmony among the individuals and groups which enable them continue coexistence as an economic entity.

Kaima Declaration and Insecurity in the Niger Delta Region
The current Niger Delta Youth insurrection against the Nigeria State was formally launched after the 1998 Kaima Declaration, the militants accused the Nigeria State, and in tandem with the oil gas exploration ventures, of systematic looting of their resources, damage to their environment and habitat, denial of appropriate revenue accruable from the mineral sales, and absent of political control of their resources (*Sunday Vanguard*, 2008).

Deriving their support primarily from the oil producing host communities who see them as liberators /freedom fighter, the militants took advantage of their terrain, with boat building technology to conduct classical guerilla warfare. Avoiding direct pitched battles with the better trained and better equipped security forces, and operating in cells and small groups, the militants in the Niger Delta mounted series of militant hit and run raids on the security forces, the oil company and the civil society. Their publicly declared objective is to demoralize the military, terrorize the civil laws and either drive away the directing companies or through kidnapping hostage taking of their workers, bring the right of the region to the attention of the international community as the Palestinians used air piracy and international terrorism in the 1970s to draw attention to the Middle East situation.

The crisis of insecurity in the region leads to the deployment of Military Task Force to restore order and create a conducive atmosphere to do business. This method could not restore the needed peace. In respond to the persistent agitation and security challenges, the Nigeria State adopted first, the strategy of symbolic concessions which raised the percentage on derivation of the oil producing states from 1.5% to 3% and later 13% (Owugah, 2010). This was in addition to the establishment of various development commissions for the region. These commissions include (a) Niger Delta Development Board created in 1960, (b) Niger Delta River Basic Development Authority in 1976, (c) Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 (d) The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, and (e) the Niger Delta Development Plan. Partly on account of this, the commissions gained the support of some leaders from the region, but could not address the social conflict in the region.

The various commissions failed to record any significant improvement in the desired development of the areas due to financial terrorism, corruption, insecurity on the part of those implementing the various objectives of these commissions. Owugah (2010) and Omotola (2007) argued that, though the agencies gain few supports and pacified some members of the region, but could not achieve desires expectations because it was basically another avenue to patronize members of the ruling class with award of contracts, consultancies and supplies of materials for the project. As remarked by current NDDC Boss, Ekeere (2017), over five thousand uncompleted projects are littered all over the

region, indicating that nothing has really changed despite series of commissions set up to develop the region.

But this is not the case; making the youth to picked up arms against their perceived enemies – the government, oil companies and their corroborators. The deepening nature of the conflict and its attendant destruction was unacceptable to the Yar'Adua Administration. The Yar'Adua government in 2009 embarked on certain confidence building measure. This measure was aimed at involving the insurgent groups in a dialogue with constituted authority (Owugah, 2010), besides proclamation of a general amnesty and unconditional pardon to all those who had taken up arms against the state, the administration went further to engaged these militants as pipeline guards. With these measures, government thought this strategy would end the long battle, but the reverse was the case. Very recently, the region saw the emergence of new militant group called Niger Delta Avengers in 2016, on eco-terrorism mission, which of recent attracted the attention of government. One fact that is obviously misplaced is the emphasis on militants driven solution. This is because the government seem to respond to the region's problems only when militants struck. Incidentally, the realities on ground show that peace building in the area must be rooted in the challenges of everyday life of the people

Issues and Options in Peacebuilding and Development in the Niger Delta.
The concept "peace" like any other concept in the human language seem easier understood, but mostly "misplaced understanding". To a greater number of people, the word "peace" simply depicts absence of crisis or war and on the other hand, war in the absence of peace. It is logical and attractive to say this, but indeed, the political scientists, it goes beyond mere absence of war. Theoretically it is not sufficient to assume that peace is the absence of war. This is because the word "peace" and its nature differ. This is why theorists define peace in line with their ideological orientation. For instance, the instrumentalists define peace as the means to an end or belief peace could be attained with the aid of coercion. No wonder, the oil companies and government of Nigeria pursuer peace in the Niger Delta through the deployment of the military to the study area. Peace building consists of a wide range of integrated activities, process, roles and functions that centered on transforming a society, especially society with intensive and prolong conflict into peace. Accordingly, the new peace building paradigm and praxis call for a shift from the concern with the restoration of issues towards a frame or process that focuses on de-rooting causes of conflict, not mere reconciliation or mediation.

In this way, peace building is highly considered using the functionalist mechanism. To this extent, peace building is perceived as a process that ensures or creates an environment that prevents the emergence and escalation of tensions and violent conflict (Juma, 2002). The conceptual praxis of peace building is essentially about the process of achieving peace and it embraces activities that build and consolidate peaceful co-existence and relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and communities. Thus, Annan (1988) maintained that the objective factors of peace building is to build on, add to, and re-orient peace and prevent reoccurrence of armed confrontation and create conditions conducive to reconciliation and recovery.

Gultung (1975), who first coined the term *peace-building*, noted that, the process achieves durable peace through the creation of structures and institutions that are peace – based and which survived on justice, equity and cooperation. The presence of justice, equity and cooperation automatically translate into permanent solution to underlying causes of conflict. There are basically two models of peace building. It is necessary to discuss the two and relates them to the Niger Delta.

The first is the liberal peace models. This model is premised on capitalist democracy. The model emphasized promotion of democracy and market oriented economy as precondition for peace building in post conflict society. It is belief by scholars of this model such as that democracy is essential for the creation of non-violent conflict management and resolution mechanism. While the market oriented aspect would stimulate growth and development. The problem of this model is that (1) it is top down, formulaic and ethnocentric (2) the model fails to address societal tension fear and distrust that persist from the conflict. Here lies the case of the Niger Delta region. This is because the model disconnected the people and thus, undermines the legitimacy of our democratic institutions. The high level of competition sparked by the liberalization of the oil sector tends to intensify social exclusion, inequality and marginalization. The Ken Saro-Wiwa and Ogoni peculiar experience in the Niger Delta, further prove this point and thus, explain why the peace building process in the area could not achieve better result.

The second is transformation peace building. As rightly observed by Fisher and Zambian, (2009), this model seeks to mainstream transformative elements into project design that deliberately focuses on building relationships as a way of addressing of conflict. What is more useful in this model is that the model links state building approach to peace building. However, state building is considered peace building in the Niger Delta. This is a misplaced understanding, and perhaps explain why all efforts made by the state to resolve Niger Delta conflict have failed. State building is not synonymous with peace building but is strongly linked. State building intervention seeks to build transformation and self-sustaining state structures that re-establish the societal contract between the state and citizen and to promote state legitimacy. State building has gained prominence in the past through the creation of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1960 the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBA) in 1976, the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, and very recent, Niger Delta Development Commission in 2000, the Niger Delta Ministry and the Niger Delta Development Plan (Owugah, 2010). From the above, it is very clear that state building and peace building converge in their aim to strengthen the relationship between the state and the people of Niger Delta region. A common problem however, is the cosmetic approach of the different strategies aimed at achieving similar goals. The fact is that, state building intervention of the different approaches can be integrated in practical terms to actualized transformative mechanism to ensuring durable peace in the area. The lack of integrative roles, activities and function, including inclusive participation of the effected people constrained the development of a coherent strategic approach to peace building in the Niger Delta.

Peace, Development and Mechanisms for Peace-Building in the Niger Delta Region

In a very simple sentence, peace is development, and development is peace. The primary concern of development is to guarantee peace. The presence of peace will therefore enable man to create and recreate himself and his society according to his desires. The idea that it is possible to evolve durable peace out of long drawn crisis in the Niger Delta through the deployment of force is wrong and cannot achieved the desires peace nor the militancy driven solutions help matters. The government failed in their bid to foster peace in the area because, all their efforts is not in line with the classical conception of development. The attraction which the classical view of development hold for peace and security among the citizens is rooted in the expansion of infrastructural development. The demand of the people centered on neglect and dearth of basic life sustaining facilities.

Infrastructural development would make the region overcome weaknesses by acquiring increasing control over the forces of nature and thereby progressively dominating the decades of poverty, ignorance with life more worth living. In this sense, development is a people centred social change. Development means people and the essence of it, is the welfare of the people. Development of the area has to do with disposition of the region to resolve their differences without recourse to armed conflict, as they get involved in the development process. Development in this context means the attainment within the region, a sense of community and of institutions (participations) and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure dependable expectations of peace building.

In order for peace to endure, it will require a substantial concession in the sovereign claims of the oil resources so as to facilitate the implementation of complementary policy measures regarding, for instance, oil revenue, oil blog concession and other oil related policies. This will create way for an inclusive development; economically, socially, politically and culturally.

One practical step towards the development of the region is the need to embark on *peace education.* Peace education and development is inseparable dimension of human progress. This is the sure root to conflict resolution and peace-building, because peace education would shape the region's world views, and inform our pedagogical philosophies and practice. Peace education at home, in school and within the community would inadvertently provide platform for reconciliation, mediation and dialogue, to creating the needed environment for development to take place, in this way, peace education would exercise influence on the values, beliefs and behavioral patterns that are subjected to conflict approaches. The point here is that peace education will render conflict-based view of the region in effective. As carefully discussed by Duffy (2000), peace education enhances the culture of peace. No satisfactory approaches will quarantine peace except a comprehensive all-inclusive and sustainable peace education that would encourage and possibly alter the current attitudes of youths in the area toward positive development.

Another practical step towards the development of the region is the need to adopt *cross sector partnership strategy*. As explained in the theoretical framework, the development mechanism in the area needs integrated structural functionalists approach to the extent

that all stakeholders including host communities would get involved. This is because the need for recognition is universal, and many groups resent being marginalized. The non-recognition of the people is aggravated by what they claim is their poverty and lack of development. Recognition in the study is participation in the planning and execution of development driven projects in the Niger Delta Master plan. As vividly scripted in the development plan, the strategic thrust of the master plan is to solve poverty or human capital development needs through a robust economy by providing the desire physical infrastructure consistently with environmental care and sustainability. Sectors critical to sustainable development in the area includes good roads, power, functional education, agriculture and more importantly good governance at the grassroots. These would create better conductive business environment and improved collaboration between active stakeholders. Proactive implementation of the Niger Delta Plan with aggressive provision of critical infrastructure will certainly induce durable peace that would unavoidably settle development in the region. In the implementation of the Niger Delta master plan, the people involvement is cardinal. Indeed, there participation is certainly one of the most important principles in determining the success or failure of peace building efforts. The rational here is that participatory development stands for partnership which is built upon the basis of a constructive dialogue among the various stakeholders during which meaningful development agenda could be set jointly. This implies negotiation rather than dominance of externally imposed development project. Thus, the people would become actors instead of being simply beneficiaries. In this way, they will influence and share control over development initiatives and the decision which affect them.

The third practical step is *human resources development*. The region is educationally disadvantaged and for the desire development to be meaningful, it ought to be appreciated and utilize by the people for whom it is meant. As rightly noted by Grant (1979), quality of the human resources available determines the pace of   development in a society. As explained, the functionalist mechanism of development an extension of the cross sector partnership requires the involvement of all the stakeholders including the oil bearing communities. The quality of human resources relationship to the desire pace of development is dependent upon the education, health and supporting environment. In the case of the Niger Delta region, for the fisherman whose rivers have been polluted, empowering him in the provision, maintenance and increased productivity of fish pounds; whether natural or artificial would certainly give him relevance in society. This situation applies to all the economic sectors in the area; agriculture, industries, business and much more. If the people of the region are encouraged to acquire new skill that make them fit into the new pace of development, certainly peace will enhance progress in the area. It will therefore make reasonable sense if the government and oil companies operating in the areas would undertake human capital development programme. This approach will definitely guarantee peace, because the devil they say finds work in the idle hands. If the people are productively engaged, peace is assured and development will take place. In this context, development is conscious efforts and results of transforming the once neglected environment for the purpose of enhancing standard of living (Anikpo, 1996). The human resources development of the region, would not only eliminate obstacles that militate

against the desired development, but will equally help to advance the people capacity to exploit, annex and utilize the environmental based resources to achieve a more fulfilling life through development partnership mechanism.

Fourthly, there is need for socio-economic and political restructuring. The sense of political marginalization that the region suffers from can be dealt with through constitutional and political restructuring of the country in a just and inclusive way than that at present. Also the alienation that arises from underdevelopment can be overcome by economic policies that lead to growth and fair distribution and the difficulties of access to basic needs could be tackled through affirmative action based on the socio economic needs of the people.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The significance is of this study is premised on the conviction that development programmes constructively pursued as suggested will lead to less conflict and greater security for growth and development in the area. Peace and development are intrinsically linked together; they are complimentary concepts. Ejere (2004) said peace is an indispensable requirement for any development in the society to take place. Any peace building efforts that never meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation in the Niger Delta to meet their own needs would achieve little or no result. Therefore, peacebuilding should recognize process that meet human development goals in the area while sustaining the ability of natural systems to continue providing the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and the people depend. Again there should be effective human capacity development to discourage youth involvement in anti-government peace building action.

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