Niger Delta Development Commission'S Peacebuilding Initiatives In Uzere Community In Delta State, Nigeria

By
Mathias Jarikre, PhD

Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution
Faculty of Social Sciences
National Open University of Nigeria
mjarikre@noun.edu.ng
Goddey Ogagarojor
Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution
Faculty of Social Sciences
National Open University of Nigeria
goddeyogagarojor@gmail.com

Abstract

Armed conflict situations in the Niger Delta region are hinged on systemic roots. This article focus on the social conditions that promotes violent conflict and the structural dimension of peacebuilding efforts of the Niger Delta Development Commission to address the needs of Uzere community. The article adopts a qualitative research design using case study because of its phenomenal inquisition of Uzere as one of the oldest communities where onshore oil production began and the intermittent crisis the community has faced over the years. Primary and secondary data were collected through interviews, documentary review and non-participatory observation. Twenty-four (key and in-depth) interviews were conducted with members of the traditional ruling council and community leadership, youth and women representatives and Business owners. The paper argue that the peacebuilding efforts of NDDC on paper aligned with the needs of the community, however, the reality speaks volume to the opposite. Vital and important efforts have been terminated after been ongoing for almost a decade, while some have been ongoing for almost two decades with no end in sight. With under-deserving consideration for peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, these efforts have elicited series of positive and negative impacts on the community. Through its findings, the article concludes that by adopting the need for structural peacebuilding as an alternative, the peacebuilding efforts of NDDC would in no time turn the positive curve.

Key words: Niger, Delta, Peace building

Introduction

The unending tussle of mankind has been the innate desire to maintain and sustain peace. It is therefore noteworthy that, the problems of crisis, enmity, conflict that has identified with the human race has made the attainment of world peace almost, if not totally, a mirage. In this light, it makes somewhat difficult, the ability to articulate the gains that has being made in the creation of a peace-free environment for African development in particular and the world in general. Ogonor (2004) observes that it is a part of human nature to disagree. However, he urged that "it is important and instructive to note that it is the management of conflict rather than its

occurrence that has been the bane of effort aimed at promoting peace as well as attaining developing a peaceful environment needed to ensure or guarantee proper sustainable and meaningful development in the world as a whole and in the Niger Delta in particular. Large efforts are still being made to date, to ensure conflicts are effectively managed or nipped in the bud as they occur in order to sustain peace and stimulate sustainable development". Oyitso, Akanji, & Orobator (2013) posits that "these efforts have continued unabated and will continue until world peace is guaranteed" (2013. 528).

Available empirical evidence shows that putting an end to obvious difficult conflict or violence requires a pious act of cautious understanding of the seemingly complex local realities and peculiarities. It is with this understanding, both remote and immediate reason(s) that generated the conflict would constitute the basis of strategic peacebuilding efforts. It is without doubt, that in order for development and any form of advancement to occur in any community, peacebuilding must first be prioritized. It is in this sense that Oyitso, et al. (2013) proposes that if development goals are to be attained, violent conflict and behaviors should be prevented and reduced both at the individual and community levels. This line of argument is further buttressed by Uyanga (2020) who made the point that peace is essential for development to occur as sustainable development is dependent on harmonious relationship in any given context.

Peacebuilding then is "the reconstructing of an environment with significantly reduced violence and where things start functioning again so that people's life becomes once more 'normal'" (Brabant, 2010). Brabant argued that "peacebuilding through recovery and development, certainly in terms of basic services, livelihoods and economic opportunities, are highly relevant for two reasons: they enable people again to have some control over their lives and hence contribute to that 'normalisation', and also create disincentives for violence as people now have greater 'economic wellbeing' to lose" (Brabant 2010). In defining peacebuilding, it is most often used, to "describe any work that has peace-enhancing outcomes, and it attaches great importance to how things happen. In other words, it is about the process as well as the activity itself and its outcomes" (Fisher, 2000). That is why efforts at maintaining this peace in the Niger Delta region can be traced to the establishment of pre-independence interventionist agency known as NDDB which was succeeded by the Presidential Task Force popularly known as *1.5 Per-cent Committee*

in 1980. The task force could not achieve much because of lack of fund and it was used as an avenue of official profligacy and politicized its activities (Chokor & Obadan, 2006). The taskforce was replaced by the formation of the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992. The aim of setting up OMPADEC was to rehabilitate, carry out infrastructural and manpower development, offer environmental protection, and pollution services. Oyitso, et al. (2013), in investigating the purpose of OMPADEC, observed that it was also considered a veritable instrument for propagating peace and understanding between oil companies and the communities in which they operate. Its goal was to foster peace and development by genuinely satisfying the needs and aspirations of the people. However, inadequate funding, lack of master plan, official profligacy and undue politicisation made it unable to change the lives of the people.

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) succeeded OMPADEC in 2000 "to deal urgently with the developmental needs of the Niger Delta and bring sustainable prosperity and peace to the area. The mission statement, vision and strategy of the commission include: to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable and ecologically peaceful, to offer lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta Region; preparation of a comprehensive master plan on the development of the Niger Delta Region; and implementation of development projects that will affect peoples' lives positively and which will become part of the master plan" (NDDC Masterplan, 2006). Several researchers were of the robust expectation that the emergence of the NDDC will bring the needed development to the region by addressing the basic human needs of identity, freedom, well-being and survival and significantly contributes towards the realisation of sustainable peace through peacebuilding in the Niger Delta region (Oyitso et al. 2013; Amoateng 2020; Akinyoade 2015). It is saddening that, the impact of the Commission has not been felt in the region especially in the Uzere community.

Oil and gas exploration in Nigeria started in the early 1950s and by 1956 oil was found in Oloibiri, now in Bayelsa State. Two years after in 1958, oil was also found in Uzere in Isoko while drilling started in 1959. Uzere has two oil fields (Uzere West and Uzere East) with a total of 43 oil wells producing about 53,000 barrels per day (8,400 m^3/d). However, the effects of the

oil exploration hazards have negatively and immensely impacted the Isoko nation since 1957, when the oil activities started. The entire Isoko communities have been subjected to environmental degradation, and the farms yield emaciated; the economic prosperity is poor, ecosystems poisonous, and life expectancy reduced. Public electricity is a mirage and craft centres, and small-scale industries are not sustainable to improve commercial activities to provide employment. Despite the hue and cry of the population, the oil and gas explorers paid no attention to the development of the Isoko communities" (Thisday 2025).

Okolo (2014) argues that by the NDDC Act of 2000, it states the NDDC categorically as an interventionist agency in the Niger Delta, its primary mission is to implement a programme for sustainable prosperity and peace in the region. This is to be achieved through well designed projects for infrastructural, technological, economic, ecological, and human resources (i.e. conflict resolution and peace-building) development. This is achieved through projects that builds the capacity of local peace committees, strengthens local governance structures, and promotes community-driven conflict resolution, by engaging traditional leaders and local government officials, to ensure that communities are equipped to address the underlying causes of conflict and are better prepared for long-term peace and reconciliation. It is the general perception of residents of the Niger Delta that "NDDC is not vigorously pursuing its mandate, especially in the areas of conflict resolution, community development and peacebuilding. This is because instead of embarking on sustainable capacity building programmes and projects, such as construction of road networks, public utilities, shore protection, and manpower to spur development, the Commission was busy procuring and distributing dustbins, exercise books and chalks to primary schools, sponsoring inter-secondary schools quiz competitions, and paying very little attention to capital projects". (Okolo 2014, 12).

Statement of the Problem

The discovery of oil in Nigeria was initially perceived as a significant boom, promising substantial revenue generation that was expected to catalyze rapid national development. However, this supposed blessing has increasingly manifested as a curse, particularly for the residents of the oil-producing communities (Ibeanu, 2008; Watts and Ibaba, 2011; Nwokolo, 2012). This explains the underlying social conditions that foster violent conflicts and the systemic roots of unrest in the region. A plethora of studies have examined the

underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region and the impact of oil exploration on the economic and social lives of its residents (Jarikre, 2024). Specifically, studies have investigated the effectiveness of NDDC programmmes in oil-producing communities, the relationship between these programmmes and regional development, the role of empowerment initiatives in reducing youth restiveness and transformation strategies for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta (Jarikre, 2021b; Oyitso et al., 2013; Nwokolo, 2012). The assumption that the existing structures and approaches, including the efforts of the NDDC and other governmental bodies, would suffice in building peace has proven to be overly optimistic

This article aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by examining the peacebuilding efforts of the NDDC from a structural perspective, with a specific focus on the Uzere Community in the Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State. By investigating the extent to which the NDDC's initiatives have impacted the Uzere Community, this research seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of structural peacebuilding approaches in addressing the complex socio-economic and political challenges in Nigeria's oil-producing regions. This paper builds on the extensive body of literature addressing oil-induced conflicts, most of which concentrate on immediate causes and isolated factors such as environmental degradation, autocratic governance, corruption, grievances related to resource distribution, greed, and a lack of transparency. However, while these factors are indeed significant, they do not fully encapsulate the complexity of the conflicts in Nigeria's oil-producing regions. Therefore, this study seeks to adopt a more holistic approach by examining the structural dimensions of peacebuilding. In this way, moving beyond surface-level symptoms, the paper will interrogate the strategies to address underlying social conditions that fostered violent conflict and systemic roots of unrest. To this end, the broad objective of this study is to examine the peacebuilding efforts of NNDC in Uzere community in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, Niger. While some salient research questions have been posited to achieve the research objective, they include: What is the coexisting relationship between NDDC objective on peacebuilding and the needs of the Uzere Community? What are the efforts made by the NDDC towards peacebuilding in the Uzere community? How effective has the peacebuilding efforts of the NDDC been in the Uzere community?

Conceptual Discourse

The term 'peace' has been widely contested, both by scholars or actors in government. What is more widely accepted is the negative definition of peace, as the absence of war and physical violence. In order to define peace in a broader and more positive way, Galtung (1981) "differentiated between negative and positive peace. Whereas negative peace is the absence of direct violence (e.g., people being killed), positive peace also includes the absence of structural violence (e.g., dying as a result of poverty), and cultural violence (e.g., factors that blind people to injustice or allow them to rationalize it)". Galtung (1997) also proposed a "three step pattern towards understanding the concept of peace by making a distinction among peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding to guide third-party intervention efforts and clarify the different roles needed". Galtung (1997) safely concludes that "the intention of peacebuilding is to create a structure of peace that is based on justice, equity, and cooperation (i.e., positive peace), thereby addressing the underlying causes of violent conflict so that they become less likely in the future". In this way, "peacebuilding is viewed as dynamic, always ensuring that it is involved in every phase of a conflict, and always moving/changing in relation to the situation or the stage of the peacemaking efforts" (Laderach 2004).

Elizabeth & Charles (2007) stated that "peacebuilding is a highly contested concept, with definitions ranging from negative peace, or absence of war, to expansive positive peace". As Jarikre (2021a, 151) noted, the field of peacebuilding is an aggregate concept which did not originate from a central point (p 151), rather the work of peacebuilding took root in different culture around the world (Schirch, 2008, 2). Thus, the conceptualization of the term by scholars, policy makers, and practitioners have been necessitated by timeline, priorities and task involved (Jarikre, 2021a). This, of course, underscores the growing confusion in terms of many spelling for one single but flexible term spelt either as one word 'peacebuilding', hyphenated as 'peace-building, two words as 'building peace and three words as 'building of peace' evident in scholarly writing, reports and publications. Notwithstanding, the question often asked but not answered is, has the different spellings diminished the intended outcomes? However, the inclusion of so many activities, levels and actors under the umbrella term peacebuilding has rendered its definition so broad, therefore, becoming meaningless and useless (Jarikre, 2021; Liamazares, 2005, Cutter, 2005). For the purpose of this article, peacebuilding as a single word will be adopted.

Coning (2013) sees those actions undertaken by international or national actors to address root causes of conflict and to deliver social, political, justice, equity, and reconciliation to institutionalize peace and absence of armed conflict as peacebuilding. The foundation for peacbuilding provides the necessities for societal rebuilding when a set of interrelated efforts that support peace activities are undertaken in a conflict situation (Brahimi, 2000). The Brahimi Report noted that peacebuilding in effect is a hybrid of political and development activities at the source of conflict (paragraph 44). In this way, peacebuilding involves the activities of government, individuals and organizations that acts as critical stakeholders in conflict societies to design development programs that adhere to the preservation of life (Falade, Harbor & Osofisan, 2004). Peacebuilding aims to address the social, economic and political root causes of violence and nurtures resolution to prevent the recurrence of structural and direct violence. Its efforts seek to upturn beliefs and attitudes that transforms the dynamics between individuals and groups toward a more stable, peaceful coexistence. Brown, Langer & Stewart (2011) noted that peacebuilding among other milestones include societal integration and economic recovery. Although, the milestones represent the ideal societal progression (Collier, 2003) and the achievement of these milestones may to some degree be contingent upon the prior achievement of other milestones (Stewart & Fitzgerald, 2001). As Jarikre (2017) noted that within the broader and narrower sense of peacebuilding activities lies the inherent role (direct or indirect programming) of assistance in a post conflict society (p.296). Thus, there is an overwhelming reference to Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) definition of peacebuilding "as a range of actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse to conflict" (p. 21) This definition commonly underscores the institutional pathway to conflict resolution. It seeks the creation of stable governments which will in turn maintain and promote peace.

For empirical purposes, Barnett et al (2007) identified three dimensions of post conflict peacebuilding. The first dimension is the desire to reinforce stability and discourage the combatants from returning to war through peacekeeping - a mandated to maintain a cease-fire and stability by monitoring the combatants. Yet peacebuilding goes beyond this feature of peacekeeping in several ways to reduce the means available, and the incentives, for actors to

return to conflict. The second dimension is helping to build or restore key state functions that have the capacity to generate basic public goods and possess a modicum of legitimacy. A basic function of the state is the production of public goods. But many states, especially those emerging from conflict, are hard-pressed to deliver such goods. Naturally, international actors do not envisage playing state-like functions long into the future, they partner with the state to rebuild basic infrastructure, provide some degree of technical and capacity building assistance for state institutions—even as they support parallel NGO or private sector structures that may operate outside of or duplicate state functions. The third dimension is the attempt to build not only the state but also society's ability to manage conflict peacefully and develop the socio-economic infrastructure necessary to underpin economic development.

The creation of peacebuilding architecture has three central dimensions which can be categorized as structural, relational and personal dimensions. The structural dimension of peace building centers its focus on the social conditions, which promote violent conflict. It is widely acknowledged that sustainable peace is a product of social, economic, and political opportunities on equal terms, which take care of the needs of the entire people or parties. However, most of the armed conflict situations are hinged on systemic roots. These root causes are somehow complex, which may include skewed land distribution, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation. Meanwhile, there can never be sustainable or positive peace, if the root causes of conflict are not attended to by the parties or the third party mediator(s). The relational dimension of peacebuilding focuses mainly on ways and means to limit the effects of war-related hostility through the repair and transformation of damaged relationships in the process of reconciliation, forgiveness, trust building, and future imagining. It strives to play down poorly functioning communication and optimally increase mutual understanding between the parties. The personal dimension of peacebuilding focuses on desired changes and programmmes at the individual level geared towards treating mental, psychological and spiritual health problems that may follow the end of an armed conflict. This includes (re)integration, rehabilitation and re-entry measures designed to take care of the psychological needs of war victims and the former combatants.

Structurally, peacebuilding underscore changing structures of violence to structures of peace. As Montiel (2001) surmised that peaceful social systems are marked by equitably-distributed decision-powers in the production, allocation, and utilization of economic, political, and cultural

resources. Peacebuilding initiatives aim to promote nonviolent mechanisms that eliminate violence, foster structures that meet basic human needs. It is in this sense that scholars such as Uvin (2002); Tschirgi (2003), Kenneth (2008); Jarikre, (2016) and Jarikre (2024) have continued to expound the debate on the nexus between development and security and peace. Belcher and Palender (2018:479) describes development intervention in conflict society as a deliberate involvement in a process or system (the activities of a project, program, or instrument) intended to influence events and/or consequences.

In Nigeria's Niger Delta region, development intervention has assumed increased salience in addressing the proximate and remote causes of entrenched culture of violence in the region (Jarikre, 2021b, 139). The interaction between security, conflict and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta precipitate the crafting of politically informed policies to utilize the strategic objectives of development to deescalate the violent conflicts through development initiatives (Jarikre, 2016, 98). This strategy is evident in the establishment of state institutions such as Niger Delta Development Board in 1959, Niger Delta Basin Development Authority 1976, Oil Minerals producing Areas Development Commission 1992, NDDC in 2000, Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSPADEC) in 2003, Delta State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (DESOPADEC) in 2006, Ministry of the Niger Delta Affairs in 2008 and other corporate social responsibility programmes by multinational oil and gas corporation (Jarikre, 2016, 101). This, of course, resonates the principles of durable peace which hinges on the development of sustainable livelihoods through provision of basic services. The ability of the peacebuilding actors and agencies in post conflict to support livelihoods, urban populations and economic recovery is a determining factor for lasting peace. In the aftermath of war, people struggle to acquire the clean water, sanitation, shelter, food and energy supplies on which they depend for their well-being and livelihoods. A failure to respond to the social services and basic needs of the population can complicate the task of fostering peace and stability. Suffice it that sustainable livelihoods initiatives provide a framework for addressing poverty and vulnerability in all contexts.

In assessing the performance of the NDDC in the provision of infrastructure/projects in the Niger Delta communities, scholars such as Ekekwe and Ukachikara (2018); Ogbodo (2024); and Jarikre (2024) posit that in spite of the creation of state interventionist development programme

431

such as the NDDC and others, it appears underdevelopment has deepened in the Niger Delta. Ikenga, Edo & Ighoshemu (2022) apparently reinforced the assertion when they argued that in spite of the huge amount appropriated to NDDC, it is believed that it impact on the region has been minimal. They pointed out in addition that though the tackling of ecological and environmental degradation features prominently in NDDC establishing Act, it has been the least attended to by the agency. In other words, the huge amounts of funds channeled to the Niger Delta through the NDDC may not be to facilitate development in the region but business investments of Nigeria's governing class, who divert attention of various local interests while expropriation activities continued unabated in the region. As Ekekwe and Ukachikara (2018) observed, the situation resonates suspicion and distrust leaving one to wonder whose development interest the NDDC exists to serve? However, some scholars such dispute the failure and unsatisfactory performance of the commission on the ground that the present NDDC by far remains the greatest and most significant attempt to grapple with the environmental and development challenges facing the Niger Delta (Isumona, 2003; Luqman, 2011) and Idumange, 2011).

This article is mainly guided by the theory of social change. Peacebuilding is based on several assumptions or change theories, about how interventions contribute to peace. To describe a theory of change very simply, it is the, "believe that by doing X (action) it will achieve Y (progress towards peace)". That is, "If we train key leaders in negotiating skills, they will become more effective advocates for their interests through nonviolent means". Or, "If we generate jobs for unemployed youth, they will be less available to be recruited to violence" (*Care International*, 2012). "A theory of change clearly articulates the intended activity (the 'if' part), and the expected change it will bring about (the 'then' part or parts). Articulating a theory of change offers a clearer picture of the intended result from an action, and explains how programme activities and results are connected with each other and contribute to achieving results at different levels. In other words, a well-articulated theory of change represents a testable hypothesis regarding how the planned activities will contribute to achieving the desired results for the programme" (*Care International, 2012*). The benefits of a focus on the theory of change includes: clarifies project logic and tackles inadequate assumptions, highlights ineffective activities, emphasizes the need for conflict analysis, and enhances conflict sensitivity

Methodology

The article adopts a qualitative research design using case study because of its phenomenal inquisition. The single case study design provided the opportunity of studying social phenomenon such as NDDC peacebuilding efforts in Uzere community through a thorough analysis of an individual case. Uzere Community is located in Isoko South LGA of Delta State. It lies within the geographical coordinates of 5.3362°N and 6.2323°E. Uzere has nine communities: Uhei, Ezede, Uweye, Afikioko (London Base), Uhroko (Paris), Ekregbesi, Abale, Iwre-Ezede, and Iboro. It is the host community to Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Nigeria, with two oil marginal fields viz Uzere west and Uzere east hosting 43 oil wells, manifolds, platforms, flow stations, pipelines, etc. (Ogwu 2024; Jarikre 2024). The people are predominantly farmers and freshmen with some of them as craftsmen and women. While others are public and civil servants working in public schools and the community health centres. The study area in this manner is important to the study in order to understand the context of communities in the ND characterized by conflict and underdevelopment and thus relevant to undertake an assessment of NDDC's peacebuilding efforts.

The study employed a qualitative research design that integrated a grounded theory approach with an instrumental case study framework. Both primary and secondary data were collected to facilitate a comprehensive investigation. Primary data were obtained through key informants and in-depth interviews, content analysis of relevant documents, and non-participant observation. In total, twenty-four interviews were conducted within the Uzere community. The interviewees encompassed a broad spectrum of community stakeholders, including a traditional ruler, a secretary, members of the traditional ruling council, the chairman and members of the Community Development Committee, as well as women's leaders and female and youth executives. These participants were purposefully selected to capture diverse perspectives and provide an objective account of the phenomenon under investigation. The interview guides focused on exploring the mandate of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and its execution, identifying specific peacebuilding initiatives within the community, and assessing the extent of community involvement in these efforts. In addition to interview data, a range of NDDC official documents—such as the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, the NDDC Act, official brochures, speeches by the Chairman and MD/CEO at various NDDC events,

and website content—were analyzed. Unstructured non-participant observations were also conducted at various NDDC project sites, and relevant photographs were documented. A key conceptual framework underpinning this study was the structural dimension of peacebuilding, which posits that more impactful interventions in oil-producing communities can be achieved through an integrated, structural approach.

FINDINGS

NDDC Peacebuilding Efforts in Uzere
The NDDC's peacebuilding initiatives are embedded within the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan. This strategic document delineates methods for creating an enabling environment for enterprise, efficient agricultural practices, and industrialization, with the aim of harnessing the region's abundant natural resources. The strategy is undergirded by an integrated approach that considers the dynamic interplay of various facets of life within the Niger Delta. Key components of the strategy include poverty reduction, the development of micro and small-scale enterprises, and the enhancement of infrastructure and industrial capacity to serve as catalysts for accelerated economic growth. Furthermore, institutional development, capacity building, and environmental protection are identified as foundational enablers of these efforts. The Master Plan is organized around five thematic areas: economic development, community needs, the natural environment, physical infrastructure, and human and institutional resources, which collectively constitute the strategic goals and policies for change. In operationalizing these strategies, the NDDC categorizes its interventions into two broad types: Infrastructure Development Projects (physical development projects) and Human Capacity Development Projects. Specific physical development projects earmarked for the Uzere community include the following:

1. **Energy/Power Supply:** Installation of solar-powered street lights (5 km) in Uzere, Isoko South (2010).
2. **Road/Bridges:** Construction of the Uzere-Patani Road (ongoing since 2010).
3. **Road/Bridges:** Development of 3 km of internal township roads (2010).
4. **Governance, Social Services & Sports:** Conversion of an uncompleted hospital into a multipurpose community resource centre (2011; project terminated after 10 years).

5. **Water Supply:** Implementation of a solar-powered water system (project terminated after 10 years).

6. **Additional Projects:** Installation of solar-powered street lights in Oturo and Paris Quarters (completed on 27 July 2015) and the installation of a 300kva, 11/0.415kv transformer (completed on 18 December 2012).

It should be noted that this list does not encompass all projects, as several completed initiatives prior to 2010 were also considered.

Relationship Between NDDC Peacebuilding Efforts and the Needs of the Uzere Community

The findings indicate that while there is a nominal correlation between the NDDC's peacebuilding initiatives and its statutory mandate, discrepancies exist in the conception, planning, and implementation of these projects relative to the prescribed guidelines. Notably, NDDC interventions have primarily focused on constructing roads, bridges, landing jetties, erosion control, and land reclamation, with relatively little emphasis on the development of social and institutional infrastructure. This misalignment represents a fundamental source of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the Commission's operations during the study period. The divergence is not rooted in the content of the interventions per se but in the manner in which these projects have been executed. Furthermore, the peacebuilding efforts of the NDDC, while initially aimed at addressing community needs, have frequently failed to align with the actual priorities of the Uzere people. For instance, projects such as the Uzere-Patani Road—envisioned as a catalyst for economic prosperity—have been abandoned, as have contracts intended to furnish and supply the community health centre. Similarly, the termination of the project to convert the old health centre into a civic centre has impeded potential improvements in community aesthetics and social engagement. Thus, although the underlying peacebuilding initiatives had the potential to meet community needs, their abandonment or premature termination has strained the relationship between the NDDC's efforts and the expectations of the local populace.

Impacts of NDDC Interventions on the Uzere Community

A recurrent theme in the data is the low completion rate of NDDC projects across oil-producing areas in Nigeria, a phenomenon that has perpetuated infrastructural inadequacies in the Uzere community during the study period. The interactions between NDDC interventions and the

community have yielded both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, the presence of the Federal Government, as manifested through these projects, has partially mitigated historical perceptions of neglect and marginalization. Road construction, electrification, and the establishment of educational infrastructure (such as classroom blocks) have produced tangible benefits. Conversely, the decision-making processes and implementation methodologies associated with these projects have also engendered significant negative repercussions. Examples include unsafe conditions on incomplete roads, increased production costs due to insufficient electricity supply, and recurring flooding caused by inadequate drainage systems. Moreover, access roads constructed to serve oil facilities have inadvertently exacerbated infrastructural blockages. These issues underscore the potential for the NDDC to enhance its positive contributions while minimizing adverse impacts by prioritizing procedural improvements over mere project outputs. Central to this improvement is the need to involve key stakeholders— particularly residents—in all phases of the intervention process, from conception through planning and execution.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that despite the clearly articulated mandate of the NDDC and the apparent soundness of its strategic framework, the agency has failed to resolve long-standing conflicts in the Niger Delta. This failure is largely attributable to the unsustainable nature of its projects and interventions. A prevailing perception among community members is that the NDDC does not fully adhere to its mandate, prompting calls for a comprehensive reassessment of its operational strategies. Notably, interviews with participants of peacebuilding capacity workshops suggest that these sessions function more as ceremonial events than as effective capacity-building exercises. As a result, participants have struggled to translate theoretical knowledge into practical outcomes. Consequently, projects that were ostensibly designed to be sustainable—such as the distribution of dustbins and exercise books to primary school pupils, provision of inter-state transport buses, and road rehabilitation—have had minimal positive impact on community welfare. The findings further indicate that the NDDC's peacebuilding efforts have predominantly relied on a fire brigade approach characterized by reactive, stop-gap measures rather than proactive, systemic interventions. This is exemplified by the recent inclusion of the Uzere-Patani Road and Bridge project in the 2025 NDDC budget following community protests that threatened to disrupt oil production. Such episodes have reinforced a community perception that

the NDDC, as a governmental entity, serves primarily as a façade for state interests aimed at exploiting local populations or enriching elite circles rather than genuinely addressing the socio-economic challenges facing the region.

Scholarly literature supports these findings. Previous studies such as Omuta (1985); Okonmah, (2001), Ikhuoria (2005), Ogboi (2003), and Iheriohanma (2005) have consistently highlighted the chronic underdevelopment of oil-producing communities, noting deficiencies in basic amenities and infrastructure. Furthermore, Omoweh (2001) argues that these regions remain among the most underdeveloped in Nigeria, with modern infrastructure such as roads, medical facilities, and electricity largely absent. Field observations in Uzere corroborated these findings: although some developmental projects were visible, the preponderance of abandoned or terminated projects— such as the prolonged construction of the Uzere-Patani Road, the terminated conversion of an uncompleted hospital into a community resource centre, and the discontinued solar-powered water system—suggests a significant gap between intended and actual outcomes. Scholars have attributed the shortcomings of the NDDC to a range of factors, including corruption, patronage networking, a fire-brigade approach to problem-solving, political exclusion, non-transparent awarding of contracts, and inadequate funding (Oyitso, 2013; Nwokolo, 2012; Akinyoade, 2018; Jarikre 2021). In many instances, the projects pursued by the NDDC did not align with the immediate needs of the community. For example, while Uzere remains heavily reliant on generators for electricity, the Commission has prioritized the provision of solar-powered streetlights over the installation of transformers that could more effectively power local industries. Similarly, community members have criticized the NDDC for its failure to promote physical development and formulate policies to mitigate the adverse effects of environmental degradation and oil exploitation—a concern particularly salient for a community dependent on farming.

CONCLUSION
It has been clearly established from the study that the region has suffered neglect and underdevelopment over the years, in spite of the huge revenue generated. This has made the people to react negatively to this injustice through protest, destruction of oil installations, vandalisation of pipe-lines, hostage takings and a host of other social vices. To redress this injustice, there is need for peacebuilding initiatives in the region. Peacebuilding entail putting

structures in place to address the root cause of the Niger Delta problem, the result also revealed that infrastructural developments, employment generation, youth empowerment through skill acquisition are some of the strategies that can be adopted by government to promote peace and development in the region. The findings is in line with other researchers" view (Okonmah 2001, Onduku, 2003, Iheriohanma 2005, Chokor and Obadan,2006, Idoko 2009 and Erue 2009) that peace can only be achieved through massive infrastructural development of the region in terms of good road networks, building of schools, health centres and provision of potable water, establishment of cottage industries, employment creation and empowerment of youth through acquisition of skills for self-reliance, giving of scholarship to indigent students, adequate representation of people in the region in government and payment of compensation to land owners affected by oil spillage.

Although there is congruence between the Commission's mandate and its strategy, the prioritisation of the peacebuilding efforts in the community is slightly out of tune with the felt needs of the community. This might have been contingent on the inevitable change that would have occurred in the socio-economic, political and environmental contexts in the Niger Delta communities, given the time lag between the development of the Master Plan of NDDC and the implementation of the peacebuilding efforts, in this case study the Uzere-Patani road has been under construction for 14 years. Another possible explanation is that the specificities of the micro context of every community in the Niger Delta were not factored into the development of the plan. The most significant positive impact of the peacebuilding efforts, especially the IDPs, is their role in bringing the presence of the Federal Government into the community or attesting to Federal Government's attention in the community. This hoped to countered the effect of neglect, marginalisation and deprivation, and poor infrastructure, which are core conflict causes in the region, but our findings proved otherwise. Other supposed positive impacts would have included economic benefits in form of income generation through job creation, supply of construction materials, compensation, and opening of local market.

It is important to state that NDDC has recorded some degree of success especially in the area of infrastructural development such as construction of roads, provision of pipe borne water, rural electrification, provision of drainage system and street lights amongst others in some other

communities. It befuddles the researcher how the selection process for beneficiaries of these peacebuilding efforts are chosen. However, much gains and success have not been recorded by the NDDC in the area of human capital development such as provision of scholarship for students, provision of learning materials to student to improve the quality of education, building of class rooms, provision of free medical health care system and the provision of skill acquisition /empowerment programmes these are the core elements of sustainable development which the NDDC as an interventionist agency has failed to delivered to the people of the Niger Delta Region.

The result also revealed that infrastructural developments, employment generation, youth empowerment through skill acquisition are some of the strategies that can be adopted by government to promote peace and development in the region.

The Commission should carry out a comprehensive review of their projects to determine their status. Where contracts have been abandoned, contractors should be prosecuted to enable the commission to recover advances to them. The people should be involved in initiating, planning and the execution of projects in the community. This will ensure that project that meet the needs and aspirations of the people are executed which invariably will ensure the utilisation and maintenance of such projects. There should be continuous and impactful capacity building workshops on peacebuilding where relevant stakeholders should be trained on the rudiments of peacebuilding. Address endemic corruption and bad bovernance in the NDDC: The wider social and political contexts of the NDDC operations have impacts for the programming of the NDDC peacebuilding efforts, therefore, it is pertinent to changing the NDDC's perception and organisational culture to peacebilding efforts: There is need for change in the perception and organisational culture of the NDDC so that the commission see their peace building efforts as genuine efforts aimed at addressing the socio-econ0omic needs of the community in order to achieve development

References

Akinyoade A. V. 2015. *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of the Niger Delta Development Commission's Interventions in Odi, Bayelsa State, Nigeria*. PhD. Thesis. Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

Amoateng, E. N. K. 2020, *Containing Violence to What End? The Political Economy of Amnesty in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta* (2009-2016). Ph.D Thesis. Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

Barnett, M., Kim H., O'Donnell, M. & Sitea, L. 2007. *Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?* Global Governance 13 (2007), 35–58

Belcher, B & Palenber, M. 2018. "Outcomes and Impacts of Development Interventions: Toward Conceptual Clarity" American Journal of Evaluation 2018, Vol. 39 (4) 478-495 journals.sagepub.com/home/aje (accessed 02/05/2020)

Boutros-Ghali, B. 1992. *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* Document A/47/277 - S/241111, 17 June 1992. New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations http://www.unrol. (Accessed 08/07/2011).

Brabant K. V. 2010, *What is Peacebuilding? Significantly Different Perspectives on Peacebuilding.* International Peacebuilding Alliance (Interpeace)

Brahimi, L. 2000. *Report of the panel on United Nations peace operations.* United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/brahimi_report.shtml (accessed 14/01/25)

Brown, G., Langer, A. & Stewart, F. 2011. *A typology of post-conflict environments.* Centre for Research on Peace and Development (CRPD). Belgium: University of Leuven.

Care International, 2012. *Defining Theories of Change.* Care International UK peacebuilding with Impact and International Alert. http://www. careinternational.org.uk (Accessed 13/08/2024).

Chokor, B. A. and Obadan, M. I. 2006. *Alternative approach: mainstreaming the Niger Delta in development planning*: A paper presented at the Niger Delta workshop organised by the National Planning Commission, held at Hotel Presidential, Port- Harcourt, 12th -15th, November. Cited in Oyitso M. O. 2013. *Community Based Institutions And Cultural Practices As Predictors Of Peace-Building In Communities Of The Niger Delta Region, Nigeria.* Ph.D Thesis. Department of Adult Education. University of Ibadan.

Collier, P. 2003. *Breaking the conflict trap: civil war and development policy.* World Bank policy research report. Washington, D.C.: Oxford University Press.

Cutter, A. 2005 "Peace building: A Literature Review" Development in Practice Vol. 15, No. 6. Routeledge – Francis and Taylor. http://www.jstor.org/stable (Accessed 19/7/2011).

Ekekwe, E. 2015. *Between Power, Parties and Principalities, Where Are The People?* University of Port Harcourt Inaugural Lecture Series No. 118. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press

Elizabeth, M. C. & Charles T. C. 2007. *"Ending Wars and Building Peace,"* Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series (New York: International Peace Academy, March 2007).

Falade, J. B., Harbor, S., & Osofisan, W. 2004. *Elements of project design: an analysis of NGO projects for strengthening electoral processes in Nigeria.* UNDP, Lagos.

Fisher, S. 2000. *Working with conflict: Skills and strategies for Action*, Birmingham: Paperback

Galtung J. 1981. *"Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peace-building,"* in Peace, War and Defence—Essays in Peace Research, 2 (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1975), 282–304;

Galtung, J 1981. *"The Specific Contribution of Peace Research to the Study of Violence: Typologies,"* in Violence and its Causes, ed. United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (Paris, France: UNESCO, 1981), 83–96

Galtung, J. 1997 *"Peace Education: Problems and Conflicts,"* in Education for Peace, ed. Magnus Haavelsrud (Guildrod, CT: Science and Technology Press, 1976);

Galtung, J. 1995. *"Three Approaches to Peace"*; Stephen Ryan, "Transforming Violent Inter-communal Conflict," in Conflict Transformation, ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 223–265;

Ibeanu, O. 2008. "*Affluence and Affliction –The Niger Delta as a critique of Political Science in Nigeria"*, an Inaugural lecture, delivered at The University of Nigeria, Nsukka on February 20 2008.

Idumange, J. 2011. "The Impact of Niger Delta Development Commission in the Eyes of the Ordinary Niger Delta People". Being a paper presented at an interactive forum of the Niger Delta Intergrity Group in conjunction with a coalition of civil society organization in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/69436

Ikenga, F. A; Edo, Z.O & Ighoshemu, B. O. 2022. "Good Governance and the Sustainable Development of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Assessing the Impact of Government Interventonist Agencies" *Journal of Danubian Studies & Research* Vol. 12, No. 1 pp. 251 – 274. https://journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/research

Isumonah, V. A. 2003. The Obasanjo Administration and the Management of the Niger Delta Conflict in Nigeria. Afr. J. Peace Confl. Stud., 1(2): 210-225.

Jarikre, M. 2024. Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of Conflict Dynamics in Gbaramatu Kingdom. NIU Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 10 No. 4 p. 167 – 180 https//doi.org/10.58709/niujss.v10i4.2041.

Jarikre, M. 2016. "The Dialectics of Development Interventions and the Imperative of Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of Development Initiatives in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region" *African Conflict Profile Volume 2, Number 3* pp. 97 – 110

Jarikre, M. 2017. "The Media and Post-Election Peacebuilding in Nigeria, 1999 – 2015" *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding Volume 5, No. 2,* pp 289 – 305.. https://s-space.snu.ac.kr/handle/10371/138435

Jarikre, M. 2021a. "Peacebuilding: A Conceptual Discourse on Broadening the Scope and Scale" *Journal of Social Sciences (JSS) Volume 5, No. 1.* p. 150 – 168.

Jarikre, M. 2021b. "Screening the risk factors in Development Intervention and Peace-building Initiatives in the Niger Delta Region" *Noun International Journal of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (NIJPCR) Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 139 -157.*

Johnson, F. H. 2004. *Strategic Framework: Peacebuilding – A Development Perspective: strategic Framework Norwegian.* Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs http://odin.dep.no/ud (Accessed 24/11/2024)

Kenneth, E. 2008. "Advancing Development While Reducing Violence: Lessons from the Field" *The Ploughshares Monitor Vol.29, No 4*. Canada ploughshares.ca (Accessed 12/11/2024)

Lederach J. P 2004, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); Camilla Orjuela, "Civil Society in Civil War: Peace Work and Identity Politics in Sri Lanka," PhD dissertation, Göteborg University, 2004.

Lederach, J. P. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Wastington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Liamazares, M. 2005. "Post-War Peacebuilding Reviewed: A critical Exploration of generic Approaches to Post-War Reconstruction" Bradford, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford. CCR Working Papers: N0. 14. http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/papers/pdfs/CCR14.pdf

Luqman, S. 2011. "Democratic Governance and the Management of Oil conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta: Policy options and Challenges." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations Vol. 5 (2)*, pp 83 – 91. http;www.academicsjournals.org/ajpsir (Accessed 2/11/2012)

Montiel J. C. (2001) *Toward A Psychology Of Structural Peacebuilding* In Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Peace, Conflict, and Violence:Peace Psychology for the 21st Century.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Montiel, C. J. (2001) "Toward a Psychology of Structural Peacebuilding" in Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/b/7538/files/2014/10/Chapter-23-Structural-Peacebuilding-Montiel-12acs55.pdf

Nwokolo, N. N. 2012, *The Political Economy Of Oil Resource Conflicts: A Study Of Oil Village Communities In Nigeria*. Ph.D thesis. International Development Department, School of Government and Society, University of Birmingham.

Ogbodo, S. O. (2024) Niger Delta Development Commission (N.D.D.C.) and Provision of Infrastructure in Niger Delta Region, 2009-2022. *Newport International Journal of Research in Education (NIJRE). Vol. 4, Issue 2.* https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJRE/2024/42345608

Ogonor, B. O. 2004. "Conflict Management and Resolution in Organisations" in N. A. Nwagwu, M. E. Ijeoma and C. C. Nwagwu. (eds.) *Organization and administration of Education: Perspectives and practices;* Benin, Printing Press Limited; 249 – 265

Okolo P. 2010. *The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) And Peace-Building In The Niger Delta.* International Journal of Social Science, Volume 2, Number 9, 2010

Okolo P. 2014. *NDDC, Conflict, Peace-Building And Community Development, In The Niger Delta Region*. Global Journal of Political Science and Administration Vol.2, No.1, pp.36-54, March 2014 Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.ea-journals.org

Oyitso, M, Akanji, T. & Orobator, F. O. (2013) "The Influence of Cultural Practices in Peace-building Process in the Niger Delta Region" *Academic Research International* Vol. 4 No.3 p 526 - 536, http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.4(3)/2013(4.3-53).pdf
.

Ronald J. Fisher, Interactive Conflict Resolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

Schirch, L. 2008. "Strategic Peacebuilding: State of the Field" *Peace Prints: South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding, Vol.1, No.1.*Available from http://www.wiscomp.org/peaceprints.htm (Accessed 14/8/2024).

Stewart, F., & Fitzgerald, V. 2001. *War and underdevelopment. The economic and social consequences of conflict.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

THISDAY 2025, https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2025/01/16/crying-out-loud/ accessed 15/01/25

Tschirgi, N. 2003. Peacebuilding as the Link between Security and Development: Is the Window of Opportunity *Closing? International Peace Academy Studies in Security and Development.* New York: International Peace Academy. www.ipacademy.org (Accessed 14/10/2024).

Uvin, P. 2002. "The Development/Peacebuilding Nexus: A Typology and History of Changing Paradigms" *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp 5 – 24.* http://www.tandfonline.com (Accessed 20/8/2024)

Uyanga, P. C. (2020) "Religious – Cultural Contributions to Conflict Prevention and Peace-building" *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies Vol. 3, No 1* p35 – 41. https://www.sgojahds.com/index.php/SGOJAHDS/article/view/48

Watts,M. and Ibaba,S.(2011) *"Turbulent oil: Conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta"* Africa Security, 4: 1-19

Watts,M. and Ibaba,S.(2011) *"Turbulent oil: Conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta"* Africa Security, 4:1-19