

Punctuated Peace? Post-Conflict Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Transformational Change in
Nigeria's Oil Region

By

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences and perceptions of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and post-conflict peacebuilding processes in Nigeria's oil region by obtaining quantitative results from surveying a sample of 396 ex-insurgents and non-insurgents and then following up with 45 purposefully selected informants to explore these results by in-depth interviews. The study was designed to fulfil three main objectives.

The first objective was to evaluate post-conflict transformations in the oil region following the material investment in DDR and peacebuilding processes. The second objective was to explore the state of peace in the oil region by identifying significant relationships between DDR interventions and changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors as well as changes in the conflict trend. The third objective was to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program with regards to the nature of peace in the oil region.

This study found that post-conflict peacebuilding produced change at the cultural, intrapersonal, structural, and interpersonal levels, which formed the basis for the development of the CISI model of Conflict Transformation. Secondly, post-conflict transformations in the oil region were mechanistically determined, and in tension with communitarian perspectives, which sees change as an ecological process. Thirdly, the incentives built into the peace process created new expectations in the oil region, reinforced by a confluence of programmatic and political factors that affect the opportunities individuals can generate for themselves, and how this creates the condition for instability. Finally, this research lays out four typologies of peace and develops a theoretical understanding of the nature of peace as *punctuated peace*. My analysis points to the conclusion that post-conflict transformations in the oil region and the nature of peace are derived not from the absence of hostilities but the dynamics which manifest in peacebuilding processes.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my precious wife, Tatenda Okoi. You've been the emotional and psychological cords in me, the spark that illuminates my path to greatness. You are indeed a gift from Heaven.

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Glossary of Terms

Delegate: A beneficiary of the peacebuilding program.

Disarmament: The act of collecting, documenting and disposal of small arms from insurgents.

Demobilization: The registration and rehabilitation of disarmed insurgents.

Ex-militant: A former member of a militant group in the Niger Delta.

Insurgency: The use of violence to challenge the political control of the oil region.

Kingian Principle: The nonviolence principle propagated by Martin Luther King Jnr.

Militancy: The expression of human agency by means of violence.

Militant: An actor who uses violent methods to advance a social cause.

Peacebuilder: Anyone involved in the design and implementation of the peacebuilding program.

Peace Economy: The economic incentives of peacemaking.

Punctuated Peace: Recurrent interruptions of the peace process by armed groups.

Reinsertion: Assistance (temporary) given to disarmed insurgents to facilitate their reintegration.

Reintegration: The process by which ex-insurgents acquire civilian status and gain employment.

Remilitarization: A relapse into an armed insurgency.

Third Phase Militants: Ex-militants who re-armed to gain access to the peace economy.

The Avengers: An insurgent group that resumed violence in the oil region in February 2016.

Technical Rationality: The use of expert processes to drive local peacebuilding interventions.

Vendor: A contractor hired to implement DDR activities on behalf of the amnesty office.

List of Abbreviations

APNL	Addax Petroleum Nigeria Limited
CISI	Cultural, Intrapersonal, Structural, Interpersonal
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
EPNL	Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FNDIC	Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities
HSE	Health, Safety and Environment
IPOB	Indigenous Peoples of Biafra
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
NAC	National African Company
NDBDA	Niger Delta Basin Development Authority
NDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDTCR	Niger Delta Technical Committee Report
NSRP	Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program
NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
NDVS	Niger Delta Volunteer Service
OSAPND	Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
PACS	Peace and Conflict Studies
PAP	Presidential Amnesty Program
RNC	Royal Niger Company
UAC	United African Company
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
OML	Oil Mining Locations
UNIDDRRC	United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre

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Chapter One

THE PEACEBUILDING UNIVERSE IN NIGERIA'S OIL REGION

Introduction

In February 1997, I landed in Port-Harcourt city in search of internship opportunities in the oil and gas industry. One morning I stood on Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout overlooking Schlumberger Dowell—the world's leading engineering company providing services to the oil and gas industry in drilling, reservoir characterization, production, and processing. It was a beautiful morning. The blue sky and brilliant sunshine made me recall a day at the beach with my college friends. The highway, which was dominated by vehicular traffic on each lane, left no space for pedestrians. I could hear the whistling sounds from air leaking across damaged automobile caskets as they drove past me. Traffic jams, noise, and air pollution were commonplace. For more than one hour the stench of oil assailed my nostrils. The contradiction of industrial expansion and population growth in the oil city was one of those contrasts waiting to be discovered. Suddenly, a steady drizzle fell on the streets and lessened the pervasive stench of industrial waste. A few minutes later, the drizzle subsided.

As I crossed to the other side of the highway—a few meters away from the premises of Schlumberger Dowell—I sighted a gentleman loading digital theodolites onto a white Hilux truck. The electronic features of the digital theodolites rolled back memories of my activities in engineering school. I introduced myself and offered to assist in loading the equipment onto the truck. That was the best way I could think of networking for an internship opportunity. He introduced himself as Elechi, the Technical Director of an engineering company contracted by one of the oil multinationals to survey its Oil Mining Locations (OML). Despite his high-profile status

in the oil industry, he was humble and approachable. So, he paid careful attention to our conversation even though we were meeting for the first time and under strange circumstances. He soon realized through our conversation that I studied civil engineering and have experience in working with electronic digital theodolites. Little did I know that our conversation would lead to a life-transforming experience and possibly define my career trajectory many years later. I had no inkling also that the conversation, which seemed casual at the time, would turn out to be a job interview. Right there, I got a job offer. He handed me his complimentary card and asked me to resume work in two days. It was by happenstance that I happened to be in the right place at the right time. My dream of pursuing an internship in the oil industry began to come alive.

I resumed work as instructed. After a brief introduction and orientation to the work environment my first assignment was to travel with the company's technical team to Obagi oilfields to conduct As-built and Detail Survey (the recovery of original topographic survey details) around specific Oil Mining Locations belonging to Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL) now Total E&P Nigeria Limited.

We embarked on our journey and had traveled at least thirty kilometers on the highway before negotiating to the road leading to Obagi community. My first experience was our suffering through deplorable road conditions—dusty access roads badly marred by dangerous potholes that made the journey somewhat unpleasant. On arrival in Obagi I sighted thatched houses located along pipelines routes, a few meters away from oil flow stations emitting gases into the atmosphere, endangering the environment and human health. The level of underdevelopment in Obagi community was an iconic representation of misery. With no good roads, clean water sources, hospitals, and schools, Obagi reflected the complexity of life in the oil region, which mirrors the contrasting experiences of Nigerian society. I was appalled by the pervasive sense of

hopelessness in the community, which seemed to express the deliberate tyranny of oil multinationals, compounded by decades of government neglect. The experience brought a humane face to the fact that the oil communities have been underdeveloped despite being the source of Nigeria's economic prosperity.

After completing my internship, I returned to school to continue my engineering studies. Shortly after graduating College, I received my deployment letter for the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program which began in December 2001. After completing the NYSC program in December 2002, I was made a job offer by SAIL—an engineering company contracted by Addax Petroleum Nigeria Limited (APNL) to rehabilitate its underwater facilities at the Calabar logistics base. The Addax Base in Calabar was home to several oil-servicing companies including Halliburton Energy Corporation—all working to facilitate APNL's offshore-onshore operations. My job was to oversee the implementation of SAIL's underwater contracts at the Addax base.

Every morning I would see Halliburton workers discharging chemical pollutants from their gas tanks into the Calabar river, undermining the health of coastal communities located less than 100 meters away from the discharge point and depend on the river as their primary source of livelihood including fishing, drinking and cooking. At every given moment I found dead fishes floating on the river, an indication of the severity of pollution from Halliburton's gas tanks. Despite its strong campaign on Health, Safety and Environment (HSE), APNL was unable to enforce stringent environmental regulations to minimize harm to aquatic resources and human health.

At the end of my employment contract with SAIL, I had experienced an intellectual awakening that reinforced my desire and interest in the complex challenges in Nigeria's oil region. Inspired by my experience, I saw an opportunity to make a more significant contribution to humanity by pursuing scholarship on a subject that ignites my passion the most and would give

me intellectual satisfaction and the fulfillment of becoming a contributor to knowledge through peace and conflict research and the greater personal rewards of learning and discovery.

Returning to Nigeria as a PACS doctoral researcher seeking to explore the peacebuilding program initiated by the state to address armed insurgency in the oil region was a fascinating experience. My first experience in the field was the disconnect between the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents whom the peacebuilding program is intended to impact. The disconnection was not only evident in the capital city where the peacebuilders are operating from, but it was also apparent in the various research sites I visited. What I discovered as my visits to the communities got more frequent was that although the Nigerian state has achieved success in stabilizing the post-conflict environment in the oil region and steps to improve peacebuilding interventions were ongoing, the nature of peace was contentious, while the peacebuilding effort seemed counterproductive. Despite the investment in the peace process which has enabled the suspension of hostilities by armed groups, the anticipated peace has yet to materialize because of the depoliticization of peacebuilding in favor of top-down interventions that ignore bottom-up visions of peace, sustained by corrupt practices that permeate the peacebuilding program.

My experience of the peacebuilding universe in Nigeria's oil region began in Isiokpo community in Rivers, where I met Eze—an ex-insurgent whom I recruited over the phone and agreed to participate in the study. I arrived Isiokpo with an official publication obtained from the Presidential Amnesty Office which contains a photo of Eze standing beside a banner as an indication that he has been “empowered”¹ with a poultry farm. Upon my arrival at his community, Eze gave me a tour of what is presumably a failed poultry farm and told me, “You are the first

¹ The term “empowered” is generally associated with the receipt of reintegration assistance. An ex-insurgent is presumably “empowered” after receiving some reintegration assistance from the peacebuilders to assist them in pursuit of employment.

person who ever came to inquire about the wellbeing of my ‘empowerment.’”² I was astonished by the unexpected outcome of his poultry farm. Also, I was curious to understand why none of the peacebuilders ever came to inspect his project. Eze felt that the peacebuilders (amnesty officials, coordinators, and vendors) are quite disingenuous. “The amnesty is a good program, but I have not been empowered. They have not empowered me because the vendor that was sent to empower me messed up the whole empowerment. So, I don’t feel empowered. How can there be peace when am suffering here in the village while the government is claiming I have been empowered?” Eze said. It was evident that Eze has been “empowered” with a business which, in the peacebuilders’ lingo, means he has been reintegrated into civilian life. Surprisingly, instead of being joyful, his tone was that of a wounded soldier writhed with agony. I could not help but think that, in a few sentences, Eze has encapsulated my entire doctoral research program.

It was evident from my conversation with Eze that the peacebuilders have a different worldview about peacebuilding that shape the logic and strategy adopted to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the insurgents into civilian society. It seems, however, that the peacebuilders’ worldview and is in tension with that of the ex-insurgents. The interface between these worldviews is what defines the peacebuilding universe in the oil region and, ultimately, the nature of peace currently prevailing in the conflict-affected communities.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics of post-conflict peacebuilding

² The meaning of “empowerment” is contentious. However, in the context of the Niger Delta peacebuilding program, empowerment is generally associated with reintegration assistance to ex-insurgents who have undergone technical or entrepreneurial training in preparation for sustainable employment, although the nature of assistance varies. The subject of empowerment, including the author’s definition, is discussed extensively in chapter 6.

processes in the Niger Delta by surveying 396 participants comprising of ex-militants and non-militants and then following up with key-informant interviews with 45 purposefully selected participants. This study weaves a tapestry of the paradoxes and contradictions of development and peace in Nigeria's oil region. Given that the oil economy has been a significant driver of Nigeria's export revenue, we cannot overemphasize its importance to national development. What deserves greater emphasis is the fact that more than five decades of oil extraction in the delta has produced unprecedented prosperity for the state and oil corporations while massive inequality abounds in communities with an abundance of natural resource wealth (Okonta and Douglas 2003; Watts 2008). The changing relationship between oil corporations and communities over time has developed from the growing recognition that oil extraction generates inequalities such as environmental degradation, poverty, food insecurity, and health hazards that increases the severity of structural violence. Grievances originating from deep resentment and general disapproval of the suffering in the oil communities manifested itself in an armed insurgency against the state and multinational oil corporations (Omeje 2005; Ikelegbe 2006; Idemudia 2009; Watts 2009; Chukwuemeka and Aghara 2010). Arguably, the armed insurgency in the Niger Delta represented a struggle for the self-determination of ethnic minorities in an impoverished oil region against the lethal combination of state repression and impunity by oil multinationals.

The proliferation of rebellious groups such as NDPVF in 2004 and MEND in late 2005, transformed the Niger Delta struggle from non-violent agitation into an armed insurgency and escalated the violence by threatening to shut down Nigeria's oil industry if their demands were not met (Watts 2005; Krepinevich 2009; Asuni 2009). The incontestable fact is that the vulnerability of the Niger Delta to poverty and environmental degradation had generated gross discontent among insurgent groups promising to destabilize the region by launching extraordinary assaults on oil

infrastructure to demonstrate their capabilities and authority (Ikelegbe 2006; Watts 2007, 2009; Obi 2009, 2010). After the devastating attack on Bonga oilfield on June 19, 2008, one of the largest oilfields on the Gulf of Guinea belonging to Shell, resulting in a decline in Nigeria's oil output, the capabilities of armed groups to debilitate the oil industry were no longer in doubt (Watts 2009).

The effects of an armed insurgency on the national economy were enormous as oil multinationals such as Shell Chevron, Agip, and Exxon-Mobil were forced to shut down their operations. As activities such as hostage-taking continued to threaten the security of oil workers, many corporations were forced to withdraw their staff and, in many cases, withdraw from the region (Watts 2009). At the peak of the insurgency, Nigeria's crude oil output decreased from the projected 2.2 million barrels per day to 700,000 barrels per day.³ Between 2003 and 2008 the federal government lost "US\$92 billion in oil revenue" from armed insurgency and its impact on production shutdowns (Davis 2009, 6). As the former Amnesty Coordinator, Kuku pointed out in his handover report, Nigeria lost "approximately 1 million barrels of crude oil per day as of May 2008, and about 8.7 billion naira (\$58 million) daily to lost production as at May 2009 (2015, 21). Also, over "1,000 lives" were lost in 2008 while "128 people have been kidnapped" between 2008 and 2009 (Kuku 2015, 21). As insecurity grew in the oil region the state's approach to counterinsurgency through the deployment of security forces in the creeks became counterproductive. Ukiwo (2015, 12) notes that the insurgent groups were "sophisticated in their methods" and have enhanced their destructive capacity and "intelligence network" against the declining capability of the military. The path to peace was hard, as the federal government grappled with the challenge of finding the most effective counterinsurgency measure.

On June 25, 2009, late President Yar'Adua announced the federal government's plan to

³ See Figure 36 for detail information concerning the impact of armed insurgency on crude oil production in Nigeria.

end the armed insurgency in the Niger Delta. This effort culminated in the most ambitious peacebuilding program ever undertaken by the Nigerian state since the end of the Biafra War, known as the Presidential Amnesty Program. The precise elements of the amnesty program include disarming insurgent groups, de-commissioning and destroying their weapons, and advancing efforts to build the capacity of ex-insurgents through a range of reintegration programs including education, vocational skills training, and entrepreneurship. Seven years after what is believed to be a “successful” peacebuilding program, regional peace collapsed when the Niger Delta Avengers (hereafter The Avengers) emerged in early 2016 as the latest insurgent group in the region – attacking oil and gas infrastructure and causing massive reduction in oil production in a campaign which sent Nigeria’s economy into a tailspin. These strategically coordinated attacks cut Nigeria’s oil output from 2.2 million barrels per day to 1.5 million barrels per day (Gaffey 2016). The impact of armed insurgency on the nation’s economy compelled the State to negotiate a ceasefire.

While the amnesty program has created the condition for security stabilization in the oil region, enabling the Nigerian government to pursue its strategic interests (Ushie 2013, 32), we know very little how post-conflict stability is perceived and misperceived by different actors and the parameters for evaluating stability in the context of the Niger Delta. For the most part, scholarly analysis tends to focus on the economic expediency of peacemaking, emphasizing the consequences of using monetary rewards to buy peace from insurgents, while ignoring the widely shared grievances in Niger Delta communities (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Ajayi and Adesote 2013; Ushie 2013; Obi 2014; Agbiboa 2015; Eke 2015; Okonofua 2016; Schultze-Kraft 2017). What remains to be known is how post-conflict transformations in the oil region have become associated with these monetary rewards and how this contributes to a new understanding of peacebuilding.

So far, there is no systematic evaluation of the unintended consequences of the DDR

program. However, the regeneration of insurgency and the destructive impact of recent insurgent groups have revived questions about the nature of peace in the oil region and whether the DDR program constitutes an effective instrument for peacebuilding. This study focusses less on the explosion of insurgent groups out of the creeks of the oil region threatening to shut down the nation's economy to how the state is engaging with ex-insurgents and non-insurgents to ensure stability and durable peace in conflict-affected communities. Underlying this focus is the need to understand the perceptions of peace by different actors as this provide a lens into the nature of peace prevailing in the oil region and the effectiveness and challenges of DDR interventions.

The central thesis this study persuasively advances is that by promoting peacebuilding primarily through a mainstream DDR logic which elevates expert practices to achieve short-term stability, the peacebuilders fundamentally depoliticizes peace for the sake of technical rationality, resulting in the restructuring of inequality, while creating a peace economy that diminishes the transformative potential of the peace program. This mainstream peacebuilding logic, while successful in ending hostilities, at least temporarily, has lost its emancipatory potential because it follows a bureaucratic means that privileges top-down administrative rationality favourable to liberal peacebuilding prescriptions to the detriment of communitarian worldviews on peace. Therefore, peace in the Niger Delta has become a complex and ever-changing process whereby the nature of peace is derived not from the absence of hostilities but the dynamics which manifest itself in the complex processes of peacebuilding. While the politics of post-conflict peacebuilding is a central element of this study, also, underlying this thesis is an understanding of the Niger Delta as a region where progress towards sustainable peace seems punctuated by the tension between the peacebuilders' logic and those whom the peace program is meant to benefit. In this sense, the

study draws on a considerable body of evidence that focuses broadly on post-conflict transformations in the oil region to support this thesis.

This study is also a novel effort to shift the theoretical focus of the Niger Delta literature from the causes of conflict to the causes of peace and the dynamics which manifest itself in post-conflict peacebuilding processes—an area in need of empirical research. This focus is particularly important for conceptualizing post-conflict transformations in the oil region and to demonstrate how these dynamic processes may add new insight to the discipline of peace and conflict studies.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, mixed methods studies on the peacebuilding is very limited; apart from a few publications on economic reintegration, there is hardly any empirical literature dealing with the impact of the DDR program in Akwa Ibom for example. This study will be beneficial in ensuring that the impacts and challenges of the peacebuilding program are explored and documented for both policy and academic purposes. Secondly, this study provides empirical evidence based on the perceptions of those coordinating the program internally, those contracted to implement the program externally, and the ex-insurgents who have benefitted from the program or excluded from its benefits. The diversity of participants surveyed in this study is necessary for validating government reports and current evidence about the impacts of the DDR intervention. I expect that this dissertation will contribute important new insights on the Niger Delta peace process, which would help to anticipate and respond to potential and future threats that may arise from both the intended and unintended consequences of the peacebuilding program.

Objectives of the Study

This research has three major objectives. The first objective is to evaluate the impact of the

peacebuilding program with regards to post-conflict transformations in the oil region produced through the material investment in DDR processes. Since its inauguration in 2009, the Nigerian state has committed significant financial resources to the peacebuilding program. Between 2009 and 2011, a total of N127 billion (US\$819 million) in funds has been allocated to the peacebuilding program to cover the training and reintegration of registered insurgents. A breakdown of this includes “N3 billion as take-off grant in 2009, N30 billion on stipend and reintegration programs in 2010, and N96 billion on feeding, stipend, and reintegration programs in 2011.” In 2012, the peacebuilding program was allocated a massive “N74 billion (US\$447 million)” in funds in the federal budget (Ushie 2013, 33). The number of registered insurgents rose from the initial 20,192 in 2009 to 26,000 in 2010 and 30,000 in 2012. Between 2009 and 2012, the Nigerian state had committed US\$1 billion to the peacebuilding program to cover the allowances and training costs for 30,000 insurgents deployed in local and offshore training centers (NSRP 2014, 4). In achieving this objective, I explored the impacts of DDR interventions on the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgent participants of the peacebuilding program including the probability of future conflicts.

The second objective is to explore the state of peace in the oil region by identifying significant relationships between DDR activities and changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors as well as changes in conflict trends. I focussed analytical attention on the significant changes that have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents because of the peacebuilding program and the implication for the state of peace in the oil region. Significant attention is given to changes in community security and its impact on peace and stability. The fact remains that the transformation of insurgents into power-brokers has not only altered the political calculus in Nigeria but also, it has elevated the oil region as a power bloc, resulting in the strategic positioning of former warlords as political entrepreneurs and federal government security

contractors (Ushie 2013, 33). I seek to understand how the participants perceive these dynamics.

Based on the first and second objectives, the third objective is to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program in the oil region. In achieving this objective, my goal is to develop a typology of peace that reflect the perceptions of the research participants. This will lead to the development of a conceptual model that explains the nature of peace in the oil region and will be useful for anticipating and responding to future insurgency including replicating the result of this study.

Research Questions

1. How does the perception of the peacebuilding program contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of DDR processes on the state of peace in the Niger Delta?
2. What are the perceived successes and challenges associated with the adoption of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta?
3. What are the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program in relation to the nature of peace in the Niger Delta?

Relevance of the Research and Contribution to Scholarship

There are several reasons why this study matters. First, peace in Nigeria's oil region is an essential condition for national security. Although the Nigerian state is deeply committed to the peace process, it is worth acknowledging that previous peace processes failed to establish some level of security needed to sustain the stability of the oil region. Whether the government is, because of its approach to peacebuilding in the oil region, inadvertently contributing to the establishment of systems and structures in which violence, insecurity, and instability are pervasive

or re-emerge over time, warrants serious investigation.

Second, this study is significant because it raises new questions about the effectiveness of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the oil region. These questions, I believe, will gain importance as armed insurgency continues to regenerate in the region. In a region with a history of violent interruptions, sustainable peace in the Niger Delta remains uncertain without an effective peacebuilding strategy. Amidst this uncertainty is the truism that the geopolitical setup of recent insurgent groups and their destructive capabilities are quite similar to the nature of insurgency that inspired the need for amnesty and subsequently a DDR program. I believe the intellectual significance and broader impact of this study will add to the fundamental knowledge base regarding peace and development, fulfilling my intent to foster ideational breakthrough in understanding the dynamics of post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta.

This study contributes to the field of peace and conflict studies in four significant ways. First, it broadens the empirical scope of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process in three states designated as low conflict and high conflict states. Most of the empirical research on armed conflicts are based on national levels of analysis and apply concepts such as GDP and commodity exports, which seems convenient since they enable the researchers to draw upon a range of datasets (Leib 2016, 33-34). The weakness of most empirical studies on armed conflict is that the preponderance of quantitative analysis utilizing aggregated national data which focusses on GDP measures, limit knowledge of the critically important local dynamics (Newman and DeRouen 2014, 5). This limitation has given impetus to qualitative research focussing specifically on sub-national and local dynamics or micro-level events to generate more explicit knowledge of the nature of armed conflicts (Simons and Zanker 2012, 6). As Clayton (2014, 34) notes, these “micro-level” data enable researchers to evaluate a variety of variables at the sub-national level. I believe

there is a great value to be gained from studying the conflict and peacebuilding process by drawing on qualitative and quantitative data at the individual level of analysis to see whether new empirical evidence may lend as much support to existing literature or whether it can enable a greater understanding of post-conflict transformations in the oil region.

Second, this study reveals the endogenous and exogenous factors that make post-conflict peacebuilding outcomes in the Niger Delta somewhat complicated. For example, are there endogenous and exogenous factors impeding effective reintegration? Third, this dissertation points out the contradictions in the peacebuilding program itself and its implication for future potential conflicts. Finally, this research participates in the discussion on post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and add to this discussion, by exploring its implication for transformational change. One challenge that this dissertation raises is how to translate peace research into practical models that can reduce the risk of violence, enhance human dignity and the fulfillment of human potential in the Niger Delta. Clearly, this challenge is germane to the growing interest in the PACS field to explore innovative approaches for dealing with conflict.

Conceptual Framework

The benefit of working in a multi-disciplinary context within the field of PACS is the ability to draw from a variety of theoretical models to analyze conflict or peace. In this section, I draw on conflict transformation theory, particularly the approaches developed by John Paul Lederach and Johan Galtung complemented by I. William Zartman's model on 'need, creed, and greed' as analytical tools most appropriate for conceptualizing the research phenomenon.

Conflict Transformation Theory

The conceptual foundations of conflict transformation theory trace its origin to Galtung's (1969a) path-breaking theoretical formulation on violence and peacebuilding which demonstrated how a confluence of historical, structural and cultural factors shape the conditions for the development of violence and established the philosophical premise for understanding peace. Curle (1971) had synthesized the works of Johan Galtung and Kenneth Boulding in addition to academic perspectives drawing on psychology, anthropology and development theory, to develop a conflict transformation model that helps to move unpeaceful relationships to peaceful relationships. Other contributions include Azar's (1990) protracted social conflict theory which provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing social conflicts which occur when identity groups are deprived of their basic needs. Similarly, Kelman's (1992) and Fisher's (1997) works on relationship building provides a theoretical model for conflict transformation which enables parties to explore mutually beneficial solutions to a conflict problem.

Theoretical developments in conflict transformation also trace its foundational premise to Freire's (1970) "pedagogy of the oppressed." Freire drew his intellectual influence from Marxism and Fanon's (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth* to analyze the way in which European colonizers used education as a tool for the oppression of the colonized – what he calls *banking education* – and how to transform the teacher-student relationship into one of mutual discourse and discovery. Freire believes the banking concept of education is fundamentally oppressive because it is structured to maintain violent and exploitative forms of social relations. Underlying Freire's theory is the idea that education was a critical element in either perpetuating oppressive conditions, or in igniting the flame of action necessary to transform colonized spaces to more democratic societies.

Conflict transformation theory became increasingly popularized by scholarly debates in the early nineties led by Fisher and Keashly (1991) as well as Bercovitch and Rubin (1992). These debates were ultimately successful in their attempt to bridge conflict resolution and conflict management approaches without undermining the fact that these approaches do overlap. As Miall (2004, 3) notes, conflict management theorists view conflict as the “incompatible interests and values between actors” and arises from the institutional structure of society, complex historical relations, and power imbalances. In this regard, violent conflict originates from the variations in the interests and values within the social structure. Because these variations are rooted in the institutional settings, distribution of resources, and historical experiences, they cannot be resolved but managed through appropriate interventions designed to prevent conflict escalation. Conflict management is, in this context, viewed as the design of interventions and institutions which enable dominant third parties to achieve the political settlement of the conflict by using their resources and influence to guide conflicting parties into a mutually beneficial future (Miall 2004). According to Bloomfield and Reilly (1998, 18) conflict management is understood as:

“The positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, [conflict management] addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict: how to deal with it constructively, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, collaborative system for the constructive management of difference.”

The systemic conflict management approach has been criticized by conflict resolution theorists on the basis that it ignores communal factors and identity issues that generate conflict. Conflict resolution theorists do not see the possibility of conflict actors reaching a compromise on their fundamental needs. Unlike conflict management where powerful third parties operate within the political system, conflict resolution involves skilled but less powerful third-party actors helping the rivals to explore the root of the problem, analyze, question, and readjust their positions and interests towards win-win outcome (Miall 2004). As Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (2009,

15-16) notes, conflict resolution involves outsiders helping conflict parties to readjust their perception of the situation and then assisting them in reframing their positions towards win-win outcome. Third parties play a critical role by exploring solutions that help the conflicting parties to see things differently and move from destructive conflict to explore constructive outcome. Thus, conflict resolution theorists tend to establish a distinction between how conflict actors position themselves with regards to their underlying needs and interests (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse 2009). While the conflictual relationship between actors and their underlying interests might be easier to reconcile through the reframing of positions, difficulties arise when the very structure of conflict is deeply rooted in a complex web of conflictual relationships that needs transformation (Miall 2004; Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse 2009). Thus, Deutsch (2000, 27) sees “constructive processes of conflict resolution as similar to cooperative processes of problem-solving and destructive processes of conflict resolution as similar to competitive processes.”

In contrast, conflict transformation represents a novel approach to conflict analysis which provides a means of understanding conflict more deeply. While conflict transformation involves “changing the conflict parties and their interactions,” conflict resolution seeks to explore a solution to the problem, while conflict management focuses on finding ways to work through the problem (Schrock-Shenk 1999, 35). Therefore, conflict transformation represents not just a critical step beyond conflict management and conflict resolution, but profound changes in the institutional and discursive sources of violence, and in “the conflict actors and their relationships” (Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse 2009, 29). The diversity of perspectives suggests a comprehensive approach that utilizes the support of the conflict parties and the conflict-affected society, while external actors only complement this effort using their human and material resources (Miall 2004, 4). As Lederach (1995, 212) points out:

“Conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily see the setting and the people in it as the problem and the outsider as the answer. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting.”

The context of transformation moves beyond the resolution of conflict to an examination of the structural and relational patterns that create conflict. According to Schrock-Shenk (1999) conflict transformation is a structure-oriented approach that involves dealing with conflict at the structural level. Augsbuger (1992) notes that conflict transformation occurs when there are considerable changes in the relational, personal, cultural and structural components of a conflict system. These transformations involve changing attitudes, transforming behaviours, and transforming the conflict itself by discovering, defining and removing incompatibilities between conflict parties. Although scholars have developed a variety of transformative approaches to peacebuilding (Galtung 1969; Curle 1971; Kriesberg 1998), Miall (2004, 6) notes that Lederach’s approach remains “the most comprehensive.”

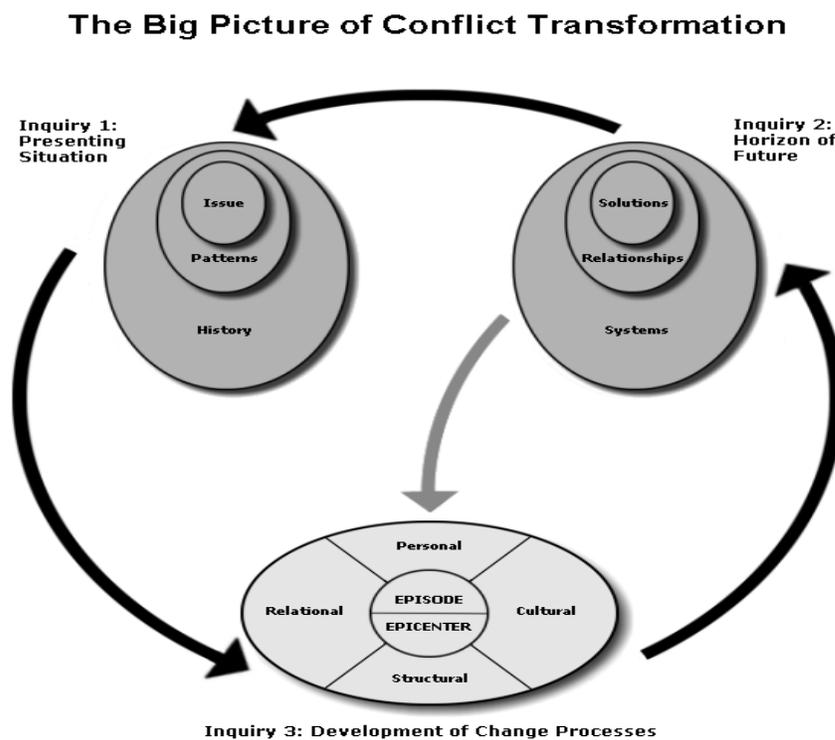
John Paul Lederach Conflict Transformation Approach

In *Building Peace*, Lederach (1997) developed his approach to conflict transformation theory against existing theoretical analysis and informed by his experience in Columbia and Somalia as well as his spiritual background rooted in Mennonite tradition. Lederach’s theory was influenced by the onslaught of violent conflicts in Africa and Asia following the end of the Cold War which created a new ideal in peacebuilding based on the limitations of existing peace practices. Lederach believes that underneath a conflict situation are micro and macro tensions that pervade invisibly. Thus, he constructed visual imaginations of a mountainous topography with peak and valley to paint a picture of conflict and then positions himself as a practitioner looking at the conflict system outside the conventional norms of academia (Lederach 2003). For Lederach,

the most significant challenges in a conflict system become visible as one climbs to the peak of the mountain. The valley, to him, represents unresolved challenges in the proposed solutions. The conclusion drawn from this visual imagery is that when dealing with a conflict situation, we often limit our scope of the problem by looking at the immediate issues. This situation has the potential to blind us to the “peaks” and “valleys” of the conflict problem, which often lie beyond what is visible to us. This idea resonates with Galtung’s triangular formation of violence where cultural and structural forms of violence are located at the lower vertices of the violence triangle underneath an invisible line, while physical violence is located visibly at the apex. The implication is that physical violence does not occur in isolation but is usually the manifestation of violent forces which operate structurally and culturally and are generally not visible. For example, ethnicity and colonialism are structures which cannot be seen physically yet can lead to the systematic oppression of minority groups, culminating in the physical manifestation of violence.

Lederach (1997, 78) sees peacebuilding as the systemic transformation of conflict “in a manner that is informed by a long-term vision.” The concept of transformation refers to the conflict dynamics (descriptive) and the overall purpose of peacebuilding (prescriptive), both of which focusses on changing destructive relationship patterns and seeking systemic change” (Lederach 1995, 18). At the heart of this long-term systemic change is the emphasis placed on reconciliation within society. For Lederach, progress toward settlement calls attention to the rebuilding of destroyed relationships, within the parameters of truth, justice, compassion, and peace. In general, Lederach’s conflict transformation approach is more therapeutic than diagnostic and gives greater attention to local ownership. The focus on local ownership represents a significant development in the discourse on conflict transformation and a methodology that approaches conflict creatively.

Moving from the conceptual foundation of conflict transformation to the practice of transformation, Lederach (2003) constructed an image of conflict called the “big picture” which helps to situate issues within a framework of purpose and direction. This framework helps to solve intractable conflicts by focussing on creating constructive change at a deeper level while eliminating uncertainties that may lead to unnecessary solutions. Lederach’s transformational framework consists of the presenting situation, change processes, and the preferred future – each representing a point of inquiry leading to conflict transformation, and a movement toward the desired future that sets in motion dynamic processes for achieving long-term systemic change. Transformation thus provides an imaginative lens into “solutions and change processes” (Lederach 2003, 32). This framework will help me to visualize the Niger Delta peace process.



*Figure 1. John Paul Lederach’s Big Picture of Conflict Transformation. Adapted from *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, by John Paul Lederach, Good Books, 2003. Used with permission from the Publisher.*

The Presenting Situation

In the first level of inquiry, Lederach (2003) presented a graphical representation which helps to analyze the conflict context and the relationship patterns in which it emerged. In Lederach's view, the presenting issues have no power to alter the course of history but helps to make connections between past and present events and to remember and recognize what has happened. The presenting situation allows us to unravel the tensions between patterns of historical relations and present conflict. Positive change begins with an effort to "identify the challenge," familiarize with the context, redress the past and create new structures and mechanisms for effective interaction in the future (Lederach 2003, 34).

In the context of the Niger Delta, the presenting situation represents the connection between spheres of historical and contemporary injustices and spaces of contestation, resistance and violence. The presenting situation also represents the "conflict ecosystem" which connects the multi-dimensional spheres of complex historical challenges with contemporary dynamics in the oil region. This notion of conflict transformation moves beyond the current issues to explore the historical dynamics and relationship patterns that produce conflict and raises the question of what immediate problems need to be addressed to transform destructive behaviours. Constructive change begins with an understanding of the nature of violence and the context in which insurgency arises, which may provide an opportunity to recognize, understand, and resolve historical challenges and to create new structures for addressing future conflict.

The Horizon of the Future

In the second level, Lederach presents an ideal picture of the desired future as a mental image that can be imagined but not touched, visualized but not controlled (2003, 36). He describes

this horizon as the “social energy” that inform the way actors situate themselves in peacebuilding and uses interconnected spheres comprising of solutions, relationships, and systems to present an image of this horizon as an “open and dynamically evolving future” (Lederach 2003, 36). For Lederach, “an inquiry into the future” requires us to ask what we would ideally like to see in place, and “how we can address the immediate solutions as well as the underlying patterns of relationships and structures” (2003, 37). He believes that a synthesis of the first and second points of inquiry leads to a linear model of change but advocates for a dialectic model involving dynamic processes, relationships and people, with each part creating a conduit for supplying social energy to other parts through interconnected spheres. The combination of arrows indicates that transformation involves a linear movement from past to present and future and a circular process based on the interaction between processes, relationships and structures—*process structure* (37).

The interconnected spheres representing the horizon of the future have implications for the Niger Delta peace process. The immediate solutions represent the Presidential declaration of amnesty for ex-insurgents which created a clean slate for the demilitarization of oil region through the implementation of DDR interventions. The relationships represent the strengthening of communication and confidence building between ex-insurgents and the state, between companies and communities, and between ex-insurgents and their communities. The structures represent the leadership, organization and coordination of the institutional mechanisms that support the peacebuilding program.

The Development of Change Processes

In the third level of inquiry, Lederach uses “embedded spheres” to present change processes that helps to broaden our thinking about responses to conflict (2003, 37). He believes

that since the change processes attends to both the proximate issues and the underlying relationship patterns, our response to conflict should not be restricted to a single solution but should involve multiple solutions and types of change. Lederach contends that change processes must not be restricted to the promotion of short-term solutions but should strive to build effective platforms for promoting long-term social change. The movement to the desired future must involve a “dynamic set of initiatives” for promoting long-term change (2003, 38).

Transforming the Niger Delta conflict thus require effort to engage a variety of individual, community, institutional, corporate and governmental stakeholders in designing and supporting change processes that attend to a set of needs at the structural, personal, cultural and relational levels, moving beyond short-term solutions to seek long-term systemic change. While the DDR framework represents such a change process, effective transformation calls attention to a variety of creative solutions that promote long-term constructive change. Drawing on Lederach, we see that armed insurgency represents a form of antagonistic behaviour that ignites patterns of destructive forces which in turn create the condition for nonviolent change.

Johan Galtung’s Conflict Transformation Approach

In *Peace by Peaceful Means*, Galtung (1996) presents a model that equates conflict resolution with health studies and drawing on his diagnosis-prognosis-therapy approach to show the relevance of this model to the treatment of “sick-states” and the treatment of human beings. Galtung presented violent conflict as the symptom of a sick state and argued that the termination of war does not necessarily correlate with good health. Underlying his analogy is the idea that the “absence of violence” or the “absence of the threat of violence,” does not correlate with the achievement of peace because peace is a continuing process. From this ontological standpoint, he

sees peacebuilding as the elimination of the root causes of conflict (Galtung 1996, 103). This approach involves a deep level transformation of violent actors, structures and cultures through a bottom-up approach that fosters positive peace. Galtung believes that sustaining positive peace consists in creating a picture of the desired future taking into consideration the interests of parties in a conflict.

Galtung (1975) developed the concept of peacebuilding from his analysis of violence and builds on this to draw contrast between negative peace (absence of violence) and positive peace (the elimination of violence in its physical, structural and cultural manifestations). For Galtung, “peacebuilding aims to address the underlying causes of conflict” that lie at the root of injustice, while enhancing prospects towards positive peace based on social justice, equity and cooperation (Galtung 1975, 297-304; Gawerc 2006, 439). Galtung’s conflict transformational concept is relevant to the Niger Delta context because it helps us to identify the conflict structure and how to transform the incompatibilities which arise between adversaries. Conflict transformation theory is, in this sense, a significant approach for conflict analysis, and for designing suitable solutions to them as well as assessing the effect of these responses (Miall 2004, 2).

Need, Creed, and Greed Theory

The conflict literature shows that political scientists have traditionally dominated theoretical inquiries into the causes of civil conflict. The entry of economists into the field of conflict analysis during the 1990s compelled theoretical consideration of the economic motivations of civil wars, beginning with the robust theoretical formulations within neoclassical economics, which crystallized into the so-called “greed and grievance” debate. The “greed” thesis developed from the work of Collier and Hoeffler (2002, 2004) but builds implicitly on Gurr’s (1970) relative

deprivation theory to analyze the ideational motivations that give rise to the economic sources of conflict—both in terms of “relative deprivation and economic predation” (Alden, Thakur, and Arnold 2011, 23). Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner (2008) identified “greed” and “grievance” as two kinds of motivations.

Cramer (2006) notes that grievance theory arose as a trenchant critique against the greed theory which analyzes civil conflicts in strictly economic terms and attempts to re-establish the role of identity and grievances in creating and sustaining civil conflicts. Greed theory underlies the assumption that civil conflicts are mostly generated by the opportunity available to rebel groups to organize and finance rebellion, such as elite competition over natural resource rents, as against grievance factors, such as identity (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2001, 2; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Because identity groups can easily exploit grievances to express their discontent, the grievance mechanism provides insufficient explanations on why conflict occurs in some countries and not in others (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2008).

Following theoretical developments by Arnson and Zartman (2005) the “greed and grievance” literature evolved to more specific debates on economic agendas in civil war and moving beyond the “greed” and “grievance” arguments to broaden the analytical framework with renewed theoretical focus at the interconnection between “need, greed and grievance.” The inspiration for this intellectual effort grew out of the attempt to understand why conflict and civil war persist in the developing world, and whether these conflicts are the result of relative deprivation, identity, or personal gain. The concern for Zartman is how these factors interact to create and sustain conflict. Zartman (2005) contends that Collier oversimplifies his argument which suggests civil wars are rooted in the drive for personal gain and that natural resource abundance predisposes a country to violence. Building on in-depth case studies of conflict in Angola, Lebanon, Sierra

Leone, Congo, Afghanistan, Colombia and Peru, Zartman demonstrated that the drive for personal gain does not necessarily motivate wars but a combination of factors, of which greed is one factor. The reformulation of the “greed” versus “grievance” debate yielded new theoretical insights and a more refined analysis of the dynamic processes that generate and sustain violent conflict in three phases which Zartman described as “need,” “creed,” and “greed.”

The “need” phase uses, as the starting point of analysis, “a failing or failed state that cannot meet the needs of its citizens” to demonstrate how grievances build up from perceived injustices, poverty, inequality, and marginalization (Holmqvist 2012, 16). According to Idemudia and Ite (2006) “needs” are the product of structural and systemic factors that drive conflict. Zartman reviewed a variety of conflict cases such as Angola and Sierra Leone, Colombia, Lebanon and Afghanistan that have elements of state failure at their roots to demonstrate his theory. The “creed” phase is one in which political entrepreneurs exploit some pre-existing identity issues, such as ethnic grievances as a convenient tool to mobilize support for the conflict. In Columbia, Angola, and Afghanistan, political entrepreneurs such as UNITA, FARC, and the Taliban exploited ethnicity, geography and class, and religious identity to wage conflict (Holmqvist 2012, 16). The “greed” phase is where a group of actors who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a conflict settlement or, in some cases, win-lose solution, use conflict to turn means into ends. In this context, “greed” refers primarily to the economic incentives of participating in violence (Idemudia and Ite 2006, 315-16).

The “need, creed, and greed” model flows with important policy conclusions. Conflict prevention in the “need” phase involves an effort to strengthen state institutions to address basic human needs. The “creed” phase on the other hand requires effort to suspend the escalation of violence and formulating political solutions that address the grievances which were the cause of

conflict (Holmqvist 2012, 17). The challenge in dealing with conflict in the “greed” phase underscores the importance of addressing conflict at the root, which often involves de-escalating tensions and bringing “greedy elites” under control by eliminating the supply of money and power (Holmqvist 2012, 17). In general, this theoretical model provides a framework for analyzing the dynamics of conflict escalation and de-escalation in Nigeria’s oil region.

Limitations of the Study

Throughout the research process, I encountered several limitations. The first limitation of this study involves the high rate of illiteracy among the ex-insurgents. A significant number of the ex-insurgents I met in Rivers and Bayelsa could not read and write and depended solely on my research assistant and me to read out the questions and interpret the options to their understanding using Pidgin English. There is a tendency to lose crucial information through the process of translating interviews and surveys from pidgin or local languages to English and vice versa. Given that the researcher is also not proficient in the local languages to understand whether the translations are accurate or not, the process of translating information between the various languages may bias data especially that a lot of the researcher’s help was required to answer the survey questions.

The second limitation of this study lies in the use of two theoretical models as my analytical frameworks. Combining conflict transformation theory with the “need, greed, and greed” theory does not provide the best analytical tools for understanding the causes of conflict and the nature of peace simultaneously. While the “need, greed, and greed” theory is useful for analyzing the causes of conflict it does not help us to understand the successes emerging from post-conflict peacebuilding and the nature of peace currently prevailing in the oil region. These theories,

however, provide important analytical frameworks when used independently to discover social constructs and their theoretical implications. While the theoretical hybridity has brought out the strengths of this study, underlying these strengths are some weakness that flow from the research design.

The third limitation of this study lies in the design of the survey instruments. Although the survey is divided into sections for analytical convenience, in many cases, the scale is not uniform, making the data analysis somewhat complicated. Such complications have resulted in the presentation of the quantitative results in multiple tables instead of presenting the entire results in a few tables and then drawing conclusions from the results to support the qualitative findings.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation intends to expand the body of knowledge about peacebuilding processes and their impact on post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. I have organized this dissertation in nine chapters.

Chapter one provides a general overview of the peacebuilding universe in Nigeria's oil region and discusses the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives and justification. It also describes the significance of the study, identifies its limitations, and outlines the theoretical framework of the study as well as the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter two provides an overview of the historical and political contexts of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process and outlines the contextual framework of the DDR program.

Chapter three provides an extensive literature review on various theories pertaining to the Niger Delta conflict and peace process and provides details on what the various theoretical perspectives identify as the main cause of militancy in the Niger Delta. This chapter goes further

to provide an overview of the current state of knowledge concerning the successes and challenges of the current peace process. This chapter also evaluates the state of knowledge concerning the Niger Delta peace process to identify empirical and conceptual gaps in the literature, which forms the basis of this dissertation's contribution.

Chapter four provides a detailed explanation of the methodological framework of this research. This study uses a sequential mixed-methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data in two phases. Phase I (quantitative) consists of a survey with 396 research participants from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers. Phase II consists of 45 key-informant interviews with purposefully selected participants who were identified during the quantitative phase of data collection. This chapter explains in detail the data collection procedure. It also explains the data analysis process. As a mixed-methods study, greater weight was given to the qualitative methods; as such, the quantitative results were used complementarily to enhance the qualitative findings (Bryman 2006). The findings were verified by means of triangulation. The ethical issues related to the recruitment of participants and confidentiality are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the data to answer the first research question on how the perception of the amnesty program contribute to our understanding of the relationship between DDR and the state of peace in Niger Delta, and to achieve the second objective of this research. This chapter examines how post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta manifested in four levels of change reflecting the diversity of participants' experiences. The participants' different perspectives and their understanding of transformational change are also discussed. The various perceptions of change are presented in a conceptual model to illustrate the impact of post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta.

Chapter six provides an analysis of the data to answer the second research question on the perceived successes and challenges associated with the adoption of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding and achieve the first objective of this research. The participants' different perceptions of empowerment and disempowerment as reflected in their understanding of the impacts of DDR interventions in the Niger Delta are discussed conceptually and analytically.

Chapter seven examines the pattern of conflict escalation and de-escalation to understand post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta and the challenges emerging from the peacebuilding process. This chapter analyzes these transformations by identifying how changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors relates to changes in the conflict trend over the life cycle of the peace process.

Chapter eight provides data to answer the third research question concerning the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program in relation to the nature of peace in the Niger Delta. The participants presented their perspectives and their understandings of the concept of peace, leading to the development of four typologies of peace. These typologies reflect the lived realities, fears and hopes of individuals who have lived through several experiences of violence. This chapter also presents a conceptual model that reflects my interpretation of the data to explain the nature of peace currently prevailing in the Niger Delta and defines the theoretical contribution of this study.

Chapter nine provides a detailed summary of the most significant findings of this research. Based on these findings and the analysis that follows, I explain the contribution that this study will make to the literature on post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta, to the theory and practice of peacebuilding, and to the field of PACS. This chapter presents practical and policy-relevant recommendations as pathways for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. Finally, this chapter provides recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

The Presidential Amnesty Program has, over the years, generated a confluence of scholarly concerns. These concerns are evident in the study of post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. The focus of this dissertation is to contribute to the growing body of scholarly literature aimed at understanding the impacts of the DDR process. However, documenting the impacts of peacebuilding processes in attaining stability in post-conflict communities in the oil region is not enough. Understanding post-conflict transformations in the oil region require analysis derived from empirical studies which provide evidence about the impact of DDR interventions. By drawing on the perspectives of individuals who participated in conflict (ex-insurgents), those who lived through the experiences of violence in the oil communities but did not participate in conflict (non-insurgents), and those implementing the peace process (peacebuilders), I analyze post-conflict transformations in the oil region against their political, social, cultural and economic implications.

Efforts to narrow the theoretical scope of this study considers conflict transformation theory and “needs, creed, and greed” theory as the analytical framework. This narrow focus does not, however, ignore the rich variety of theoretical approaches within the growing field of PACS. Instead, the theoretical ideas and models presented in this chapter provides useful frameworks for understanding the meaning, nature, and challenges associated with post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. This scholarly examination of post-conflict peacebuilding processes not only shape our understanding of the impact of the amnesty program, but also the knowledge and understanding may help us to act in more informed and effective ways. Therefore, in the next chapter, I start by placing the Niger Delta conflict and peace process in their unique context.

Chapter Two

THE CONTEXT OF THE NIGER DELTA CONFLICT AND PEACE PROCESS

Introduction

Political struggles in the Niger Delta have undergone profound transformations over the past few centuries. Although Ugoh and Ukpere (2010) traces the Niger Delta struggle to 1965, other studies locate the origins of the struggle to the early encounters between European merchants and Indigenous peoples during the Trans-Atlantic global trading system in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Ikelegbe 2006; Obi 2010). As significant as this history is, the pre-colonial struggle itself is not as important compared to how historical developments set the stage for patterns of conflict in the post-colonial era.

Several conflict scholars have established that the recurrence of conflict is determined by how it ended in the previous phase (e.g. Werner 1999; Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild 2001; Fortna 2003). While the Niger Delta struggle is historically contingent, the peace process traces its origins to the colonial era when Indigenous elites from the region began to express concerns about the region's underdevelopment following the discovery of oil. To fully understand these transformations, this chapter lays out chronologically the social, historical and political contexts of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process and shows the various interventions designed to resolve the conflict and how the current peacebuilding program emerged.

The Historical Context of the Niger Delta Struggle

Before the arrival of European slave merchants, mostly the Portuguese and later Dutch, Swedish, British and French in the 15th century, the Niger Delta existed as a collection of independent and self-governing nation-states governed by Indigenous kings, with well developed

institutional structures (Eluwa 1988; Sagay 2008; Mayowa 2014). The Benin kingdom, which emerged in the eleventh century as one of the earliest formations of nation-states, grew in political and economic power, controlling trade along the Atlantic coast in southern Nigeria, in what is presently the Niger Delta region. Outside the Benin kingdom, other independent nation-states governed by kings that made up the present Niger Delta include the Calabar, Itsekiri, Brass, Bonny, and Opubo kingdoms, etcetera (Sagay 2008).

Encounters between Europeans and the locals in the fifteenth century were founded initially on economic transactions dominated by the slave trade. Slavery defined “the nature of compromise or competition” for political and economic dominance between and among the different ethnic nations that inhabit the coastal region (Ifedi and Anyu 2011,76). Despite the resistance by locals to protect the sovereignty of Niger Delta kingdoms, these kingdoms were later “conquered by the Europeans” to defend imperial interests (Obi 2010, 225). While historical struggles developed from the encounters between European merchants and the Indigenous ethnic nations following the integration of the region into the trans-Atlantic global trading system (Obi 2010, 225; Ifedi and Anyu, 2011), the nature of conflict can be contextualized as local attempts to resist the subordination of Niger Delta kingdoms to imperial forces seeking to control trade from the interiors to the hinterlands.

For more than three millenniums, at least dating back to the late fifteenth century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was indispensable to the economic life of the Niger Delta region (Lovejoy 2000; International Crisis Group 2006, 2). Interestingly, early relations between Europeans and the Indigenous kings were mutually beneficial, which saw the kings offering slaves to Europeans in exchange for commercial products. Slavery records archived at the National Museum at the old residency in Calabar shows that “between 1690 and 1807, European merchants transported

1,069,100 slaves comprising of 40 percent of their trade from ports in the Bight of Biafra and the Bight of Benin” (International Crisis Group 2006, 2). As Lovejoy (2000, 81) notes, between 1650 and 1800, an “estimated 1,010,000 slaves comprising of 24.1 percent of the total slaves from West Africa left the Bight of Biafra ports.” The expansion of the trans-Atlantic global trading system created a demand for slaves to the Americas, which saw the emergence of city-states and the development of new markets in the region. The slave economy in the Niger Delta collapsed when Britain decided to abolish the slave trade in 1807 and subsequently pressured other countries to do the same by 1815 (Ifeyi and Anyu 2011).

The industrial revolution in Europe made the palm oil trade even “more profitable,” prompting European companies to divert their attention to other export products such as palm oil (International Crisis Group 2006, 4). Thus, Okorobia and Olali (2013) notes that the slave trade and palm oil have had the most remarkable impact on the Niger Delta before the birth of Nigeria. Arguably, ethnonationalism and identity conflicts originated from the earliest formation of city-states in the region, “the role these city-states played during the trans-Atlantic trade, and how they situated themselves under the British colonial government” (Okorobia and Olali 2013, 431). The focus of this dissertation, however, is not much about the ethno-nationalistic struggles that raged from the subordination of the Niger Delta by external and internal forces, but their link to contemporary challenges in the region.

Political Developments in the Colonial Era

Political developments in post-colonial Africa trace their origin to the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, in which European powers negotiated their interests over the destinies of pre-colonial African territories. The various colonial powers represented at the conference

unanimously adopted, signed and ratified a General Act for the expansion of economic development and “enlightenment” in specific regions in pre-colonial Africa. The General Act was also intended to further the “moral” and “material wellbeing” of the Indigenous peoples while preventing future disputes between colonial powers over new acts of conquest (Craven 2015, 38).

At the Berlin Conference, the British government raised its flag over the sovereignty of the lower Niger region. The preponderance of British influence was evident in the abolition of slave trade and the growing expansion in the palm oil trade. George Goldie, a British merchant who had monopolized the palm oil trade in the lower Niger, masterminded the creation of the first imperial corporation – the United African Company (UAC), which transformed into the National African Company (NAC) and, under his leadership, signed treaties with Niger Delta kings to protect British commercial interests (Ifeyi and Anyu 2011, 77). The NAC later metamorphosed into the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and, by 1886, the British government granted Goldie a royal charter to the RNC (Flint 1960). It seems plausible that the Berlin Conference has assumed a powerful symbolic presence in Africa’s development history.

One of the defining characteristics of European conquest of the lower Niger is that the British government was represented mainly by imperial corporations who initiated campaigns leading to the proselytization of local people and subsequently the transformation of their political institutions (Mayowa 2014). With the backing of the royal charter, the RNC became increasingly influential in the Niger Delta region. Some of the strategies designed to protect British commercial interests in the Niger Delta include the creation of institutional structures such as “the police, secret service, customs,” and regional administration (Ifeyi and Anyu 2011, 77). These protection mechanisms and structures reinforced exploitative relationships between imperial corporations and the Niger Delta region. From 1894-1895, king William Koko of Nembe kingdom, one of the

ancient city-states in Niger Delta, led a rebellion against the British, represented by the RNC, over attempts to exclude the Nembe from the palm oil trade, the most lucrative enterprise at the time (UNDP 2006).

It is important to note that British colonialism coincided with the expansion of the global capitalist system and the increasing demand for oil to meet Britain's industrialization needs. The First World War increased the demand for more oil resources to reinforce Britain's military capabilities for which the British government had to satisfy this need by exploiting its colonies. Nigeria became a target for resource exploitation. As Raji and Abejide (2014, 64) notes, the growing demand for oil made "exploration and geological mapping" of mineral resources indispensable to the British colonial economy. Consequently, the British colonial government set up a mineral ordinance in 1914 as the legal guideline for exploration and mining companies. The mineral ordinance laid out the rules governing land ownership, such that natural resources in the colony were considered a property of the crown. Raji and Abejide points out that "concessionary rights" were granted to mining and oil corporations to carry out geological and geophysical surveys in the South including the coastal areas (2014, 64). Shell BP, initially known as Shell-D'Arcy Exploration Parties, started the geophysical and geological surveys of the Niger Delta. Following this, the first oil well in Niger Delta was discovered in Oloibiri, Bayelsa state, in 1956, while commercial production of crude oil commenced in 1958 (Agbiboa 2013).

Struggles in the Post-Colonial Era, 1960s–1990s

The indispensable starting point for an analysis of the Niger Delta conflict is the nature of the political arrangements forged around oil and ethnicity. What is often discussed as the Niger Delta question has much to do with the incompatibilities arising from the federal government's

control of oil resources and the sharing of oil-generated revenue among the states of the Nigerian federation, and the claims by oil communities regarding resource ownership. Because the allocation of revenue from oil extracted from the delta benefitted all groups within Nigeria, it generated incompatibilities between minority groups of the Niger Delta and the state. While conflict arising from the allocation of oil resources has been a central feature of Nigeria's political history (Ejobowah 2000), arguably, the political arrangements forged around oil revenue allocation perpetuated ethnic domination, which created the condition for post-independence struggles.

Thus, the development of ethnic tensions in Nigeria's oil region strongly correlates with the absence of reliable and responsive political institutions to transform historical structures which were designed to privilege dominant ethnic groups to the detriment of minorities (Saro-Wiwa 1995; Osaghae 1995, 325; Naanen 1995; Arowosegbe 2007, 7–12; 2009, 578; Chuckwuemeka and Aghara 2010, 401). Ikelegbe (2006, 105) notes that post-independence tensions arose primarily from the failures of regional development institutions such as the NDDB to tackle the development challenges in Niger Delta communities and the continuous “neglect” of the region. While Nigeria's independence from the British colonial administration contributed to transforming the struggle for self-determination in the oil region (Obi 2010), the character of post-independence tensions was defined by a remarkable shift from non-violent struggle to violent confrontations. The inability to meet the demands of Niger Delta people invariably gave impetus to armed resistance, culminating in the Twelve Day Revolution (Idemudia 2009, 316).

The Twelve Day Revolution

The Twelve Day Revolution which occurred in February 1966, championed by an Ijaw militant, Isaac Adaka Boro, was the earliest attempt to coordinate a violent campaign for the self-

determination of the Niger Delta (Omotola 2009; Obi 2010, 225). Boro led a youth movement known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) in a courageous attempt to secede from the federal republic of Nigeria and form an independent state known as the Niger Delta Republic. Concerns about ethnic marginalization following the discovery and commercial production of crude oil in Oloibiri gave impetus to the Twelve Day Revolution as an insurgent movement for the self-determination of the minority groups of the Niger Delta who found themselves vulnerable to underdevelopment (Boro 1982, 119-120; Chukwuemeka and Aghara 2010, 401). Boro recruited and armed Ijaw youth insurgents to seize and disrupt oil production in Oloibiri (Ikelegbe 2006, 105). In a way, the Twelve Day Revolution was a radical rejection of the intolerable social conditions in the oil region, an expression of discontent against ethnic preponderance and its manifestation in the institutions of political oppression which seemed to threaten the wellbeing and survival of ethnic minorities following independence.

The Twelve Day Revolution coincided in time with the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970. Boro's attempt to secede from Nigeria and form an independent republic was botched after his compatriots were apprehended and prosecuted for treason but were later granted amnesty on the condition that they will join the federal troops to countervail the Biafra rebellion. Boro's decision to fight for the government during the Civil War was to defend the minority groups of the Niger Delta from the prevailing Ibo hegemony in the southeast and to prevent the Biafra rebels from capturing the oilfields in the Niger Delta (Boro 1982; Obi 2009, 119). Oil extraction raised the expectations of Niger Delta people concerning the prospects of development. So, they fought for the government because they considered their chances were better within a united Nigeria than with an independent Biafra (Idemudia 2009, 316). They were compensated with the creation of new states in the Niger Delta, which seemed like an opportunity to attract development to the oil

region. But that prospect never materialized. Instead, the Niger Delta became more vulnerable, leading to new struggles in the 1990s (Idemudia 2009).

The Ogoni Struggle

The early 1990s saw the explosion of social movements in the oil region seeking to hold the image of the Nigerian state and oil multinationals up to public scrutiny for environmental degradation and human rights violation. Between 1989 and 1993, a total of “203 anti-oil protests” have occurred, resulting in the “loss of 117 working days” by oil multinationals (Frynas 2001, 36). Political tensions in the early 1990s arose primarily from the insensitivity of the oil multinationals and the State to the demands of ethnic minorities (Ikelegbe 2006, 105; Aworosegbe 2009, 583) and the growing awareness of the negative impact of oil extraction on the environment and life systems (Okonta and Douglas 2003; Ikelegbe 2006; Adunbi 2015). The champions of these struggles were public intellectuals and environmental rights activists who were outraged by the negative impact of corporations on the region’s under-development and attributed the political tensions in the region to the effects of oil extraction (Olojede et al., 2000; Jike 2004; Okonta 2005).

MOSOP was the first Niger Delta group to mobilize a coordinated protest exposing the destructive activities of Shell BP, championed by late Ken Saro-Wiwa (Okonta and Douglas 2003). MOSOP’s demands included environmental remediation of Ogoniland, political autonomy, resource control, and political representation - all articulated in the Ogoni Bill of Rights. Through Saro-Wiwa’s leadership, “MOSOP coordinated” a transnational campaign that put Shell on the spotlight for its human rights atrocities in Ogoniland (Okoi 2016a, 57). Efforts by the Nigerian regime to respond to MOSOP’s agitations with palliative remedies sidestepped the main grievances of Ogoni people. These developments resulted in the Ogoni March of 1993 to protest

Shell's atrocities and the state's refusal to grant Ogoni people the right to "self-determination" and control of their natural resource wealth (Okonta and Douglas 2003, 119). The Nigerian regime responded to the protest by unleashing violence against peaceful protesters, including the prosecution and killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight countrymen in November 1995 (Okonta and Douglas 2003, 119; Obi 2006, 96-98; Chukwuemeka, Anazodo and Nzewi 2011, 336). The death of Ken Saro-Wiwa further transformed relations between the Indigenous peoples of Ogoniland and the state.

The initial non-violent character of the Ogoni struggle bore a striking resemblance to several revolutionary movements across Africa which emerged initially as non-violent insurgencies and only became violent due to political repression and intimidation by oppressive regimes. This is evident in the work of Sibanda (2005) which explored the political history of insurgency in Southern Rhodesia between 1961 and 1987, with emphasis on the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). This study shows that ZAPU emerged initially as a revolutionary movement that employed non-violent means to achieve its goal of advocating for majority rule but added armed resistance to its strategy due to intimidation by the white settler regime (Sibanda 2005).

Armed Insurgency at the Turn of the Millennium

The distinguishing character of the early 1990s struggles is that they were peaceful and non-violent. Repressive state responses to peaceful protests and "the militarization of oil communities" escalated the insurgency as ethno-nationalistic groups began violent mobilizations against oil multinationals and the state (Ibaba, Ukaga and Ukiwo 2012, 3). Since 1999, the focus of political elites and youth activists seems to have shifted from the initial agitation for political

inclusion and participation to new concerns about self-determination, political autonomy, resource control, and self-governance (Osaghae 2001, 10-11; Ikelegbe 2001; Abubakar 2001; Ikelegbe 2006, 87; Ibaba 2008). Nigeria's return to democracy transformed the dynamics of the Niger Delta struggle as the political landscape initially dominated by the military elite had been overtaken by civilian political elites with vested interests in the oil economy.

The transition to democracy meant that the implementation of the 13 percent principle of revenue derivation would create the opportunity for increased "allocation of oil revenue to Niger Delta states" (Idemudia 2009, 320). The 13 percent principle of derivation is a formula for revenue allocation between the central and sub-national governments in Nigeria. Under this principle, Niger Delta states are to receive 13 percent of the oil and gas revenue accruing to the State. The initial derivation principle was calculated based on a 50 percent revenue allocation to mineral resources producing regions. As Idemudia and Ite (2006, 397) notes, the principle of derivation has been "revised from 50 percent in 1975 to 13 percent since 2001." These agitations also emphasized the "abrogation of obnoxious laws, state restructuring, reparations for environmental degradation," and remediation of endangered ecosystems in the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe 2006, 106). Repressive state responses subsequently transformed the region into a "theatre" of contestation between armed insurgents and the state (Cooper 2006, 174). These insurgent groups include the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Chicoco Movement, and Egbesu Boys (Quaker-Dokubo 2000; Babawale 2001; Akinwumi 2004, 2005).

Political transformations in the 2000s saw a shift in strategy – from non-violent activism to armed rebellion, resulting in the proliferation of small arms in the oil region (Quaker-Dokubo

2005; Oche 2005). Subsequently, the struggle assumed a criminal dimension with the prevalence of kidnapping activities, attacks on oil and gas infrastructure, armed robbery, and sea piracy. For example, in 2003, an insurgent group operating in the Niger Delta seized an oil barge and took its crew members and a military escort hostage. A similar event occurred in 2004 involving the hostage-taking of three crew members and an army officer in an oil barge belonging to Shell (Omonobi and Okhonmina 2003; Okhonmina 2004). Between 2006 and 2008, MEND carried out “66 attacks, resulting in 317 deaths, 30 injuries, and 113 kidnapping” (NDTCR 2008, 116-119). With these developments, the predatory tendencies of the insurgent groups transformed what was initially a public-spirited struggle into a criminal enterprise where economic opportunism dominated the activities of the various insurgent groups.

Historical Responses to the Niger Delta Struggle

The agitation for the development of the oil region has attracted several interventions, beginning with the Henry Willink Commission initiated by the colonial administration in 1957.

The Henry Willink Commission of 1957

Minority groups began their agitation for the development of the oil communities since 1956 (Ikelegbe 2006, 104; Idemudia 2009, 315). Idemudia (2009) points out that at the time Niger Delta chiefs and political elites were preoccupied with concerns about ethnic marginalization and political exclusion by the dominant ethnic groups. The first official response to the development challenge in the Niger Delta began in 1957, when the British colonial government established the Henry Willink’s Commission of Inquiry to probe into the grievances expressed by minority groups and how to address their fears (Idemudia 2009). The Willink’s Commission report released in 1958

identified poverty, under-development, and state neglect as the complex governance challenges in the region and recommended special interventions to address these challenges (UNDP 2006, 12).

The creation of the Willink's Commission in 1957 coincided with the discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri, which raised the expectations of Niger Deltans about the prospects of development in the oil communities. Following the commencement of oil extraction in the region, the fear of marginalization revived, this time that the Niger Delta will not be appropriately rewarded with the benefits from the oil revenue (Ikelegbe 2006). The "failure to implement the Willink's Commission recommendations" as a step toward alleviating the suffering in the oil region set the stage for post-independence struggles for self-determination (Idemudia 2009, 315). However, Oduntan (2017) reviewed the transcripts of the Willink's Commission against its potential to resolve ethnic differences and argued that neither the British colonial administrators nor Indigenous elites were realistic about addressing ethnic relations since political interests concentrated on the development of bureaucratic structures and post-colonial political control.

The Niger Delta Development Board

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the Tafawa Balewa government took pragmatic steps to review the Willink's Commission Report and address its recommendations, resulting in the creation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961 with the mandate to tackle the development challenges in the Delta. While the NDDDB was successful in its effort to address the physical development of the oil region (Omoweh 2005), this narrow focus ignored an integrated development approach that will include interventions designed to address the human development challenges in the oil region. Some argue that the NDDDB failed to translate the Willink Commission's recommendations into actions that will address the needs of Niger Delta people

(e.g. Frynas 2000; Ite 2004; Ikelegbe 2006; UNDP 2006; Idemudia 2009). For example, the UNDP (2016, 11) attributed the failure of the NDDDB to the inability of the “colonial development plan” of 1946-1955 to pursue the goal of human development.

The Niger Delta Basin Development Authority

Following the administrative and political failures of the NDDDB, the military regime established the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) under Decree 37 of August 03, 1976. About 2,500 hectares of land were acquired by the institution for agricultural development, particularly rice farming, including the development of flood and erosion control projects. These projects were either abandoned or lacked maintenance. The same pattern of political, administrative and structural challenges that prevailed during the NDDDB era manifested itself in the NDBDA. Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi (2007, 289) notes that like the NDDDB, the NDBDA created an avenue for corruption to the detriment of the “poverty-stricken populations” in the oil communities. Arguably, the institution merely provided palliative measures rather than addressing the real development challenges in the oil region.

OMPADEC

OMPADEC was established by Decree 23 under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1992 as an institutional framework for addressing the failure of previous development interventions in the oil region, particularly the NDDDB and the NDBDA. Its purpose was to facilitate “the rehabilitation and development of the oil producing areas” (NNPC 2006, 4) which had been devastated by environmental pollution due to oil extraction. In addition to this, the institution was mandated to increase revenue allocation to oil producing areas from 1.5 percent to

3 percent (Gabriel 1999; Frynas 2001; NNPC 2006, 4). Ultimately, OMPADEC was designed to provide the institutional framework for mediating between oil multinationals and their host communities (Osuntawa, Dennis and Nwilo 2005; Sanya 2006; Okonta 2005). But most of the oil revenue allocated to the institution for the development of Niger Delta communities were misappropriated.

The manifestation of corrupt practices soon weakened the capacity of OMPADEC to address the development challenge in the oil region (Frynas 2001, 38; Sanya 2006; Okonta 2005; Akinwale and Osabuohien 2009). Gabriel (1999) notes that between 1992 and 1994, OMPADEC's activities were concentrated on development projects. In addition to undertaking projects such as road construction, electrification, provision of water, and land reclamation, OMPADEC focussed greater attention on increasing its "administrative capacity" through staff recruitment (Gabriel 1999, 96). The manifestation of widespread corruption within the institution was evident in the award of illegal contracts to non-existent contractors (Sanya 2006). Internal politics within the ranks of the institution's leadership resulted in administrative restructuring and, consequently, the withholding of its operational funds (Omotola 2007). The federal government scrapped OMPADEC in 1999 due mainly to corruption, lack of accountability, and its failure to implement sustainable solutions to the region's underdevelopment. Akinwale and Osabuohien (2009) attributed OMPADEC's failures to inadequate regulatory and monitoring mechanisms.

Contemporary Responses to the Niger Delta Struggle

Following the explosion of activist groups in the Niger Delta in the late 1990s, which metamorphosed into armed insurgency in the 2000s, several developmental and peacebuilding interventions have emerged to address the Niger Delta conflict. These include the creation of the

NDDC, the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, and the Presidential Amnesty Program as the latest intervention.

The Niger Delta Development Commission

The failure of OMPADEC motivated the Obasanjo government to establish the NDDC in 2000 as an institutional response to the development challenges in the Niger Delta which manifested in widespread insecurity. The mission of NDDC is to facilitate the sustainable development of the oil region by ensuring that the nine states that make up the region “achieves economic prosperity, social stability, ecological regeneration and peace.”⁴ Also, the commission is responsible for developing a strategic master plan in collaboration with multi stakeholders including the federal and sub-national governments, oil multinationals, and civil society actors (Mähler 2012, 397).

The two financiers of the NDDC are the federal government and oil multinationals. The federal government contributes 15 percent of the 13 percent oil revenue allocation to the Niger Delta states from the federation account, while oil multinationals contribute 3 percent of their annual budget, in addition to 50 percent of the ecological fund earmarked for oil producing states (Omeje 2006; Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi 2007). Through these funding mechanisms, the NDDC has initiated several development projects in the nine states, such as roads, electrification, jetties, water and sanitation, and health and education. While the NDDC has made tremendous effort to achieve the goal of human, social, and infrastructural development, this effort is insufficient in meeting the developmental challenges in the oil region (Omotola 2007, 81-82; Ugoh and Ukpere 2010). Nzeadibe, Ajaero, and Nwoke (2015) attribute NDDC’s failures to its inability

⁴ See the NNDC mission statement at <http://www.nddc.gov.ng/about%20us.html>

to integrate the developmental initiatives of communities into its development masterplan. While the NDDC as presently constituted operates with limited resources and may not be able to commit the resources required to meet developmental needs in the region, Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi (2007) notes that a more significant challenge confronting the NDDC is ensuring that its projects have a direct impact on people.

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs is one of the recent initiatives of the Nigerian government established by President Musa Yar'Adua in September 2008 as a response to the Niger Delta peace process. As Ugoh and Ukpere (2010, 1172) notes, the ministry was mandated to “formulate and implement policies for the development and security of the Niger Delta region.” Its mandate accorded primacy to infrastructural development, environmental protection, and youth employment. The establishment of the ministry was imperative at the time due mainly to the gap between the development programs of interventionist agencies like the NDDC, which was created to address the region’s under-development, and the rising expectations of Niger Delta people. However, not much has been achieved by the ministry despite the substantial financial allocation to undertake development interventions in the Niger Delta.

The Presidential Amnesty Program

When President Yar'Adua resumed office in 2007, the Niger Delta region had been militarized by armed groups who had declared war against the state and oil multinationals, as well as by federal troops seeking to dislodge the insurgents from the creeks. Realizing the effects of armed insurgency on Nigeria’s economy, Yar'Adua decided to include the Niger Delta peace

process in his Seven-Point Agenda. The political antecedents to the Presidential Amnesty Program trace its origin to the South-South Legislative Retreat held in Port Harcourt on August 2008, in response to the longstanding advocacy among intellectuals from the South-South region for review of the national constitution to reflect Nigeria's federal principle. This effort culminated in a communiqué condemning the criminal approach to the Niger Delta struggle. Also, the communique advocated for a constitutional structure that gives adequate powers to each oil producing state to control the natural resources located on its territory, the repeal of "obnoxious petroleum laws" as they affect the Niger Delta region, and recommended amnesty for insurgents (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016, 38). This communiqué was the antecedent to "the Security and Peace Committee chaired by Goodluck Jonathan" (who was Vice President at the time and later became President) to broker peace with the insurgents (38).

These developments culminated in the 45-man technical committee appointed by President Yar'Adua to harmonize the recommendations of the various reports on Niger Delta development. These include the Willink's Commission Report of 1958; the 2005 Niger Delta Human Development Report; and the 2006 Report of the Presidential Council on the Social and Economic Development of the Coastal states. The technical committee headed by the leader of MOSOP, Ledum Metee submitted a list of recommendations to the federal government based on a synthesis of 14 reports containing proposed solutions to the Niger Delta conflict. These recommendations include: 1) granting amnesty to leaders of the militia groups within a comprehensive DDR program; 2) increasing oil revenue allocation to Niger Delta states; 3) increasing infrastructure; and 4) developing institutions to sustain Niger Delta development (Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi 2010, 44). These recommendations were intended to assist the Nigerian government in facilitating peace and sustainable development in the oil region.

On June 25, 2009, President Yar'Adua proclaimed amnesty and unconditional pardon for Niger Delta militants who had been prosecuted for criminal atrocities. The proclamation served to demonstrate the state's commitment to the stability of the region as a precondition for sustainable peace and development. The terms of the Presidential Amnesty include "the willingness of the militants to surrender their arms, unconditionally renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect" (Kuku 2015, 22-23). In return, the Nigerian state pledged its commitment to rehabilitate ex-insurgents under a structured DDR program. Therefore, amnesty was, in a way, a step toward ending violence and creating an environment conducive for the long-term stability and development of the oil region.

The amnesty program implementation was undertaken in three phases under the DDR framework: the disarmament phase, the demobilization and rehabilitation phase, and the reintegration phase. Each of these phases was designed to realize the objective of the amnesty program to secure and stabilize the oil region. Following the initial proclamation of amnesty, the federal government gave militants a 60-day moratorium between August 6th and October 4th, 2009 to accept the terms of the amnesty and unconditional pardon for past crimes. Thousands of militants were granted amnesty and pardon and surrendered their arms and ammunition to the state at various centres designated for arms collections in Akwa Ibom, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta, Cross River, Ondo and Rivers states respectively (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016, 38-39).

Between June 26 and October 3rd, 2009, several leaders of the various insurgent groups led their subjects to surrender their arms and accept amnesty. Acting in the capacity as commander of MEND, General Boyloaf led a group of insurgents to surrender their weapons on August 22, 2009, following the release of their leader Henry Okah, who was incarcerated for criminal transgressions based on his role in the Niger Delta insurgency (Gilbert 2010). Soboma George also

led members of The Outlaw group to surrender their weapons and accept amnesty on August 13, 2009. The leader of the Niger Delta Volunteers, Ateke Tom also surrendered his weapons to the government on October 3, 2009, same as the leader of Niger Delta Strike Force, Fara Dagogo. The leader of MEND Government Ekpemulo (code named *Tompolo*) surrendered an assortment of weapons and explosives on October 4, 2009, to accept amnesty. The Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee recovered a total of 520 arms, 95,970 rounds of ammunition, and 16 gunboats in Bayelsa state alone (Gilbert 2010).

Following the end of the initial grace period, the federal government extended its pardon to militants who did not comply with the presidential pardon but were willing to surrender their arms and accept amnesty after October 4, 2009. A total of 9,808 insurgents enlisted in the second phase of the amnesty program between 2010 and 2012, comprising of 6,166 in 2010 and 3,642 in 2012 (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016, 39). Of the 30,000 participants enlisted in the amnesty program, 20,192 participants were documented and demobilized in the first phase, 6,166 in the second phase, and 3,642 in the third phase (Premium Times 2012; Zena 2013, 4; Kuku 2015, 25). Compared to other externally funded DDR programs in Africa, the Niger Delta DDR program derives its uniqueness from the limited participation of stakeholders, an internal funding mechanism, and the training of militants beyond the shores of the conflict environment (Oyewo 2016). Initially, the reintegration phase of the DDR program was delayed due to the absence of a clear institutional architecture to plan and coordinate its implementation. After more than seven years of implementing the DDR program, it is unclear, however, how many participants the program has reintegrated. Therefore, progress towards sustainable peace demands an unflinching determination from the state, corporate and community stakeholders, the mobilization of resources

over the life cycle of the peace process, and a critical appraisal of the underlying needs of the populations whom the peacebuilding interventions are designed to affect.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the historical and political contexts of ethno-nationalistic struggles that raged from the subordination of the Niger Delta by imperial forces and their culminating impact on contemporary political challenges in the Niger Delta. This chapter shows that the British colonial system in Nigeria created the institutional foundation for the underdevelopment of the oil region, engineered by imperial exploitations of the region's resources which set the stage for armed insurgencies in the post-colonial state. Post-colonial developments in the Niger Delta also derive their origin from the oppressive political institutions inherited from the colonial system to reinforce the structures of ethnic domination rather than transforming them.

Both the colonial and post-colonial administrations have developed a variety of institutional solutions to tackle the development challenges in the Niger Delta, which altogether have failed to produce sustainable results. The latest peacebuilding effort is the amnesty program, and its corollary DDR interventions which provide a non-coercive framework for ending insecurity and transforming former insurgents into responsible and law-abiding citizens. Understanding the historical and political context of the current peace process is essential for identifying the successes and failures of past and present interventions. The next chapter will provide a review of the literature concerning the Niger Delta conflict and peace process.

Chapter Three

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature on the Niger Delta conflict is rich and plentiful, addressing both the multivariate causes of insurgency and responses to it. Idemudia (2009, 307) has drawn extensively from existing literature to situate the conflict within three competing theses: the “marginalization-relative deprivation” theses, the “political economy of war” theses, and the “environmental degradation” theses. He contends, however, that the explosion of insurgency in the region accorded theoretical attention to the “marginalization-relative deprivation” thesis and the “political economy of war” thesis (307). A careful examination of existing studies shows that the scholarship to date has focussed primarily on theoretical questions concerning the immediate and proximate causes of the insurgency, with little attention accorded to peacebuilding. Although much has been written on the peace process, the scope of knowledge is limited to the amnesty program implementation. So far, empirical research on the transformations emerging from the peace process as well as the nature of peace, is lacking. This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual and theoretical foundations of armed insurgency in the Niger Delta. In addition, it presents an overview of the scope of knowledge on peacebuilding and reviews existing literature to identify the knowledge gaps. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to reflect theoretically, conceptually and analytically on the current state of knowledge as this provides a point of departure for this research.

The first section provides a synopsis of the armed groups in the Niger Delta to lay a foundation for future discussion. The second section examines literature dealing with the causes of armed insurgency while the third section reviews existing research on the Niger Delta peacebuilding process. The fourth section evaluates the literature dealing with armed insurgency

and the peace process more critically to determine the strengths, weaknesses, limitations and deficiencies in the research, which forms the basis of this dissertation's contribution. The last section draws on conflict transformation theory, particularly John Paul Lederach's conflict transformation approach complemented by Johan Galtung's model on peace to analyze post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta. It then draws on "need, creed, and greed" (Arnson and Zartman 2005) framework to examine how greed and grievance variables intersect with human needs to regenerate patterns of conflict in the Niger Delta. A synthesis of these theoretical ideas provides the analytical framework for conceptualizing the changing dynamics of insurgency, post-conflict transformations, and the nature of peace in the oil region.

The Armed Groups in the Niger Delta

Before engaging in a theoretical discussion of the insurgent groups in the Niger Delta, it is perhaps important to give a sense of who the insurgents are, their characteristics, and social class. Such information would be especially helpful in understanding the interpretation of my survey data in the subsequent chapters.

The starting point of this discussion is to consider the spate of violence in Warri, Delta state, in the late 90s, which originated from the rivalry between the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo ethnic nations, driven by competition for oil rents, contracts, and employment opportunities in the oil industry. The elites of these subnational ethnic groups diverted the funds donated by oil multinationals to support development interventions in their communities to purchase arms which were used to fight interethnic wars. Subnational ethnic rivalries subsequently metamorphosed into militancy as rival ethnic groups exploited the situation to arm local militants and deploy them against their adversaries (Asuni 2009, 11). The escalation of interethnic tensions in 1997 was

particularly motivated by the incompatibilities which arose from the creation of new states and the proposed location of a local government headquarters that promised to guarantee a steady stream of revenue and employment opportunities to the host community (Asuni 2009, 11; Courson 2016). Since 1997, there had been an explosion of militant groups in Ijaw communities and Warri town seeking to fight for economic justice (Courson 2016, 200). While these groups initially operated without a strategy, they have subsequently transformed into well-coordinated militant formations with hierarchical command structures that elevated the status of their commandants into a new class of Indigenous elites in the oil region.

According to Courson (2016, 200), some of the earliest formation of militant groups in the Niger Delta between 1996 and 2003 include Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Meinbutu Boys, Mubotundigha Ogbo, Torudigha Ogbo, Feibokirifa Ogbo, Olabrako-opri Ogbo, Dolphin Ogbo, Ogbokonde, Feibagha Ogbo, Egbemini, Agelebagha Ogbo, Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), and Egbema freedom fighters. Courson notes that the formation of ethnic Ijaw youth movements from the Warri metropolis was to countervail Itsekiri ethnic aggression against Ijaw settlements (2016, 200). It is important to note that the Ijaw militant groups from Warri operated like a military organization with air, infantry, amphibious and marine command structures which enabled them to coordinate effective warfare against their adversaries (201). The effects of interethnic violence in 2003 forced Chevron to shut in its operations, prompting the federal government to deploy a military Task Force named “Operation Restore Hope,” resulting in the militarization of Niger Delta communities (Asuni 2009, 11; Courson 2016, 204). The militarization of the oil region escalated the level of violence in the Niger Delta as military personnel began to engage in criminal activities that threatened the survival of the militants who

went on a recruitment drive to countervail the threat. The resulting instability following the realignment of the armed groups rendered the Niger Delta region almost ungovernable.

The emergence of new militant groups such as the FNDIC, NDV, and NDPVF in the early 2000s championed by Tom Polo, Asari Dokubo, and Ateke Tom transformed the character of the Niger Delta struggle. The FNDIC, under the leadership of Tom Polo, became the forum for articulating the grievances of minorities of the Niger Delta as well as advocating the liberation of Ijaw people in their struggle against the Itsekiri nation (Courson 2016, 17). Both Ateke Tom and Asari Dokubo operated criminal networks in the Niger Delta around oil bunkering and exerted substantial influence in the politics of Rivers state. While Ateke's disposition to criminal behaviour revealed his intents as self-serving, Asari, on the other hand, "espoused ideological aims" which enabled him to legitimize his actions as a fight for freedom (Asuni 2009, 15).

In the wake of the insurgency, the governor of Bayelsa state, Chief D.S.P. Alamiyeseigha was incarcerated for corruption, while Asari Dokubo was incarcerated for treason. These developments provided a rallying point for representatives of Ijaw militant groups who, at the invitation of Tom Polo, convened several meetings in Delta state in 2005, ostensibly to discuss a course of action (Asuni 2009). These meetings culminated in the founding of MEND in 2005. The emergence of MEND set the stage for a new phase of insurgency characterized by a spectacular assault on oil and gas facilities.

Theoretical Debates on the Niger Delta Conflict

This section deals explicitly with theoretical debates concerning armed insurgency in the oil region and the motivations of insurgent groups as well as the dynamics and intensity of the conflict.

Colonial Legacy

The theoretical premise of the Niger Delta conflict is the recognition that minority groups in the oil region are historically victims of internal and external power structures which traces their origins to Nigeria's colonial history. As Usuanlele and Ibhawoh (2017, 1) argue, the domination of minority groups is historically contingent and develop from the ethnic social strata established under the colonial administration. Colonialism integrated diverse ethnic nations with overlapping identities under the same territorial space—a process that set the stage for irredentist conflicts between ethnopolitical groups following independence (Mazrui 2008, 37; Yung 2009; Okoi 2016a; Okoi 2016b; Usuanlele and Ibhawoh 2017). Okoi (2016a, 48) notes that the colonizers drew up artificial boundaries between their colonized territories and bequeathed these structures to the post-independent elites, undermining the “variation in the ethnic composition of the sub-national groups.”

Arguably, the political antecedent to a litany of conflicts in post-independent Nigeria is a legacy of Frederick Lord Lugard's amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates that pre-existed as culturally heterogeneous societies. The difficulty in transcending ethnic loyalties following independence reinforced the desire of the post-independent national elites to create a Nigerian nation-state. The contradiction of the Nigerian nation-building project is that the European concept of nationhood was exported to the post-colonial state. Consequently, the amalgamation process of state-building was fraught with many challenges (Usuanlele and Ibhawoh 2017). Oghi (2013, 243) describes the amalgamation as “a marriage of ‘strange bedfellows,’” attesting to the role that colonialism plays in relegating some groups to the status of minorities while elevating others as dominant identity groups.

A defining policy of the colonial government was the creation of three administrative

regions along the dominant ethnic lines; the Ibo in the East, the Hausa-Fulani in the North, and the Yoruba in the West. The Hausa represent a collection of people who inhabited what is presently the Hausaland. As Okpu (1977, 20-22) points out, the Hausa became known for setting up walled cities from where they developed governance techniques which enhanced their prestige in the administration of Islamic law, while the “Fulani are Muslims who arrived in the Hausa city-states in the early 13th century and adopted the Hausa culture through intermarriage but retained a nomadic culture.” The Ibo emerged from a synthesis of ethnic groups located East of the Niger and distinguished themselves from other groups by their decentralized systems of governance and democratic leadership structure that extends into the family unit (Okpu 1977). Okpu notes that unlike the Ibo and Hausa, the Yoruba represents a collection of Ijebu, Oyo, Egba, Ilesha, Ife, Ekiti or Owu peoples who established a society “organized into kingdoms, the greatest of which was the Oyo Empire” (1977, 29-30). Since 1960 the machinery of state power has been dominated by these dominant ethnic groups that tend to oppress the minority groups by blocking their access to political power and economic participation.

The division of Nigeria into administrative regions corresponding to the dominant ethnic groups manifested in oppressive ethnic relations which left some Nigerians living as minorities in the East and West. Ethnic sentiments grew in the South, generated by concerns about the economic and political marginalization of minorities. The colonial system, thus, created unbalanced power relations which elevated some groups above the others and reinforced this inequality using State institutions (Anugwom 2011; Joab-Peterside, Porter, and Watts 2012; Jack-Akhigbe 2013). According to Jeong (2000, 31-32), “colonialism imposed” an ethnic structure which destroyed pre-existing cultural identities.

Since independence, the post-colonial state has grappled unsuccessfully with the task of

building a cohesive nation that transcends colonial divisions. This is exemplified by the proliferation of insurgent groups in the Niger Delta seeking to undermine the legitimacy of the state. Armed insurgency in the oil region is, arguably, a product of a colonial legacy which created oppressive ethnic structures which were inherited by the post-colonial political elites dominated by three ethnic groups to oppress minority rights (Ifeka 2001; Ukeje 2001; Ikelegbe 2005; Fleshman 2002; Obi 2009; Idemudia 2009). The Niger Delta struggle thus epitomizes the paradox of post-colonial nation-building project in Nigeria. Idemudia (2009) has drawn insight from Marie Duncan's Nested Theory, particularly the idea of "Nests of Phases," to explore the political tensions in the oil region, tracing the root of insurgency to a colonial legacy. A common theme running through the literature is such that attributes the conflict to historical dynamics which developed from the oppressive structures inherited from the colonial state. As Azar (1990) notes, the colonial system created conditions whereby political power tended to be monopolized by a powerful ethnic group using its dominant position in the state to oppress minority groups.

The Resource Curse Thesis

Resource curse refers to the disappointing outcome of economic development and governance in countries endowed with an abundance of natural resource wealth, compared to countries that are less endowed. The resource curse debate gained theoretical attention through the work of Sachs and Warner (1995) who sampled 95 economies in the developing world and found a negative correlation between natural resource-based exports and economic growth during the period 1970–1989. Similarly, Auty (2001) found a negative relationship between natural resource wealth and economic performance, suggesting that resource-abundant countries tend to experience underdevelopment compared to resource-poor countries.

A large body of literature supports the “resource curse” thesis that resource-abundant societies tend to experience slow economic growth compared to countries facing resource scarcity, using variables such as Dutch disease, governance, and conflict (Sachs and Warner 1995; Karl 1997; Auty 2001; Subramanian and Sala-i-Martin 2003; Osaghae 2015; Elbadawi and Soto 2015). The resource curse debate gained theoretical influence following the intervention by prominent economists such as Humphrey, Sachs, and Stiglitz (2007) who argued that countries endowed with abundant natural resources tend to experience economic underperformance compared to countries with fewer resources. To support their argument, they drew empirical evidence from the success of the Asian Tigers economies which are less dependent on resource revenue when compared with African countries richly endowed with resource wealth yet experience slow economic growth. According to Sachs (2007, 174), the “curse” implies that natural resource revenue often does not translate into long-term development. Sachs believes, however, that natural resources can also serve as a springboard to long-term growth.

In *The Paradox of Plenty*, Karl (1997) argue that resource abundant countries in the developing world are more likely to experience unpleasant realities such as poverty, poor governance and violent conflict compared to those without natural resources. In a different volume, Karl (2007) took a theoretical twist which identifies the resource curse as a primarily political and institutional problem rather than an economic problem. He argued that the contestation for resource rents arises from the scramble for oil resources, making the resource-producing state a “honeypot” attractive to opportunistic transnational actors who stake their interest in the resource economy, exerting significant pressures that contribute as much to the curse as internal political factors (Karl 2007). The theoretical evidence points to the conclusion that the resource curse is primarily the result of political and institutional challenges.

Nigeria presents a prominent case study in the resource curse debate (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Humphreys, Sachs and Stiglitz 2007; Frankel 2010; Peter and Ocheni 2015; Osaghae 2015; Eregha and Mesagan 2016). Recognizing that national development rests on the disposition of the state to utilize resources efficiently for the common good of its citizens, Nigeria's case represents a paradox. Osaghae (2015) argues that despite the flow of oil income to Nigeria's oil-producing states, which was expected to address underdevelopment, the resource wealth has not brought much development to the region. Very recently, Peter and Ocheni (2015) explored how dominant forces within Nigeria have constrained the state's capacity to transform its natural resource wealth into economic growth and poverty eradication. They argue that the authoritarian grip on the nation enabled political regimes to hijack state resources, rendering the citizens incapable of participating in economic or political processes. The resulting poverty and corruption subsequently constitute a threat to national security (Peter and Ocheni 2015). While this argument is important, it tends to shift analytical emphasis away from resource endowment and toward resource availability as the theoretical basis for insecurity.

The Economy of War Theory

The political economy of war underlines the scholarly attempt to understand whether and how natural resource abundance influences economic growth or contribute to conflict. This scholarly endeavour has produced a burgeoning literature, particularly the "greed" versus "grievance" debate which underlines the economic and political motivations for armed conflict. The greed argument holds that actors in conflict derive their motivation from the opportunities that conflict produces, which then increases the likelihood of its outbreak (Reno 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Based on an empirical study of the impact of resource dependency on civil wars

in Africa, Collier (2000) contends that natural resources engender conflict amongst rival socio-political actors and that the predatory character of these socio-political forces creates the condition for armed conflict. Thus, people rebel not because of real grievances but because of the economic opportunities that rebellion provides. This argument forms the basis of the “new political economy” framework which seeks to theorize the motivations of armed groups who engage in resistance, particularly in Africa (Ukiwo 2007).

Scholarly efforts to expand the resource curse literature has brought Nigeria’s oil insurgency to the center of the political economy debate (Ikelegbe 2005). At the core of this debate is an argument that links the motivations of insurgent groups to the incentives derived from the capturing of natural resource rents (Collier 2000; De Soya 2000; Nwandasali 2000). Collier and Hoeffler (2002, 1) found a weak relationship between grievances and civil conflict, arguing that neither is inequality nor political oppression a determinant of conflict. The argument that armed insurgency in Nigeria’s oil region is not driven by ethnic grievance but in the opportunities available for militants to improve their well-being has gained increasing scholarly attention (Cesarz, Morrison, and Cooke 2003; Omeje 2005). For example, Oyefusi (2008) examined the drivers of youth insurgency in Niger Delta communities and the factors that present the opportunity for resistance and found that insurgency is rooted in factors that decrease the opportunity cost of participating in rebellious behaviour or increase the incentives thereof.

Ikelegbe (2005) believes that a society’s vulnerability to conflict can arise from the struggles to control its natural resource wealth. These struggles often arise from the activities of warlords, elites, and merchants who seek to consolidate their power in competition with one another. Insurgent groups contribute to creating and sustaining the war economy through illegal trading of natural resources mostly facilitated by foreign agents. The “war economy” thesis thus

underlines the activities of transnational mining corporations who exploit conflicts to gain access to both the formal and informal economies and use insurgent groups to create and sustain the war economy through illegal trade (Ikelegbe 2005). As Mair (2003, 21-22) points out, transnational organized crime is intensified by the activities of clandestine agents who mediate between warlords to facilitate the plundering of natural resources as well as smuggling and arms trafficking.

A defining character of the “war economy” thesis is that natural resource abundance creates the incentive for conflict as rebel constituencies often exploit the mechanism of violence to capture the rents from natural resources extra-legally (Tonye, Ojo, and Aghedo 2011). In other words, criminal syndicates legitimize their activities by disguising their economic agenda with political “grievances,” making it difficult to distinguish between those actors who are motivated by legitimate social and political objectives and those who are merely motivated by “greed” (Mair 2003, 22). Studies have shown that criminal activities associated with sea piracy, oil bunkering and kidnapping of oil workers are tactics deployed by insurgent groups to extract rents from multinational corporations due to the non-transparent methods of compensating Niger Delta communities for oil pollution (International Crisis Group 2009; Mahler 2012). While the prevailing theories often attribute the prevalence of violence with greed-based motives, Okonofua (2013) situates the conflict within the deliberate role of interest groups who deploy insurgency as a strategy to gain access to the resource economy. These activities do not, however, undermine the struggles of legitimate actors who are motivated by genuine grievances.

A consensus is emerging, that in seeking to theorize the causes of armed insurgency the emphasis should focus on non-economic variables such as identity, group marginalization, inequality and weak state structures (Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2007; Stewart, 2011). For example, Nathan (2000, 2) theorized rebellion as the result of accumulated grievances, in contrast to the

greed thesis. As Ellis (2004) notes, the assumptions of the greed thesis are “dangerously simplistic.” This claim is significant because Ukiwo (2007) did not find a relationship between insurgency and greed in western Ijaw communities; instead, his study traces insurgency to the historical marginalization of minorities. In a different publication, Ukiwo (2009) contends that the political economy thesis is so preoccupied with economic variables that it accords very little attention to political and historical factors. This observation, in a way, suggests that the political economy thesis undermines the social context of conflict. This criticism resonates with Obi (2009) who believes the binary lines between greed and grievance, when viewed in a conflict context, do not adequately capture the fluidity of criminality and dissent in the oil region. According to Ebiede (2017, 42), the complexity of the Niger Delta conflict is that it is rooted in multi-dimensional causal factors. Despite its silence on non-economic variables, the “economy of war” thesis provides useful insights into the criminal motivations of armed groups.

Socioeconomic Marginalization

Many peaceful and progressive societies across the world are ethnically heterogeneous, suggesting that ethnic heterogeneity itself is not a cause of conflict. Concerns arise, however, when political elites manipulate ethnic divisions to oppress minority groups (Annan and Danso 2013). Empirical studies have shown that the intensity of conflict is high in resource-based societies with politically excluded minority groups (Koos and Basedau, 2013; Wegenast and Basedau 2014; Koos and Pierskalla 2015; Mähler and Pierskalla 2015; Asal et al., 2016). While scholarly efforts to establish the correlation between resource extraction and armed conflict lend credence to the grievance mechanism, the analysis that follows emphasize causal variables (for example, GDP proxies) that do not allow for a clear distinction between greed and grievance variables. As Koos

(2018) noted, the context of “grievance” underlies some theoretical complexity, making its analysis difficult in the absence of opinion survey data. This observation is prevalent in his study on the Niger Delta, which seeks to uncover the nature of oil-related marginalization and to distinguish between group and individual grievances.

A recent study by Koos (2016) argues that resistance provides an incentive for ethnic groups to transform their deprivation. This argument suggests that politically excluded groups do not aim for victory over their adversaries but wage conflict as a strategy to increase the costs of their exclusion from the political process (2016, 20). Koos’ argument thus, raises significant concerns about the complexity of peace in the Niger Delta against the competing narratives in which various ethnic groups situate their struggle. What accounts for conflict, then, is the discrepancy between oil-generated wealth and the political and economic exclusion of Niger Delta people (Ukeje 2001; Okonta and Douglas 2003; Watts 2009). So far, the vast literature traces the drivers of conflict to grievances generated by the feeling of exclusion among minority groups (Okonta 2000; Iyayi 2000; Ukeje 2001; Ifeka 2001; Fleshman 2002; Okonta and Douglas 2003; Ikelegbe 2005; Obi 2009; Idemudia 2009; Arowosegbe 2009; Akpan 2014). Akpan (2014, 45) traces the source of discontent against the Nigerian state to the marginalization of minorities from the political and economic mainstream.

Very recently, Folami (2017) traced the root of conflict in Delta state to unequal distribution of the oil rents. Thus, while the grievance mechanism brings to light the contradiction of wealth and poverty in the oil region, the literature points to a common argument that conflict is a consequence of perceived power imbalances as well as the economic oppression of minority groups. Despite substantial flows of oil-generated revenue to the state, the level of inequality in the oil communities reveals an appalling contraction. The situation in the Niger Delta illustrates

how total dependence on natural resource revenue can suppress human development, deprive local populations, and aggravate armed conflict (Osuoka 2003; Higgins 2009). The UNDP (2006) Report on the Niger Delta gives credence to this representation because it magnifies the scope of inequality in rural communities whose inhabitants cannot access job opportunities in the oil industry due to lack of technical skills. Consequently, a feeling of exclusion develops among minorities on the basis that the oil wealth extracted from their region does not benefit them (Saro-Wiwa 1995). Minority groups who are concerned about the failure of state institutions to address their grievances have resorted to armed resistance.

Based on the studies reviewed so far, there is an underlying pattern in the multivariate causes of violent behaviour. For example, Arowosegbe (2009) traces youth violence in the oil region to the politics of exclusion, while Ugor (2013) undertook an empirical analysis focused on uncovering the patterns of youth violence in the oil region, in the broader context of struggles for economic participation. Folami (2016) undertook a purposive sampling of 128 participants in Delta state and found a link between conflict and oil exploration, where conflict originates from disparities in the distribution of oil rents. Armed insurgency is, in this context, a consequence of economic exploitation and the longstanding marginalization of minority groups from the oil communities.

Environmental Degradation

Decades of oil and gas extraction has transformed Nigeria into a reinter state, where national development is dependent on natural resource revenue (Ukeje 2001; Okonta and Douglas 2003; Watts 2009). While the petroleum industry in Nigeria has the potential to bring significant social and economic change, which can lead to prosperity in the oil region, paradoxically, however,

environmental degradation has been a critical challenge confronting the oil communities in the delta (Ogbonnaya 2011; Babatunde 2014, 77). This paradox is exemplified by empirical studies which have established a relationship between environmental degradation and massive inequality in the oil communities (Aghalino 2009; Evoh 2009; Oviasuyi and Uwadiae 2010; Arinze 2010; Aghalino 2011, 2012; Aghalino and Okolie-Osemene 2014; Adams 2014; Okolie-Osemene 2015).

The scope of environmental devastation in Nigeria's oil region is evident in the work of Agbu (2005, 82-3) which shows that approximately "3,000 oil-spills" recorded between 1976 and 1999 originated from the extractive activities of oil multinationals and that these activities contributed to the devastation of the country's coastal, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems. Several other studies support the evidence that approximately 300 oil spills occurred per year between 1991 and 1993 within Rivers and Delta states alone (World Bank 1995; Frynas 2001, 35; Niworu 2017, 44). The campaign against oil corporations originated from the longstanding environmental effects of their activities on local communities who derive their livelihoods from the environment.

The UNDP (2006) Report also indicates that the environmental effects of oil extraction and its impact on discriminatory land use practices have put enormous stress on oil communities in the delta. Studies conducted by Amnesty International (2009) and UNEP (2011) revealed the over-exploitation of the Niger Delta environments through unsustainable practices in the petroleum industry. These findings resonate with the study by Ogbonnaya (2011, 75) which shows that pollution arising from oil spills and gas flaring has transformed environments which sustains agricultural productivity in the oil region, engendering underdevelopment and poverty in the local communities. Equally important is the study by Elum, Mopipi & Henri-Ukoha (2016) which reviewed the adverse effects of oil extraction in the Niger Delta and found that the environmental impacts of oil extraction have perpetuated pollution, food insecurity, loss of farmlands and viable

rivers for fishing. Discontent arising from unsustainable environmental practices has resulted in the regeneration of armed insurgency in the oil region (Elum, Mopipi, and Henri-Ukoha 2016, 12881).

In a broad sense, the environmental degradation thesis links the Niger Delta conflict to the negative impact of unconstrained extractive activities on the environment and communities (Jike 2004; Okonta 2005). Idemudia and Ite (2006, 391) have traced armed insurgency in the Niger Delta to the complex interaction of social, political, economic and environmental forces but contend, however, that “political and economic factors are the root causes of the armed insurgency, while ecological and social factors remain proximate causes.” Other scholars like Saliu, Saka and Abdulahi (2007, 276) contend that the neglect of these environmental threats has set the stage for violence.

For example, Okonta and Douglas (2003) have chronicled the struggle between communities and imperial corporations in the Niger Delta, in a brilliant publication which bore witness to the unfolding human tragedy of oil-induced disasters. Their study provides documentation of Shell’s accomplices in Nigeria’s oil conflicts and the murder of the renowned environmental rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight compatriots. The contradiction of oil-generated wealth and environmental pollution and inequality in the oil region raised human rights and social justice concerns in 1990, inspired by MOSOP (Okonta and Douglas 2003). This consciousness subsequently transformed the local environmental struggle in the Niger Delta from nonviolent resistance into an armed insurgency. To understand the nature of resistance, Tonwe, Ojo and Aghedo (2011) examined the transformation of environmental activism in the Niger Delta from low-intensity conflict ostensibly to an armed rebellion using the greed versus grievance framework.

A central theme that permeates the environmental degradation thesis is how oil extraction infringes on the human rights of communities. The destructive activities of corporations link environmental degradation to local struggles for human rights and social justice (Jeong 2000, 285-288). In most cases, these concerns often attract palliative solutions that fail to balance economic development with human rights (Asobie 2004). Although insurgent groups have emerged over time to protest the activities of oil corporations and the state, repressive State responses have subsequently reinforced a feeling of victimization among indigenes of the oil communities. Discontent arising from these contradictions, in turn, motivate the insurgent groups to transform the situation by violent means.

The Resource Control Thesis

Sagay (2008) defines resource control as the rights of oil communities to ownership and control of natural resources within their territories. The resource control thesis underlines the spatial expression of power and agency between the Nigerian state and insurgent groups over the control of oil wealth within Niger Delta communities. These contestations draw attention to the work of Washington, Rosier, and Goodall (2006) who observed that how communities construct their struggle for justice is an essential way in which “place” convey its meaning for the people who inhabit that community. This observation offers a critical lens into the dynamics of identity politics, and the struggle for environmental justice including how insurgent groups mobilize “space” as a justification for their actions (Ugor 2013, 3). However, the central tension lies in the question of ownership.

The resource control debate revives interest in critical questions concerning the creation of the Nigerian state. As Umejesi (2015) notes, the nature of state created by the British colonial

government reconstructed national identity in colonized territories by taking ownership of natural resources away from the community and vesting it on the state. Since the nation-state became the geographical basis for identity, prehistoric identities have been restored by the power vested in the nation-state, enabling communities to find expression in resource control struggles (Umejesi 2015). According to Adunbi (2015, 183), resistance in Niger Delta is “a consciousness rooted in the notion that land and oil resources are inheritances from ancestors, and this philosophy has sustained the rebellious discourses of both human and environmental rights activists as well as insurgent groups.

So far, the most persuasive argument concerning the resource control debate has been the *Kaiama Declaration* by the Ijaw ethnic nationality on December 11, 1998, which asserts the rights of Ijaw communities and peoples to exercise control over their resources (Okonta and Douglas 2003). Acting under the Articles of the *Kaiama Declaration*, the IYC gave oil multinationals an ultimatum to vacate Ijaw communities (Ikelebge 2006, 110). The consequence of this declaration was the deployment of the military to Ijaw communities, resulting in gross violations of human rights. For example, the Nigerian military perpetrated brutality on the Odi community in Bayelsa state in 1999 that resulted in over 2,000 deaths in a population of 15,000 people as well as the destruction of property (Rowell, Marriot, and Stockman 2005; Watts 2007, 654; Omotola 2010, 44). In 2006 President Obasanjo also deployed troops to the oil region to displace insurgents from the creeks and gain control of the oil resources (Watts 2007). As Cooper (2006, 174) notes, much of the tensions in the Niger Delta has been the result of state reprisal of communal uprising over resource control.

The resource control argument has been dismissed by those who contend that elites often mobilize group identity as a tool for collective action in support of their political agendas. For

example, Ebiede (2017, 1198) posits that the Niger Delta conflict is mostly a contest by local elites over the control of natural resources. While it may not be easy to lead groups of people for collective action due to trust, identity groups are easy to mobilize because ethnicity serves as a powerful force for identity group formation. According to Akerlof and Kranton (2000), conflict behaviour is determined by an individual's identity and the status of their identity group.

Although D'estree (2008) believes that identity involves a struggle over power, resources and status, she contends, however, that identity itself does not produce conflict. Instead, the interaction between conflict parties is what creates the condition for actual conflict because it builds on pre-existing conditions and transforms them into good or bad. Pre-existing conditions could be differences in identity, such as struggle over power, resources, and perceived injustice (D'Estrea 2008). In other words, it may be easier to mobilize groups who derive their identity from ethnic variables such as language, religion and other regional differences compared to class divisions along socioeconomic lines. Therefore, identity remains a critical unit of analysis in the spatial politics of resource control among insurgent groups in the Niger Delta.

Uneven Development

Development planning in Nigeria has historically ignored the development of physical and social infrastructure in communities that produce the nation's natural resource wealth. Both the colonial and post-colonial states undermined infrastructural development except where they served the strategic interests of imperial corporations. From the colonial to the post-colonial era, there had been several appeals to address the economic and social underdevelopment in Niger Delta communities. A UNDP report chronicles infrastructural challenges in the oil region to include lack of roads, electricity, schools, potable water, hospitals and housing (2006, 37). Infrastructural

deficiencies continue to prevail in the Niger Delta because of the tendency to use Nigeria's resource wealth to develop other regions, while the oil region continues to struggle (Watts 2004, 50-51; Ijaw National Congress 2006, 13). As Ikelegbe (2006, 104) notes, the dysfunctional state of physical and social infrastructure in the Niger Delta and the region's location amidst a complex ecosystem characterized by creeks, estuaries, rivers, mangrove swamps and lowland rainforests means that the need for sustainable development remains a critical factor in political struggles across the region.

Saro-Wiwa (1995), for example, identified uneven development as one of the leading causes of the Niger Delta struggle. Saro-Wiwa believed the post-colonial elites concentrated development at the center while neglecting regional dynamics in the Niger Delta. Thus, the proximate causes of insurgency in the oil region lie in the way that political elites mobilized ethnic differences to distribute political and economic opportunities preferentially to the interests of dominant ethnic groups while discriminating against subordinate groups (Saro-Wiwa 1995). Others attribute the infrastructural challenge in the region to the prolonged activities of oil corporations which have manifested in the destruction of land and the environment (Baghedo, Samuel and Nwagbara 2012) and community struggles for the remediation of the endangered ecosystems (Ugo and Ukpere 2010).

Chukwuemeka and Aghara (2010, 401) note that perceptions of uneven development in a society often generate rivalry among groups, which invariably produces a conflict situation. Thus, grievances grew from perceived disparities in the level of regional development in the Niger Delta compared to other regions. Economic inequality over time reinforce perceptions of unequal development and its manifestations in violent behaviour. This argument suggests that feelings of deprivation among Niger Delta people grew from a comparison of their status to other regions and

the realization that their wealth has been exploited for the development of other regions while they attract less of the economic prosperity they believe themselves to be entitled. Under this condition, insurgency becomes a strategy deployed by aggrieved actors to draw political attention to the infrastructural challenges in the region. Although some effort has been made to provide necessary infrastructures such as access roads, electricity, and water in many communities, such interventions are often not commensurate with the magnitude of environmental pollution and the wealth extracted from the region (Chukwuemeka and Aghara 2010, 403).

Federalism

The literature on Nigeria's federalism is rooted in issues as diverse as the microstructure of the Nigerian federation and range from political instability to state creation to revenue sharing. In *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, Suberu (2001) explored the dynamics of Nigeria's federalism, focussing specifically on state creation, revenue allocation, population enumeration, and political representation. Underlying Suberu's work is how Nigeria bequeathed from the colonial administration a dysfunctional federal system of centralized revenue collection, and why the country is lacking a stable, and effective political framework for social and economic development. His work thus makes an essential contribution to the literature by tracing Nigeria's dysfunctional federalism to the competition between regions, groups and individuals over revenue sharing and control, and linking these problems to the struggles of minority groups.

In the post-colonial state, the revenue derivation principle recommended by the Phillipson Commission of 1946 was the standard revenue sharing formula (Omodero, Ekwe, and Ihendinihu 2018, 166; Idemudia 2012, 186). As Adangor (2015) notes, the derivation principle implies that the percentage of revenue accruing to sub-national governments from the federation account is

proportional to their respective contributions. The challenge of the derivation principle is that it does not give states the right over their resources. The underlying argument is that the three dominant ethnic groups have made it difficult for Niger Delta states to exceed 13 percent of the derivation payable to them, although the constitution permits an upward review (Adangor 2015). The conflict thus originates from perceived injustice in the revenue allocation system that rewards Niger Delta states disproportionately. Sagay (2008) argue that insurgency in the oil region is not only a struggle for economic participation and environmental justice but also a struggle against the nature of federalism.

Underlying the federalism debate is the common assumption that Nigeria's federal structure marginalizes the Niger Delta in revenue allocation in addition to the deplorable state of infrastructure in the oil region. Some analysts argue that Nigeria's federalism has failed because it promotes ethnic imbalances that foster nepotism and corruption (Osaghae 1998; Akiba, 2004; Sagay 2008). Ako and Omiunu (2013, 87) attribute the reasons for restiveness in the oil region to "the ownership and management of Nigeria's oil wealth and the distribution of oil revenues." The tension lies in Nigeria's constitution, which vests the absolute ownership of oil resources and the sharing of the oil revenue on the federal government. However, oil communities believe they are entitled to the resource wealth because the laws governing natural resource management and the federal government's actions infringe on their rights to self-determination (Ako and Omiunu 2013).

According to Osaghae et al. (2011), self-determination is the right of an oppressed people to organize themselves into a self-governing body independent of the dominant power structure and is the basic principle for realizing the freedom to control one's destiny. As Okonofua (2011, 66) notes, the right to self-determination assures that minority groups united by shared culture and

religion can seek liberation from “oppressive structures and institutions.” In the Niger Delta context, self-determination is the right of minorities who feel marginalized to determine their destiny (Okwu-Okafor 1994). Consequently, oppressed groups from the oil region have sought liberation from the oppressive structure by violent means (Okonofua 2011, 66). It could be argued, therefore, that armed insurgency in the delta originates from a skewed federal system that perpetuates marginalization and exclusion, and resistance to the colonization of oil communities by State and multinational forces.

On the contrary, Suberu (2001) argued that federalism has not failed per se but has only been manipulated by powerful elites to their advantage in disregard for national development. This argument resonates with Ojo (2017), who argues that the scholarship on Nigerian federalism oversimplifies the suffering of minorities. His study takes a philosophical departure from the politics of victimization to examine the contributions of ethnic minorities to the political development of Nigeria since the 1950s up until the collapse of the first republic in 1966. Very recently, Imuetinyan (2017) attempted to evaluate the efficacy of Nigerian federalism in the pursuit of self-determination and equality among minority groups and found that the cost of governance at the national and state levels, amidst complex challenges associated with economic development and welfare services, makes federalism untenable as a framework for national integration.

Conceptual Debates on the Niger Delta Peace Process

In this section I review conceptual literature on the Niger Delta peace process to understand the scope of knowledge on post-conflict peacebuilding.

The Monetization of Peace

One of the contending issues surrounding the peace process that has attracted academic attention has been the use of monetary incentives to buy peace from insurgents, enabling the state to create a conducive environment for oil and gas extraction in the Niger Delta (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Ajayi and Adesote 2013; Ushie 2013; Obi 2014; Agbiboa 2015; Eke 2015; Okonofua 2016; Schultze-Kraft 2017). Obi (2014) has attempted to raise critical questions concerning the politics of amnesty and whose interest it serves, including questions about the sustainability of the peacebuilding initiative. By using a political economy analysis to uncover the power relations that underlay the amnesty politics, he argues that the amnesty program had been less of a peacebuilding program and more of a political project undertaken by Nigeria's elites to maintain their preponderance over natural resource rents.

Similarly, Ajayi and Adesote (2013) examines the "gains" and "pains" of the Niger Delta Amnesty Program between 2007 and 2012 and argues that amnesty was less of a humanitarian initiative and more of a "reactive intervention." The concept of "reactive intervention" implies that amnesty was a means of buying peace from insurgents to create a security environment conducive for oil production. Agbiboa (2015) contend that the strategy of buying peace from insurgents, while it has been successful in re-establishing oil and gas production, gave little attention to the underlying causes of insurgency in the oil region. It follows that the stability of the oil region only establishes the effectiveness of the amnesty program in achieving the government's strategic objective, which is to increase oil production. As Ushie (2013, 33) notes, the use of monetary incentives to negotiate peace with insurgents remains an "unsustainable" approach to peacebuilding, especially when considering the volatility of Nigeria's oil revenue. A critical challenge of the amnesty program is that its presentation by the state as a gift to insurgents reveals

the state's effort to criminalize the insurgents, thereby avoiding dealing with their underlying grievances (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011). It follows that the transformation of former insurgents into power-brokers did not only alter the political calculus in Nigeria but also, it elevated the Niger Delta as a power bloc, resulting in the strategic positioning of warlords and their henchmen as government contractors (Ushie 2013, 33). Indeed, the monetization of grievances, which has enabled the transfer of material wealth to ex-insurgents, has occurred against the effective mobilization of the peacebuilding infrastructure to facilitate sustainable peace in the oil region. As Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011, 45) note, the political construction of amnesty as a windfall for criminals pose a significant challenge to the peace process in the oil region because the state ignores the longstanding grievances of the local constituents and the "structural violence" in which insurgency grows. The implication is that genuine reconciliation in the oil region remains a far cry so long as the peace program ignore the causes of insurgency (53).

Similarly, Eke (2015) examined the challenges confronting the amnesty program and argued that while amnesty was intended to stabilize the oil region, the state's renewed commitment to insurgents in the post-amnesty period was based solely on economic expediency. Amnesty is, therefore, "a 'cash for arms' policy," which seems attractive to criminals who deployed violence against the state to gain access to the benefits of peacemaking (756). According to Okonofua (2013, 10), "militants and their organizations continue to exist as artifacts in the structure of economic violence created by power brokers to advantage a small network of the political elite." Thus, while the amnesty program has enabled daily oil production, it remains unsuccessful in tackling the spread of small arms in the oil region, which further revived criminal activities such as oil bunkering to the extent that crime became a survival strategy among militants (Eke 2015). Amnesty is thus a peacebuilding policy based on the exchange of cash for peace.

Evaluation of the Literature and Gaps

Although a large body of literature exists on the Niger Delta conflict, there is limited empirical research dealing specifically with post-conflict transformations in the oil region. One fundamental weakness in the scholarship that is yet to receive empirical attention is the impact of the monetary payments to ex-militants on post-conflict transformations. There is a need to explore more deeply the effect of these payments on the stability of Niger Delta communities, including whether and to what extent these payments serve as a predictor of future conflict. So far, the literature provides limited insights into these concerns.

A second issue that has received little or no empirical attention in the literature is that of *empowerment*. While empowerment features as a prominent theme in peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta, the concept has received very little scholarly attention. Only recently did Ajibola (2015, 3) attempt to investigate the potential of the amnesty program to create the conditions for the successful reintegration of ex-insurgents into civilian society including questions about whether the process of empowering ex-insurgents can facilitate sustainable peace in the oil region. Much needs to be done to deepen analytical insights on the nature of empowerment in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding processes and how participants perceive empowerment differently.

Third, the role that corruption plays in post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta remains an issue of immense importance, which nonetheless has received very little scholarly attention. As Ouattara (2001) argues, a society that is susceptible to corruption is one where public servants are unaccountable, where laws are non-existent, and where there is outright disrespect for human rights. Nigeria exemplifies such a society where corruption has contaminated every sector of government (Okonofua and Ugiagbe 2004; USAID 2006). In such a situation, community youth who feel marginalized and excluded based on perceived corrupt practices in the

implementation of peacebuilding interventions often turn to violence to challenge the corrupt system. Meanwhile, empirical studies that specifically address corrupt practices in the peacebuilding program is non-existent. It is imperative, therefore, that this research explores the role that corruption plays in peacebuilding processes and thereby to fill the empirical lacuna in the literature.

Four, the literature on the peacebuilding program in the Niger Delta seems dominated by masculinized perspectives while marginalizing the views of women. As such, we know very little the impact and potential challenges of DDR interventions on women stakeholders and how women perceive the peace process differently. This challenge call attention to the work of Okonofua which shows the gender disparity in the amnesty program as women constitute a relatively small percent of the total number of ex-militants which puts them in a disadvantaged position when accessing reintegration benefits compared to the male (2011, 12-13). Generally, female militants have limited access to skills, knowledge, information, and employment opportunities compared to the male militants (Nillson 2005), yet the program gives more reintegration support to men than women (Okonofua 2011, 13). While a gender analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is imperative, however, that this study attempt to beam a critical lens on the impact of DDR interventions on women.

Five, the current literature provides limited insights on post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta. While it is evident that the region has experienced some stability over time, no study to date has examined which specific DDR interventions have produced what changes and how these changes lead to the understanding of post-conflict transformations. Due to limited empirical studies on post-conflict transformations, we know very little how the changes that have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents affects the post-conflict ecosystem in general. These indicators are

critical for evaluating whether and the extent to which stability has returned to oil communities, including whether the state of security is by any means a consequence of the DDR interventions. Given the resurgence of militancy in 2016, questions remain whether the amnesty program has successfully weakened the capacity of armed groups or not. Also, the severity of poverty in Niger Delta communities and government effort to build the capacity of ex-insurgents through a range of programs has created the need to explore what changes have occurred that are traceable to the DDR Program and what issues have received less attention.

Six, a prominent argument in the literature had been whether the cessation of hostilities has brought peace to the Niger Delta and, if so, what is the nature of peace currently prevailing in the oil communities? Aghedo (2012) argues that amnesty has been successful in winning the war in the Niger Delta by ending hostilities but unsuccessful in winning the peace. This argument suggests that the nature of the conflict is not static but continually changing (Idemudia 2009), making the prospects of peace somewhat complicated. Underlying this complexity is the lack of a conceptual framework that mirrors the perspectives of the perpetrators and victims concerning the nature of peace. This study will fill this gap by mapping a variety of perspectives.

Seven, there are concerns that the amnesty program has failed to address the full range of challenges associated with post-conflict peacebuilding and development in the Niger Delta, which has reinforced a feeling of exclusion among ex-insurgents. However, there has been a genuine commitment by the federal government to the peace process, which led to the inclusion of more amnesty beneficiaries in 2009 and 2012 (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016, 39). Oyewo (2016) examined the challenges of reintegrating Niger Delta insurgents and identified, among other problems, the exclusion of key stakeholders in the amnesty program due to the adoption of a bottom-up approach that ignores broad stakeholder consultations while concentrating power on

the warlords who command the insurgent groups. While there is ample evidence concerning the role that exclusion plays in conflict formation at the macrostructure of society, we know relatively little about the exclusionary dynamics of the peace process and how this creates the condition for the regeneration of conflict. This gap in the literature is worth addressing.

Finally, my position in this dissertation is that the fundamental forces shaping the Niger Delta conflict are multi-faceted, so are the likely drivers of future conflicts. Beyond the interplay of “need, creed and greed” forces, there are underlying macrosocial and microsocial forces that coalesce to shape the nature, magnitude and direction of the conflict, such as corruption, elite conspiracy, bureaucratic challenges, and human behaviour induced by the growing awareness that anyone with a grievance can mobilize violence as a lucrative means of earning a living. These macrosocial and microsocial forces require transformation.

However, despite the plethora of literature dealing with the amnesty program, no study to date has explored the Niger Delta peace process from a conflict transformation framework, which limits the scope of knowledge concerning the typologies of peace and the structures that need to be transformed to put the region on the pathway to sustainable peace. This study, therefore, makes the first attempt to explore the Niger Delta peace process from a conflict transformation framework which has enabled the discovery of various change processes and typologies of peace that mirrors the fears and hopes of the research participants as well as reveal the transformational impact of the peacebuilding program and its endogenous and exogenous challenges.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the theoretical debates and conceptual foundations of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process. In the first section, I reviewed the literature dealing with the

underlying drivers of insurgency from a variety of perspectives, including historical, political, social, economic, and ecological. In the second section, I reviewed the literature on the Niger Delta peace process and identified the challenges emerging from the implementation of DDR interventions. In the third section, I evaluated the literature to identify gaps in the research and establish the contribution of the study. I presented the conflict transformation approach as a framework for organizing my research ideas as well as analyzing my findings. This framework provided useful insights for understanding whether the DDR program represents a vehicle for sustainable peace or not. In the next chapter, I present the methodological approach of this dissertation.

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Research on the amnesty program has been primarily qualitative. So far, the only mixed methods study that draws on rigorous qualitative and quantitative analysis to inform a new understanding of the amnesty program had been that of Okonofua (2011), which analyzed the experiences of ex-insurgents in three high conflict states. Okonofua's study is significant because it helps to identify the commonalities and differences in the literature dealing specifically with the amnesty program. This study utilizes a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in two phases. This "strategy involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data in the first phase, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase" (Devellis 1991; Creswell 2007, 72).

As a sequential design, the study began with quantitative data collection through a survey which provided a broad overview of participants' perceptions of the peacebuilding program in Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa states. The result of the quantitative phase provided valuable insight into the impact of DDR interventions, including conflict motivations and demographic information of the research participants. Halcomb and Hickman (2015, 7) note that "a sequential design involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data separately, with the findings from one type of data collection (example interviews) providing a basis for the collection of the second set of data (example survey)." However, greater weight was given to the qualitative data while the quantitative data was used to complement the qualitative findings (Bryman, 2006). In other words, the quantitative data is used augmentatively to support the qualitative results.

Philosophical Worldview

The philosophical worldview that underpins this research is pragmatic constructivism. Pragmatism is a doctrine that evaluates truth claims and beliefs solely by the success of their practical application on human interests. Pragmatism as a philosophical worldview is an epistemological undertaking premised on the claim that an idea is right if it works in the real world and has practical consequences. As Creswell (2009, 10) notes, “pragmatism arises out of actions, situations and consequences.” Pragmatism is thus an ism through which we evaluate truth claims against their practical utility.

Pragmatism took off from the philosophical works of Peirce, James, and Dewey (see Cherryholmes 1992) as an alternative to the historical debates between rationalism and empiricism and attempts to reconcile the abstractness and particularism of each worldview. Peirce (1997) proposed pragmatism as a set of methodological techniques for scientific investigation, which aims to explore solutions to problems. Pragmatism’s foundational assumption is that an idea is meaningful only when it has practical utility (Peirce 1931; Hartshorne, Weiss, and Burks 1931). Peirce (1878) introduced the pragmatic notion that the intelligibility of ideas is determined by what would be expected in the way of experience if specific ideas were followed through with practical action. However, his postulations were under intense scrutiny because they contradict the prevailing idealism of American philosophers of that era.

Pragmatism began to stir up intellectual controversy among philosophers after William James had reviewed Peirce’s idea following his lecture on *Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results* at Columbia University and the Lowell Institute during the winter of 1906-1907. James (1907) introduced pragmatism as a method of reconciling empiricism with idealism. James’ pragmatism revolved around the twin principles of “value” and “morality.” Thus, the reason for

philosophy was to understand what had value to humans and why. James argued that ideas are valid when they have experiential and practical consequences. In other words, ideas are valuable to humans only when they work. For James, truth, meaning, and reality, and the value they have when implemented are the central tenets of pragmatism. Thus, he dedicated substantial effort to exploring the practical implications of these philosophies to understand whether they can help us to make sense of the world and resolve problems. He argued, however, that the pragmatic method was not new as great thinkers such as Aristotle, Socrates, John Locke, had all used pragmatism in different ways (James 1907).

Pragmatism gained a new philosophical life through the writings of Dewey (1903) who saw pragmatism as a method of harnessing human intelligence to address moral and social problems. Dewey combined elements of Peirce's and James's pragmatisms with a version of historical consciousness drawn from the philosophical ideas of G.W.F. Hegel, to construct his version of pragmatism known as *instrumentalism*. This version of pragmatism thus aims at identifying what is pragmatically significant and consequential in a problematic situation (Dewey 1910). Dewey's pragmatism thus emphasizes a synthesis of thoughtful reflection with creative action. While the pragmatic worldview is not committed to one way of knowing but looks to what works best to achieve the desired result, it is evident from these philosophical assumptions that pragmatists are committed to both objective or subjective views of ontology but maintain a subjective epistemology that emphasizes the interconnection between knowledge and action. To pragmatists, knowledge is truthful to the extent that it is successful in guiding action and prediction (Van de Ven 2007, 40). According to James (as cited in Van de Ven 2007, 56), "a theory is accurate if it can generate new facts so long as it is profitable for our lives." An essential characteristic of pragmatism, therefore, is the interconnection of theory and praxis.

In general, pragmatists recognize that there are many ways of interpreting the world, that no single perspective can give the entire picture of the world (Sanders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). As a philosophy of inquiry, pragmatism requires researchers to draw without prejudice ideas from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Ultimately, the research question(s) will determine whether quantitative or qualitative methods are best suited for understanding the research problem (Morgan 2007). Pragmatist researchers thus mediate the contention between post-positivism and constructivism by using both qualitative and quantitative data so long as they meet their needs and purposes and provide superior insight into a research problem (Creswell 2009).

Although constructivist scholars differ on epistemological grounds, Adler (1997, 322) notes that they share the binding philosophy that the relationship between the material world and human actions is dictated by the frames through which we acquire and interpret knowledge. Building on Adler's philosophy, Hoffmann (2005) posits that the inter-subjective world of shared experience is where significant actions take place. Because inter-subjective knowledge constitutes the identities, interests and actions of conflict actors, the framing of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process will determine how actors conceive of the problem and what solutions are appropriate and legitimate for addressing it. The concern for pragmatic constructivist scholars is not much about the action itself as it is the intersubjective context in which actors engage in the peace process. Constructivists pay attention to the ways in which actors socialize into patterns of rhetoric that generate specific claims to knowledge (Hass 2004), and how knowledge shape human action (Hoffmann 2005). Thus, as Barnett (2005) notes, the constructivist research agenda is firmly committed to understanding the political world based on the meaning actors give to their actions.

Parsons (2010, 81) contends that when viewed meta-theoretically constructivism unfolds with different epistemological foundations reflecting "complex and contested relationships to

other approaches.” Parsons acknowledges that despite the commitment by constructivists to interpret the meanings behind human actions, there is a verisimilitude among pragmatist constructivists that transcend interpretations. Pragmatist constructivists combine interpretivist and rationalist approaches in their effort to understand the social world. The search for methodological hybridity allows for an understanding of the connection between practices and change.

In this research, I followed a pragmatist constructivist philosophical worldview which enabled me to seek meaning from the participants’ experiences by studying the actions undertaken by the Nigerian state to promote peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and the impact these actions have produced in the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents as well as the post-conflict society in general. This philosophical premise is fundamental to the conceptualization of post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta against the various DDR interventions and to explore how the participants define change as well as their perceived solutions to the conflict.

Rationale for Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

The first rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative data is what Bryan (2006) refers to as *complementing*—that is, the use of one approach to complement the other. In this study, I accomplished the mixing of qualitative and quantitative data by using the quantitative result to develop a set of qualitative questions and then identified research participants for interviews with the aim to explore these results in more depth. My purpose was to use the quantitative results complementarily to “elaborate, enhance, illustrate and clarify” the findings from the qualitative study and why these results occurred (Greene, Caracelli and Graham 1989, 259; Bryman 2006). When qualitative and quantitative methods are used in combination, they “complement each other

and allow for more” insightful and comprehensive analysis (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham 1989; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

Second, my rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative data follows what Carvalho and White (1996) refer to as *explaining*—the use of qualitative data to understand unanticipated results from the quantitative data. So far, there is limited quantitative research on the Niger Delta peace process. Therefore, mixed methods design most likely supports the development of appropriate themes that help to measure the effectiveness of DDR interventions and using the qualitative results to explain the quantitative data. These themes will then provide an informed explanation of the nature of peace in the oil region.

Thirdly, mixed method research was most suited for addressing the research problem because it allows the researcher to explain the statistical results by talking to ordinary people and tapping their experiences. Creswell and Clark (2011, 267) believe that using different approaches has the advantage of “providing a broader understanding of the research phenomena than one strategy alone.” Because mixed methods research generally involves collecting, analyzing, and mixing numerical and qualitative data in one study (Creswell 2003), the process ensures that the evidence is mixed, and knowledge is increased, in a more meaningful and insightful manner that could not be achieved with one method alone (Creswell and Clark 2007). Therefore, a mixed methods design helped to mediate the methodological weaknesses in the literature, which shows some bias for qualitative research.

Study Location

The Niger Delta region has a population of 31 million people comprising of 40 ethnic groups who inhabit the nine states of the South-South geopolitical zone as well as the oil-producing

areas (NDDC 2005; National Population Commission 2006). These nine states include Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers (see Figure 2). This study focusses on Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers states. Akwa Ibom state was established on September 23, 1987, out of the old Cross River state after a prolonged agitation for state creation by the Ibibio people that occupied the mainland part of old Cross River. Rivers state came into existence in 1967 as one of the 12 states created by the military regime led by General Yakubu Gowon and has 23 local government areas. Bayelsa state was established on October 1, 1996, out of Rivers state and has eight local government areas.



Figure 2. Map of Nigeria Showing the Exact Locations of Niger Delta States. Source: Stratfor (2012).

I derived my selection criteria from the work of Idemudia (2014, 156) as presented in Table 1. The table indicates that Akwa Ibom is a major oil-producing state comprising of 31 local governments composed of a heterogeneous ethnic population of 2,930 million people and a landmass of 8,412 square kilometres. The ethnic composition of Akwa Ibom comprises of groups who identify as Ibibio, Oron, Eket, and Ibeno and speak similar languages with dialectical

differences, depending on their location in the coastal areas or the hinterlands. Akwa Ibom also contributes 20 percent of Nigeria’s oil production in predominantly offshore locations monopolized by ExxonMobil. Compared to Bayelsa and Rivers, the level of violence in Akwa Ibom was relatively low due to the limited activities of notorious insurgent groups (see Table 1).

Table 1. Criteria for Selecting Study Location

State	Ethnicity	Population	Size of State (km ²)	Level of Violence	Percentage of Oil Production	Oil Production Location	Dominant Oil MNC	Major Youth/Ethnic Movement
Akwa Ibom	Heterogenous	2.930	8412	Low	20%	Offshore	ExxonMobil	Afigh Iwaad Ekid
Bayelsa	Homogenous	2.6195	21,110	High	24%	Offshore/ Onshore	Shell	Egbesu Boys, Ijaw Youth Council, MEND
Rivers	Heterogenous	2.6195	26,899	High	24%	Offshore /Onshore	Shell	MOSOP/MEND

Source: Uwafiokun Idemudia 2014, 156. Used with permission from the author.

Similarly, Rivers is a primary oil-producing state comprising of 23 local governments composed of a heterogeneous ethnic population of 2,6195 million people and a landmass of 26,899 square kilometres. The multiethnic composition of Rivers exemplifies the co-existence of many ethnic nationalities, such as Ikwere, Abua, Opobo, Eleme, Okrika, Etche, Ogba, Ogoni, Engenni, Egbema, Obolo and Kalabari etcetera. Rivers contribute 24 percent of Nigeria’s oil production in offshore and onshore locations monopolized by Shell. It is designated as a high conflict state due to the presence of notorious armed groups such as MEND (see Table 1).

Compared to Rivers and Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa represents a primary oil-producing state comprising of 8 local governments with a population of 2,6195 million people and a landmass of 21,110 square kilometres (see Table 1). The ethnic composition of Bayelsa is homogenous with a predominantly Ijaw population. Bayelsa contributes 24 percent of oil production in offshore and onshore locations monopolized by Shell. Also, Bayelsa is a high conflict state due to the presence of notorious insurgent groups, such as MEND and Egbesu Boys (see Table 1).

Within the three study locations, I visited several oil-communities to observe the post-conflict environment. These visits enabled me to familiarize myself with several amnesty projects and took an inventory of failed and successful projects. In Akwa Ibom state, data collection took place in Ibeno and Ikot Ekpene communities. Ibeno is the leading oil community in Akwa Ibom and lies in the Mangrove Forest Belt of the Niger, occupying the largest Atlantic coastline in the state. It is also the operational base of ExxonMobil in Akwa Ibom. Ikot Ekpene is home to hundreds of youths from the Niger Delta currently undertaking degree programs at Ritman University through the Presidential Amnesty Scholarship.

Data collection in Rivers took place in Isiokpo community in Ikwere, Nkpor village in Kalabari, Port-Harcourt city and its surrounding coastal communities where many ex-insurgents are currently residing. Data collection in Bayelsa concentrated in Yenagoa, and in Peremabiri community in southern Ijaw where there is a considerable presence of ex-insurgents due to the community's vulnerability to environmental pollution, which frequently regenerates violence. I selected these communities due to their geographic proximity, the number of participants living, working or schooling in these communities, their willingness to share information about the program voluntarily, and my accessibility to key informants. In both Bayelsa and Rivers, I identified ex-insurgents who have benefited from the amnesty program through training and post-training empowerment, and those who were dissatisfied with its implementation and outcome.

Sample

There are 30,000 registered participants in the Presidential Amnesty Program comprising of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents from the nine states of the Niger Delta (see Table 2). I drew 100% of the survey participants from this sampling frame. Of the 30,000 registered participants,

456 (1.5%) is from Akwa Ibom, 11,280 (38%) from Bayelsa, and 7,073 (23%) is from Rivers. Together, these three states make up 18,768 (62.5%) of the total number of registered delegates in the Presidential Amnesty Program (See Table 2).

Table 2. Sampling Frame	
STATE	TOTAL
Abia	237
Akwa Ibom	456
Bayelsa	11,280
Cross River	432
Delta	6,435
Edo	1,149
Imo	823
Ondo	2,156
Rivers	7,032
TOTAL	30,000

Source: Office of the Special Adviser to the President on the Presidential Amnesty Program

The target population for this study included ex-insurgents and non-insurgents from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers. For the quantitative portion of the study, I administered a total of 396 questionnaires to two categories of respondents (ex-insurgents and non-insurgents) representing 2% of the total population of delegates registered in the amnesty database from Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Bayelsa. Responses were received from all the 396 participants, resulting in an 84.8% response rate by ex-insurgents and 15.2% by non-insurgents (see Table 3). The non-insurgents represent individuals from the oil communities who had witnessed the insurgency but did not take part in it. They were, however, integrated into the amnesty program to enhance their social mobility through education. Also, 85% of the key-informants interviewed were purposefully-selected from this sampling frame. The remaining 15% are secondary participants such as amnesty consultants, community leaders and oil workers purposefully-selected based on their experiences living or

working in the oil communities and the depth of knowledge they possess regarding the insurgency or the amnesty program (See Table 4).

Table 3. Response Rate for Questionnaire

Category	No. of Responses	Response Rate
Ex-militants	336	84.8
Non-militants	60	15.2
Total	396	100

Also, 83.8% of the respondents were predominantly men, while women represented 16.2% (see Figure 3). The age of respondents ranged from 18 years to 75 years. Breaking down the age of respondents into various categories revealed that 81(20.5%) of the respondents were 18-24 years of age, 164(41.4%) were 25-34 years of age, 127(32.0%) were 35-44 years of age, 20(5.1%) were 45-54 years of age, and 4(1.0%) were 55-74 years of age. It is evident from the age data that the population comprises three groups, such as youth, adults, and elders. The youth (18-34 years of age) add up to 61.9% of the population, while 37.1% represent adults. The rest (1%) are elders (see Table 5). Very importantly, the majority (53.3%) of the respondents were from Rivers, 42.7% from Bayelsa and 4.0% were from Akwa Ibom. Concerning ethnic affiliation, the respondents were predominantly Ijaw, representing nearly two-quarter (49.0%) of the respondents, followed by Ikwere (25.8%). The rest identified as Ibeno (4.0%), Okrika (10.1%), Kalabari (8.6%), and Ogoni (2.5%) ethnic nations (see Table 6 and Table 7).

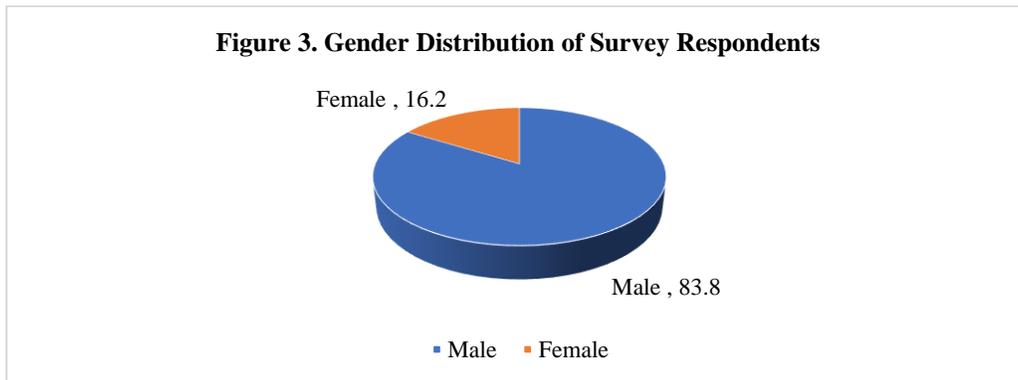


Table 4. Categories of Informants

Categories of Informants	No of Informants Per Category	Percentage
Primary Informants		
Ex-militants (Male/Female)	30	66.7
Consultants (Male and Female)	3	6.7
Amnesty Students (Male/Female)	6	13.3
Secondary Informants		
Youth Leaders (Male)	1	2.2
Community Leaders (Male/Female)	2	4.4
Government Officials (Male)	1	2.2
Oil workers (Male)	2	4.4
Total	45	100.0

Table 5. Age of Survey Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	81	20.5
25-34	164	41.4
35-44	127	32.0
45-54	20	5.1
55-74	4	1.0
Total	396	100.0

Table 6. Location of Survey Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Akwa Ibom	16	4.0	2.49
Bayelsa	169	42.7	
Rivers	211	53.3	
Total	396	100	

Table 7. Respondents' Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percentage
Ibeno	16	4.0
Ijaw	194	49.0
Ikwere	102	25.8
Okirika	40	10.1
Kalabari	34	8.6
Ogoni	10	2.5
Total	396	100.0

Sampling Strategy

This study used two types of sampling strategies. I used the snowballing sampling technique for the quantitative phase of data collection. Initially, I recruited participants from a

database of the Presidential Amnesty Office that includes amnesty delegates who participated in, or benefitted from, a variety of vocational, technical, entrepreneurial, educational training and empowerment programs. Following the recruitment of these participants, which mostly occurred over the phone, I travelled to their respective locations to administer the questionnaires. After that, I solicited referrals to other ex-insurgents or asked for help in identifying them. I leveraged these referrals to recruit many ex-insurgents who responded to the questionnaire.

I recruited another set of participants during the Amnesty Refresher Training Courses on Entrepreneurship leveraging my contact in the Presidential Amnesty Office. With the assistance of the Amnesty Office, I attended the Refresher Training Courses as a non-participant observer. This opportunity enabled me to interact with the ex-insurgents, identify, screen and recruit participants for the survey. I also recruited the non-insurgents as survey participants through snowballing, leveraging my contacts in Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Bayelsa and the Presidential Amnesty Office. Conducting the quantitative study first was a rewarding experience because, as Creswell (2007, 74) points out, it helped “to identify and purposefully select participants for a follow-up, in-depth qualitative study.”

In the qualitative phase of the study data collection was based on a purposeful sampling technique that relies on the researcher’s judgement when selecting the units (e.g. people, data, and events) to be studied. Patton (1990) notes that purposive sampling seeks “information-rich cases” and explores these cases in great depth. Patton identified “16 types” of purposive sampling techniques (169-183), but for this study, I adopted maximum variation sampling which Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as the most viable technique for the qualitative method. The maximum variation sampling technique uses common patterns emerging from significant variation in the sample to capture the main experiences of a program and its shared impacts. This technique enables

the researcher to sample the opinion of different kinds of people to ensure that the research reflects the public's perspective. The aim of maximum variation sampling is "to capture and describe the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a program" (Patton 1990, 12).

Using maximum variation sampling, I identified and recruited informants for in-depth interviewing, leveraging my initial contacts. These informants were purposefully sampled, taking into consideration their in-depth knowledge of the conflict and peacebuilding program. The idea of purposeful sampling is to select informants who are "information rich" and will best answer the research questions (Patton 1990, 169). Thus, respondents were pre-screened to ensure they are "information rich" and meet the requirements of the study. After that, I selected a sample of participants whom I contacted by telephone to schedule interviews. I conducted a total of 45 interviews (Baker and Edwards, 2012) comprising 30 ex-insurgents and 15 non-insurgents. In addition to these primary interviews, I obtained other sources of primary data from media interviews with "information rich" stakeholders from the Niger Delta published in online newspapers and online platforms such as YouTube channels.

Because data collection in the qualitative phase was carried out using a purposive sampling strategy, I used my discretion as the researcher to select the study units. I selected the respondents based on the following criteria: 1) their participation in the insurgency; 2) how they experienced the effects of the insurgency in their various communities; 3) their participation in the peacebuilding program as ex-insurgents or non-insurgents or knowledge of its impact; and 4) the attainment of 18 years to ensure they participate in the study was based on informed consent. The collection, transcription, and analysis of data occurred between December 2017 and April 2018. The use of purposive sampling gave me an opportunity to identify the same participants surveyed

for an interview, thereby enriching the quality of data. My ability to sample the same population the survey and interview ensured that the responses were valid and reliable.

Research Variables

I selected my research variables based on the objectives set out in this study. I identified these variables through a review of the literature. The independent variables were derived from conditions related to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process and took into consideration resources invested in the peace process. I derived the dependent variables from the outcome of the DDR interventions, such as changes in the conflict trends, security stabilization, and development outcomes. The operationalization of the research variables took into consideration several measures.

First, I operationalized the disarmament variable by taking into consideration a variety of indicators concerning whether the disarming of ex-militants has reduced kidnapping and bombing of oil facilities, eliminated the means of violence (e.g. source of arms and ammunition), strengthened communication between conflict parties, decreased the level of fear among civilians, and increased the level of trust among actors. The dependent variable took into consideration the reduction in criminal activities, reduction in small arms, the degree of confidence-building between actors, the decrease in personal and community security, and the degree of trust-building.

Second, I operationalized the demobilization variable by taking into consideration indicators such as whether the transformational training has increased the consciousness of nonviolence among ex-insurgents, or transformed them into law-abiding citizens, and the impact of the transitional support to ex-insurgents. The dependent variable took into consideration behaviour changes among the ex-insurgents, such as improvements in the security situation due to

their unwillingness to resume violence, increase in peace advocacy, and the nature of peace currently prevailing in Niger Delta communities.

Third, I operationalized the reintegration variable by measuring whether and how reintegration programs such as education, skill training, and entrepreneurship have reduced the risk of violence in Niger Delta communities, whether men and women were given equal opportunities in peacebuilding interventions, and whether there was discriminatory treatment against some category of ex-insurgents. The dependent variables measured the decrease in conflict risks, gender disparity, the acceptance of ex-insurgents by members of the community, and their level of social capital development.

Phase I: Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative phase of the study utilizes survey research to select a sample of respondents from the study population and administered a standardized questionnaire which provided a statistical description of the respondents' opinion concerning the impact of the peacebuilding program. According to Creswell (2003, 153), quantitative research involves data collection in a way that information can be quantified to support or refute "alternate knowledge claims." For Creswell, the survey research strategy provides a quantitative description of the opinion of the population being studied by researching a sample of that population (2009, 12). I used the cross-sectional survey design using a questionnaire for data collection and using descriptive statistics to make summations about the population. The aim of using cross-sectional surveys was to collect data that will help me to understand the research phenomenon in a defined population at a point in time (see McMillan, 2000). Unlike longitudinal survey design that involves

data collection over time, the cross-sectional design is economical to implement because it requires the rapid turnaround in data collection.

Data Collection Technique

The primary techniques used in collecting quantitative data was self-administered, and the group administered questionnaires containing different formats of close-ended questions requiring respondents to select from a list of options measured on a 4, 5, 6 and 7-point Likert scale, and dichotomous questions that ask for a “YES” or “NO” answer. I developed the Likert scale according to the procedure developed by DeVellis (1991), which requires the researcher to determine what variables to measure quantitatively, generate a pool of questions, establish the appropriate scale of measurement for the items, and conduct an expert review of the pool of items.

Quantitative research also requires the researcher to consider including validated items from other instruments, administer the survey instrument to a sample population for validation, evaluate the items for reliability, and optimize the scale lengths based on reliability checks (DeVellis, 1991; see also Creswell and Clark 2007, 124). I consulted with the work of Okonofua (2011) for validated items, which enabled me to design my questionnaire. I sent some self-administered questionnaires to participants with a high level of literacy, such as consultants, students, and oil workers who returned the surveys in sealed envelopes. I administered other questionnaires face-to-face. I also conducted the group-administered questionnaires face-to-face targeting ex-insurgents who were participants at the Refresher Training Courses on Entrepreneurship or those I recruited in the communities. The survey consists of sixty questions organized into seven sections corresponding to the causes of conflict, the DDR program, and some demographic details.

Section A includes open-ended and closed-ended questions designed to elicit information about the characteristics of the conflict, the conflict actors and their motivations to pick up arms as well as surrender their weapons to make peace. Section B measured changes in the level of safety in Niger Delta communities following disarmament. Section C measured the effectiveness of disarmament with regards to changes in the level of communication and trust among actors as well as the transparency of DDR interventions. Section D measured the effectiveness of demobilization programs such as nonviolence transformational training, and the impact of transitional support in breaking the organizational structure of armed groups. Section E measured the impact of the reintegration program in assimilating ex-insurgents into the social life of their communities. Section F measured the challenges emerging from the design and implementation of DDR interventions, focussing specifically on social justice issues. The last section includes the demographic profile of the research participants, such as gender, ethnicity, age and residency.

Before administering a survey, I made sure the participants understood that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they may choose to withdraw at any time. I clarified the procedure for filling the questionnaires and assured them of the anonymity of their identity, including how I intend to use their data. Also, participants were given an informed consent form and asked to check off the consent option indicating their willingness to participate in the survey voluntarily. I employed the services of experienced field assistants to facilitate the dissemination and collection of questionnaires from respondents.

Analytic Strategy

The first step after conducting the survey was to manually transfer the responses from the questionnaire into an excel spreadsheet by putting each question number as a column heading and

using one row for each respondent's answers. Each possible answer was assigned a code. For example, the first question in section A asks a closed-ended question that required respondents to answer Yes or No. I coded the "Yes" responses as 1 and the "No" responses as 2. The quantitative analysis was performed using SPSS. Because SPSS allows the entering of numerical data, my variables had to be labelled, and the data coded using these value labels. For example, I used value labels such as *1=male* and *2=female* (where 1 and 2 represent nominal measures). After entering the data from all the questionnaires into a spreadsheet, I had to screen the data for accuracy.

After migrating the data from Microsoft Excel into SPSS, I performed simple descriptive statistics that provided summaries about the sample, displayed in tables and charts. I used simple descriptive statistics to understand whether the collection of arms from ex-insurgents have had any impact on the safety of oil communities and whether the transformational training given to ex-militants as part of their demobilization have changed their attitudes towards conflict. I used same measures to understand whether the vocational training and education acquired by ex-militants have improved their attitudes towards conflict and whether the transitional support payments to ex-militants have increased the probability of conflict or created the condition for peace. These statistical measures helped me to understand the gender and ethnic distribution of the respondents and what the respondents thought about the DDR interventions. I presented the information in tables and graphs.

Phase 11: Qualitative Data Collection

In the qualitative phase of this research, I employed multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) as the strategy of inquiry. Harris and Johnson (2000) define ethnography as the representation of a people's customs, behaviour and beliefs based on field research. Ethnography

is also the description of a cultural group (Fetterman1989), or according to Maanen (1996) the observation of a cultural group by a researcher who has lived within the cultural environment under investigation. For Tuckman (1999), ethnography is the observation of behaviour under study in the context in which it occurs as well as interviews with research participants rather than the manipulation of variables by external instruments. As a qualitative research method, ethnography relies heavily on data from a researcher's personal experience, observations, interviews and historical analysis. The ethnographic strategy helped to deepen my insights into the research phenomenon through personal interactions with research subjects (Murchison 2010, 4).

Hammersley (1990) notes that the ethnographic methodology involves the study of human behaviour daily and the collection of qualitative data from a variety of sources including informal conversations and observations that help the researcher to construct their narrative. Such a narrative build on charts, diagrams and other artifacts that enable the researcher to create stories about the research phenomenon (Hammersley 1990). Ethnographic research methods are, therefore, a means of tapping the reservoir of knowledge, experiences and perspectives of locals at the household and community levels (Moll and Greenberg 1990).

For example, Li (2015) had conducted a multi-sided ethnography across mining communities in Peru, which enabled her to draw valuable comparisons of various mining conflicts. Li documented diverse experiences of environmental conflicts at the Yanacocha gold mine and the proposed Conga mine. An important discovery from this study was the identification of mountains as sacred beings, which further galvanized political opposition to mining operations that interfere with the environment. Equally important was the contradiction between economic development and environmental degradation in the town of La Oroya, where actors perceive the pollution from

a smelter as an acceptable trade-off with the employment opportunities it provides for locals including the role played by environmental actors in shaping these interactions (Li 2015).

Li's ethnographic work further documented the "equivalences" that arose from the interactions between transnational mining corporations regarding their rationalization of environmental management and how these top-down propositions were in tension with local communities whose arguments were grounded in claims about the environmental effects of mining (2015, 24). As Genzuk (2003) notes, ethnography improves the research process by tapping the perspectives of powerful local actors to generate new analytic ideas on human difference and similarities. Thus, ethnographic methods are critical in shaping new variables that give rise to further empirical testing in the field (Genzuk, 2003). Data analysis involves interpreting the meaning that people give to their experiences, with quantitative analysis playing a marginal role (Hammersley 1990).

Data Collection Technique

The principal technique employed in the collection of qualitative data was in-depth interviews and observations, complemented by field notes and secondary sources derived from amnesty publications, along with media interviews from YouTube Channels. In carrying out this study, I travelled to Nigeria for three months in the research field, where I conducted 45 semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants representing ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. I interviewed two categories of participants. The first category represents the primary informants who are directly involved in the amnesty program and includes the peacebuilders and target beneficiaries, such as ex-militants, amnesty students, and amnesty consultants. The second category includes secondary informants who do not play a direct role in the amnesty program but

are significant actors in the oil communities (see Table 4 for the number and percentage of informants interviewed in each category). The interview technique was useful for this study because of the opportunity of working directly with participants in collecting qualitative data. Unlike the surveys, I had a chance to probe or ask follow-up questions where I needed to get more in-depth on the topic. Having a personal conversation with key informants enabled me to frame and reframe my questions.

The qualitative research questions were designed to elicit responses on what participants think about the peacebuilding program with regards to post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta. While conducting the interviews, I used purposive sampling to seek out voiceless ex-insurgents who may have in-depth knowledge of the situation but are usually not consulted by researchers, due to their low status in society (Autesserre 2010, 33). I also elicited information from non-militants who have in-depth knowledge of the peacebuilding program but are usually not included in decision-making. Acknowledging these information-rich, yet voiceless informants enabled me to validate the reliability of the data, to be sure that the respondents were speaking from experience.

One advantage of using the interview technique was that the key informants were a part of the measurement instrument rather than mere survey respondents. Some questions did not appear on the interview schedule that nonetheless became necessary to ask based on the interview responses and the need to probe into these questions and gain a deeper understanding of what the participants were thinking. I conducted the key-informant interviews with the aid of an interview schedule and followed up with probes without causing any discomfort to interviewees. Using open-ended questions enabled me to pursue a more in-depth understanding by following up with

explanations for each subject matter. This process gave the participants a chance to contribute data uncontaminated by my personal biases and interpretations of the peacebuilding program.

Participants for the interviews were recruited based on informed consent, and I conducted the interviews at the preferred locations of participants. Some interviews were conducted via Skype and over the phone. Before conducting each interview, I educated the participants and ensured that they understood what the study is about and its benefits. I emphasized that I would be recording the conversation but assured them of the confidentiality of their data and the anonymity of their identity in the dissemination of my research findings. Also, I made sure the participants understood that they are participating in the interview voluntarily and should they decide to withdraw at any time, there would be no consequences to them up until November 2018, when I expect to be submitting my dissertation. After that, participants were given an informed consent form and asked to check off the consent option indicating their voluntary participation in the interview. Throughout the interview process I created rapport with the informants, provided them with scope to voice their opinions without interrupting them, and was respectful, non-judgmental and non-threatening (Merriam 1998; Johnson and Turner 2003; Fraenkel and Wallen 2003; Flick 2006). I obtained recorded consent for interviews conducted via Skype and over the telephone.

My time in the research field was also devoted to observing the situation in the oil communities and the attitudes of ex-insurgents concerning the peace process. The two types of observations proposed by Fraenkel and Wallen (2003, 452) includes “narrow focus and broad focus observations.” Narrow focus observation requires the researcher to concentrate on a single element while the broad focus requires the researcher to concentrate on the big picture of events in the research environment. My field observations took into consideration several factors proposed by Merriam (1998) which includes my research goal, study objectives, the research

questions, my field of study, my impressions as a researcher, and the topic under study. These considerations had guided me through the selection of the various sites I visited to observe some “empowerment” programs undertaken by the government to reintegrate the ex-insurgents.

I used data from field observations and through interactions with participants to understand how different categories of participants perceive the peace process. By attending Refresher Training Courses with the ex-militants as a non-participant observer, I observed and documented the sources of future conflicts. I made several visits to research sites I have visited to validate my findings. Several times I held informal conversations with the ex-insurgents and non-insurgents from Niger Delta states outside my sample frame as well consultants who possess useful insights on the peacebuilding process and used the information they provided to validate my findings.

Other sources of data included reports published by the Presidential Amnesty Office and media interviews with government officials, ex-insurgents, and public intellectuals conducted by journalists and published in reputable newspapers and YouTube channels. I made regular visits to the amnesty headquarters in Abuja to benefit from information concerning the peacebuilding program that may be difficult to access without such connections.

A potential risk that arose from this study was the quality of information I was privy to when interviewing key informants who spoke on conditions of anonymity. Due to the risk involved in releasing sensitive information about the peacebuilding program, I had to protect the identities of informants. In all the interviews I conducted, I used pseudonyms to represent the names of informants to protect their identities. However, my presence in some communities generated mistrust among some participants who were initially unwilling to share information concerning their involvement in the insurgency and peace process. Some participants chose to be interviewed in isolated locations that posed a risk to my security as a researcher. In one instance, an ex-

insurgent who identified as an Ijaw youth leader requested that I interview him, along with other ex-insurgents, in a specific location later discovered to be a drug joint. Given the difficulty of researching unfamiliar terrains, I had to depend on referrals to recruit a field assistant within the community who spoke the language and understood the cultural dynamics. Such individuals became a part of my research team, helping to penetrate informants by making my mission known to them and soliciting their cooperation in responding to the questionnaire.

Finally, I made a painstaking effort to build trust with the participants to get them to reflect on their experiences concerning the peacebuilding program. In cases involving small communities where my presence was noticeable, I had to disclose my mission to the community leader. Such contacts were especially helpful in Ibeno community in Akwa Ibom, where I did not know whom to contact. Somehow, I leveraged my connections in Uyo to identify a young man who understood the terrain and was willing to help me penetrate the community leader of Ibeno from where I got the contacts of some youth leaders who were instrumental to this study. It was through this laborious process that I was able to explore the relationship between ExxonMobil and the Ibeno community and how Ibeno people position themselves with regards to the Niger Delta struggle and peace process.

Analytical Strategy

Qualitative data analysis involves transforming experiences, observations, and conversations into text by reviewing field notes, journals, interview transcripts and summaries to look for relevant words, phrases, events and actions that occur frequently (Lincoln and Guba 1985). I analyzed the qualitative data using an inductive approach developed by Thomas (2006). Thomas described his model as “a systematic procedure that “uses raw qualitative data to derive

themes and concepts or develop a model through interpretations made from the data by the researcher, “enabling research findings to emerge from the frequent and significant themes inherent in raw data” (2006, 238).

I analyzed my field notes, secondary data and in-depth interview data using the visual model of qualitative data analysis introduced by Creswell (2002). I coded the textual data using Atlas.ti qualitative software, followed by a thorough review of the interview transcripts, field notes and secondary interviews. I then uploaded the documents to a document folder in Atlas.ti labelled as Amnesty Program Doctoral Project, with a brief description of each material. In the second stage, I segmented the documents according to shared characteristics such as primary and secondary stakeholders, corresponding to the various categories of ex-militants and non-militants. Grouping the materials according to stakeholder categories enabled me to query Atlas.ti concerning what each group of respondents are saying in each research question.

In the third stage, my analysis began by coding segments of the documents systematically to identify themes and concepts emerging from my raw data using “open coding” (Straus and Corbin 1990, 1998; Larossa 2005). I read the interview transcripts line-by-line, making notations concerning the central themes that capture each participant’s opinion while reflecting on ideas and theories from the literature that offer similar meaning and a more elaborate explanation of concepts and events. A total of 140 categories emerged from the interviews, what Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012, 20) describe as “1st-order categories.” This process enabled me to identify the conceptual categories into which my observations were grouped and subsequently create descriptive categories (by grouping similar phrases, words, and events) which formed the initial framework for analysis and modifying these categories as the analysis proceeds (Hoepfl 1997).

Because the sheer number of categories that emerged from the interviews was initially overwhelming, it was difficult to make sense of the data. I applied “axial coding” to reduce the number of categories to 43, considered a more manageable number (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Thinking at the level of the informants required me to apply “a second-order analysis” that took me to the theoretical realm, helping me to find relationships emerging from the interviews, and whether the emerging themes suggest concepts that might help me describe the research phenomena (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012, 20). I applied “selective coding” to identify core concepts that connect to the categories that have been identified through open and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998). A total of 8 core concepts emerged that became fundamental in constructing a narrative about the peacebuilding process, post-conflict transformations, and the nature of peace.

In the fourth stage, I queried Atlas.ti to make graphical representations of the codes in a tree-like display that showed the structure, hierarchy and interaction of the variables. Atlas.ti enabled me to collapse the 43 codes into 8 themes with the most analytic power representing my qualitative findings. The analysis of these themes was based on my interpretation of the raw and secondary textual data to generate meanings that represent the participants’ experiences. My role as a researcher was to interpret the meaning behind the textual data and compile a report based on the lessons learned (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The data provided a rich context for analyzing the impacts of DDR interventions and the theoretical implications of the peacebuilding program.

Ethical Considerations

I conducted this research in compliance with the conditions of the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) at the University of Manitoba. While the topic of this study is sensitive, the

conduct of the research did not provoke any physical or emotional discomfort on the participants. Any information obtained regarding this study is treated confidentially and available only to the researcher. Throughout the data collection process, I transformed hand-written notes into Microsoft Word documents and saved them in a password-protected personal computer. The interviews were audio-recorded using digital recorders, which transfers interactive notes to a laptop by USB cable. The use of digital recording devices eliminated the intrusiveness of electronic devices (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I maintained confidentiality by using a pseudonym instead of the respondents' names when transcribing interviews. I stored consent forms, hand-written notes, and audiotapes in locked cabinets. Respondents were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym should they disagree with my choice of pseudonym.

During the data collection process, I clarified ethical concerns related to confidentiality, including sharing the research information with a third party and how I will utilize the data. Before the commencement of each interview, I gave the participant a copy of the Informed Consent letter to carefully read and decide voluntarily, whether to accept or decline their participation in the study. I scripted the consent letter in plain language and devoid of ambiguity or deception as to the actual intent of the research. Before administering the questionnaire to a participant, I included a consent form for the participant to read. Where it was evident that a participant has low proficiency in the English language, an interpreter was available to interpret the questions. Participants were instructed to give their informed consent by checking off the consent option expressing their willingness to participate in the survey. Where a participant declined to sign a written consent, a recorded oral consent was used but excluding personal information such as the name, or identifiable signatures. Throughout this study, I did not award any monetary compensation to participants. I, however, provided refreshment in the form of non-alcoholic beverages and snack

in appreciation. Since this study did not involve any form of deception, and whereas I had disclosed all elements of the study to the participants, a debriefing was not necessary. However, I promise to communicate the result of this study with relevant stakeholders to ensure accountability and internal validity.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Mixed methods research involves collecting numerical and textual data using multiple data collection procedures such as close-ended questionnaires, interviews, observations, journals, diaries etcetera, and then analyze and interpret the data. Zohrabi (2013, 254) notes that quite often, data triangulation requires the researcher to obtain information using multiple procedures that ensure the “dependability and trustworthiness of the data and their interpretation.” Conventional practice emphasizes the need for researchers to consider the validity and reliability of their data before and after data collection. Validity is a measure of the believability and truthfulness of our research and whether it is measuring what it purports to measure (Zohrabi 2013). According to Burns (1999, 160), validity is an “essential criterion for measuring the quality and acceptability of research.” Since qualitative research sees “reality as holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing” (Merriam 1998, 202), validity is built into the different research phases through the data analysis and interpretation process (Zohrabi 2013, 258). What defines the credibility of data is its quality, that is, its richness and the analytical capacity of the investigator (Patton 1990). Because the conclusions drawn by researchers are “based on the information obtained using these instruments,” the data and quality of research instruments must be subject to validation (Fraenkel and Wallen 2003, 158).

The various information sources I accessed using qualitative and quantitative instruments

and data collection strategies defined the credibility of this research. I derived content validity from an expert review of the research instruments. Before administering the survey and interview to the sample population, I forwarded the questionnaire and interview questions to the dissertation committee for expert review with the aim to clarify unclear and obscure items. This process led to several revisions of the questions to ensure credibility. Secondly, I established internal validity through data triangulation and member checks. I triangulated the data by gathering numerical and textual data from various sources and using different data gathering techniques which enabled me to corroborate the findings. Collecting information from a variety of sources and with a variety of techniques can confirm the findings (Zohrabi 2013). The data is valid if the researcher can obtain similar information from a variety of sources.

Thirdly, I performed internal validity through member checks, which involved taking the results back to some participants with email access for confirmation and validation of the content of the information they shared during the interview. This procedure helps to further support the plausibility, truthfulness, and trustworthiness of the data. Finally, internal validity was implemented through researcher bias (Zohrabi 2013). While it is true that I have my own biases and values which are influenced by how I see the world, I have tried to maintain impartiality in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting my data. I was explicit, critical, and non-judgmental at different stages of the research while ensuring the research is conducted accurately following ethical rules and principles, and the findings reported with honesty. I was equally concerned with the external validity of this study. If this study has credibility, the results should be transferable across the remaining six states in the Niger Delta. As Burns (1999, 160) notes, the “generalizability of a study to other subjects depends on the similarities between the context of our inquiry and other contexts.” In some cases, the ability to generalize the results to a broader

population beyond the population under investigation also depends on the research design (Nunan 1999, 17). Because I designed this research in a way that can be implemented in any Niger Delta state involved in the amnesty program, the findings are capable of being generalized. In other words, the same research instruments and questions will generate similar findings when applied to similar contexts within the Niger Delta.

In establishing the reliability of this research, several factors were taken into consideration, including the consistency, dependability, and replicability of the findings. External reliability raised concerns about the replicability of the research. For example, could the study be reproduced by an independent researcher and obtain similar results to the original research? (Burns 1999, 20-21). Some researchers believe that increasing external validity takes involves a clarification of the status of the researcher regarding their social position with regards to the informants, the choice of informants and their full description, and the conditions in which the researcher conducted the study. Other factors include the units of analysis that the researcher chooses to focus on, and the methods used to collect and analyze data (LeCompte and Goetz 1982; Nunan, 1999). Similarly, internal validity deals primarily with the researcher's consistency throughout the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. An independent researcher can achieve internal validity when the data analysis produces the same findings as the original researcher (Zohrabi 2013, 260).

For several reasons, I believe this research has achieved both internal and external validity. First, I had no personal affiliation with the amnesty program and my relationship with the informants was non-coercive but based on mutual respect while the information shared was treated anonymously and with the utmost confidentiality. My experience shows that engaging the respondent at a personal level can easily clear doubts about confidentiality issues and the willingness to provide the needed data. Assuring them of their anonymity can encourage them to

share information more comfortable (Gillham 2000; Brown 2001). Having the opportunity to give the participants an assurance concerning the confidentiality of their information was valuable.

Second, I established trustworthiness by providing a full description of the various categories of informants and their selection criterion. Third, many questionnaires were administered face-to-face to ensure that the respondents answer all the questions at the same time and to clarify confusing questions or define concepts so that respondents were not confused (Okonofua 2011, 143). According to Szolnoki and Hoffmann (2013, 58), the advantage of face-to-face surveys is that they are “structured, flexible and adaptable,” which enables the researcher to control the questionnaire within the survey environment.

Implementing a face-to-face survey also reduces non-response bias, which is a critical factor in establishing the validity and reliability of research findings (Klandemans and Smith 2002). This method was efficient because I was present to explain unclear and ambiguous questions. However, for a few participants, such as the consultants and students, the survey was self-administered and returned in sealed envelopes provided by the researcher. Four, both the terminologies used in this study and the units of analysis have been fully defined and substantiated.

While this research involves the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, the uniformity of the research process implies that another researcher can replicate this study in a similar setting within the Niger Delta. Also, the merging of qualitative and quantitative data is an essential way of establishing validity and reliability by ensuring that the research derives its credibility from the combination of different data sources as opposed to total dependence on one source of data. I, therefore, believe that this research has established its reliability and that the results are capable of being replicated.

Positionality and Role of the Researcher

I approached this research as an ethnic minority from the Niger Delta region who understands the structural tensions in the oil communities and the powerlessness of minority groups who frequently turn to violence to protect their fundamental rights or draw political attention to the underdevelopment of the oil region. Throughout this study, I grappled with questions concerning my positionality as an ethnic minority studying other ethnic minorities within the Niger Delta context. Of concern is whether being an indigene of the Niger Delta who is coming from Canada to interview former insurgents in the oil communities puts me in a position of power that determines how I situate myself in the research in relation to the research participants and whether I am considered an outsider or an insider in the research process. As Merriam et al. (2001) note, the relationship of insider and outsider in terms of positionality allows for an exploration of the dynamics of conducting research within or across one's cultural origin. It is possible, therefore, that my ethnicity, class, and power has introduced some elements of subjectivity in how I think about the Niger Delta conflict and peacebuilding program, my judgments concerning the nature of peace, and my relationship to the participants. My status as an ethnic minority also suggests that my thoughts, beliefs, desires and perceptual images of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process remain subjective facts that are representational of my conscious experiences living and working in the Niger Delta. Therefore, my subjectivity derives from the qualitative character of my conscious experiences.

Throughout the research process, I was conscious of the fact that my socioeconomic status and class put me in a position of power. I was also conscious of the fact that my background, intellectual biases, worldview, values and experiences shape how I see the world, the perspective I hold about the peace process, my impression of the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents, and how

I approached this study. While I consider myself an outsider (because I am not involved with insurgency) and believe that we need a radically different approach to fighting injustice, I am more interested in how the participants see the world and how they construct their experiences concerning the insurgency and the peacebuilding program. So, while presenting myself to the research participants, I had to create an atmosphere of respect and trust, explaining my mission to participants and maintaining a cordial relationship with them, such that enabled them to share information with ease. My role had been that of a researcher seeking to construct meaning from the research data and thereby to establish the intersubjectivity of the research by ensuring that my report reflects the data and that my analysis does not embellish events as more significant than is represented in the data.

While I approached this study subjectively, my philosophical inclination to pragmatic constructivism allows me to draw liberally from statistical and ethnographic techniques in seeking in-depth understanding of participants' perception of how the various processes of peacebuilding have produced results in their personal lives as well as their immediate communities, rather than limit myself to one way of knowing. Thus, my relationship to key informants was mutually beneficial because it provided them with an opportunity to contribute to the research findings.

One advantage of this study is that my relationship with the participants provided them with an opportunity to engage in a critical reflection of the research phenomenon. These reflections facilitated knowledge and the validation of this knowledge through repeated interaction. While this study involves collecting numerical and textual data in two phases, the qualitative research gave me ample opportunity to connect with the research subjects at a deeper level, what I could not achieve with the questionnaire. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note that in qualitative studies, the researcher's role is eminently crucial because the researcher is an instrument of data collection

while data is collected through this human instrument, rather than through questionnaires. The qualitative researcher needs to connect with the subjects by describing those aspects of self, assumptions, biases, experiences and expectations that qualify the researcher to undertake the study (Greenbank 2003). It is possible that my background as an ethnic minority and my previous experience working in the oil industry has potential to impose biases that may influence how I view the peace process and ultimately my interpretation of the research findings and the conclusions I am likely to draw from my analysis. This realization was crucial because even though I was not involved in the peacebuilding program in any capacity but acting as an independent researcher, my interaction with the participants and connection to their lived experiences put me in a difficult situation in maintaining a position of neutrality. To ensure I was subjective in my approach to the research, I had to get down to the level of the participants by rephrasing my language and sentences, often using pidgin English to facilitate mutual understanding.

Finally, my presence in the local communities put me in a vulnerable position due to the impression formed in the minds of the ex-insurgents that I might have been sent by the government to interview them. Although I repeatedly introduced myself to the participants as a researcher, some ex-insurgents continued to perceive me as an advocate who will relate their suffering and concerns to the government. Because the participants think of me a government agent they could vent their frustrations on, many were free to express their discontents. While this relationship remains crucial in generating quality data, the false impression created in the minds of the ex-insurgents who perceive the researcher as their “saviour” and “channel of communication,” puts the researcher in a position of power. I feel that as a researcher working on the Niger Delta peacebuilding program, I need to be reflexive of the way my participants think of me and how their impressions affect the quality of data.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology, strategies and techniques used to collect and analyze the qualitative and quantitative data for this study. The collection of qualitative and quantitative data was carried out in two distinct phases. To gain insight into the Niger Delta peace process, I conducted 396 surveys in the first phase, followed by 45 key-informant interviews in the second phase, utilizing an ethnographic method. I conducted in-depth interviews with two categories of participants. The first category comprised of knowledgeable informants representing 30 ex-insurgents from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers who have benefitted from the peace program, and those who claimed they did not benefit from the program. The second category comprised of 15 non-insurgents representing amnesty students, youth leaders, women leaders, amnesty consultants whose opinions have been valuable in enriching my understanding of the research phenomena. These participants were chosen based on their participation in the conflict, their experiences in the various phases of the peacebuilding program, and their involvement in program implementation.

In this study, I also reviewed secondary interviews conducted by journalists with individuals from the region who played prominent roles in the design and implementation of the DDR interventions. I obtained the transcripts from secondary interviews from local online newspapers and TV programs published on YouTube channels and coded along with the primary interviews to generate themes. These interviews, along with field notes from non-participant observations, provided a detailed account of participants' experiences and perceptions of the peacebuilding program. I analyzed the statistical data using SPSS while the interview data were analyzed using Atlas.ti qualitative software. The analysis helped me to generate several themes and arrive at various conclusions regarding the process and outcome of the peacebuilding program

and DDR interventions. While I have altered as much information as possible in the interview transcripts to protect the confidentiality of the participants, I have not changed their words and stories. Thus, the various perspectives shared by the participants remain the main findings of this research. The next will introduce some results of the study that helps to understand post-conflict transformations in the oil region.

Chapter Five

PEACEBUILDING AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Introduction

While reviewing official publications of the Presidential Amnesty Program, I stumbled into the profiles of 177 Niger Delta youths deployed to aviation academies in the United Kingdom, Greece, Germany, Jordan, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates for pilot and aviation maintenance engineering training. The profile of Douyi Obirizi caught my attention because it attests to the transformative impact of the peacebuilding program.

Growing up in the village Obirizi developed a strong admiration for helicopters but was often caught up in the scientific mystery surrounding these flying objects as they hover over his neighbourhood every morning, afternoon and evening. Born in a resource-rich, yet a socially dysfunctional rural community where, ironically, quality education is a luxury many youths of his socioeconomic status couldn't afford, the dream of a flying career could only be imagined but almost impossible to realize.

The cloud of hopelessness that pervaded his experience in the village suddenly disappeared when his name appeared in the list of candidates shortlisted for aviation training in Athens, Greece. Initially, the opportunity seemed like a dream. That dream became a reality as he got into the rudiments of professional flying in a highly competitive industry. Rising from the confines of village life where the trappings of systemic poverty, unemployment, and suffering are interwoven in his everyday life, to training as a commercial pilot, one gets a sense of what it means to experience liberation from the burden of hopelessness, which is a significant way of evaluating the transformative impact of the amnesty program.

The nature of experience illustrates the capacity of the peacebuilding program to facilitate career opportunities for previously disadvantaged youths from the Niger Delta, enabling them to integrate into the global economy as a means of addressing the critical challenges that were the principal motivation for conflict, while also helping them to become better citizens and invested in their communities. This chapter evaluates post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta to understand which changes originate from the impact of DDR interventions.

A growing body of scholarship has established unequivocally that the granting of amnesty to insurgents and their subsequent disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has been successful in “winning the war” in the Niger Delta by ending hostilities but unsuccessful in “winning the peace” (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Aghedo 2012; Wapmuk 2012). The relative stability in the oil region is an indication that post-conflict peacebuilding interventions have produced a positive impact on the ex-insurgents. In many ways, the implementation of DDR interventions has contributed to the restructuring of the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents alike. Not only have many community youths been liberated from the suffering in the oil region where they languished in illiteracy, hopelessness and deprivation, but they have also taken up new identities and completely different personalities as peacemakers and participants in nation-building. Despite these successes, the literature on the Niger Delta peace process to date fall short of empirical studies that capture the changes that have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents and their communities and how these transformations contribute to the nature of peace in the oil region.

This chapter attempts to put these changes into context and explain why they are crucial for understanding conflict transformation in the Niger Delta. This chapter argues that the suspension of armed hostilities does not define the state of peace in the Niger Delta but how post-conflict interventions culminate in measurable changes at the cultural, interpersonal, structural and

intrapersonal levels. This argument is consistent with the conflict transformation literature, particularly the work of Augsbuger (1992) who posits that conflict transformation occurs when there are considerable changes in the structural, personal, cultural and relational elements of a conflict system. These transformations involve changing attitudes and behaviours and transforming the conflict itself by defining, discovering and removing incompatibilities between conflict parties.

To understand how the Niger Delta region emerged from the challenge of violent conflict this chapter focusses on the second objective of this study; to explore the state of peace in Niger Delta by identifying significant relationships between DDR interventions and changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors as well as changes in conflict trend. In achieving this objective, the participants were asked to reflect on their perception of the peacebuilding program with regards to the effectiveness of DDR interventions and the state of peace in the Niger Delta. Based on the result of the survey and a review of the literature dealing with the outcomes of the peacebuilding program, along with field observation, I saw an obvious need to explore this issue by interviews with ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. The responses reflect their individual experiences concerning the outcomes of DDR interventions. A common theme running through these narratives was that of *transformation*. This theme reflects the importance attached to changes that occurred in the lives of amnesty participants, in the broader Niger Delta ecosystem, and within the institutional structure of peacebuilding. In the context of this research, I discovered four types of transformations that capture the emergent patterns revealed through the analysis of the qualitative findings and complemented by the statistical results. The theoretical evidence derived from these themes is consistent with the conflict transformation paradigm and thus establishes the empirical scope of this study and its contribution to peace and conflict studies.

Intrapersonal Transformation

The first conception of change revealed in the data is that of *intrapersonal transformation*—which refers to changes in the attitude of ex-insurgents to violent behaviour due to their awareness of how the conflict affected their lives and their surrounding environments. Change at the intrapersonal realm is generated internally, through self-awareness. Transformation occurs in an individual's belief system and perspective to life, particularly those beliefs which appear to reinforce violent behaviours by threatening an individual's sense of security. In this study, intrapersonal transformation refers to the change that occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents produced through the educational and psychological processes of demobilization designed to transform their beliefs and attitudes, and thereby to reprogram their minds against violent behaviour.

Building Peace Through Nonviolence Transformation

During the demobilization phase of the DDR program, the peacebuilders implemented nonviolence transformational training as a confidence-building measure. The aim was to facilitate the intrapersonal transformation of ex-insurgents as a precondition for security stabilization. Through my interaction with the ex-insurgents, I observed the impact of demobilization interventions in raising the consciousness of nonviolence among them and what changes have occurred in their lives because of the social and psychological mechanisms of peacebuilding.

My experience in the research field gave credence to the influence of Martin Luther King Jnr's nonviolence philosophy of social change (The Kingian Principle) on ex-insurgents who have undergone the transformational training program as part of demobilization interventions. The Kingian philosophy promotes nonviolence by inspiring aggrieved parties to direct their aggression

to the issues of injustice and not the individual and institutional perpetrators. Writing in the wake of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, King inspired the victims of injustice to avoid the use of physical violence as a liberational strategy and instead endeavour to liberate the human spirit from internal violence by embracing their adversaries with love, while seeking to win their understanding rather than defeat them. I met a group of ex-insurgents who cited the Kingian First Principle: “nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people,” and the Fourth Principle: “accept suffering without retaliation,” repeatedly to demonstrate their level of consciousness and disposition to nonviolence. The Kingian nonviolence philosophy has inspired many ex-insurgents to resist violence and the temptation to engage in the illegal refining of crude oil or oil bunkering, which promises huge financial returns.

The Kingian philosophy has served as a powerful tool for transformational change, which has enabled the peacebuilders to successfully reprogram the minds of many ex-insurgents, making them averse to violence. While in the field, I met ex-insurgents who have transformed into peace ambassadors in their communities. Many of them have retained their transformational training manuals which they reference regularly to demonstrate their level of consciousness concerning nonviolence. Kuku (2015) the Kingian strategy has been fundamental in transforming the ex-insurgents into change agents as exemplified by the level of attitudinal change and their unwillingness to participate in violence. For example, Wami, an ex-insurgent from Rivers stated:

Amnesty has helped a lot. Since the federal government brought amnesty, most of us became law abiding. Those of us who went through the struggle and later surrendered our arms have difficulty going back to violence. Sometimes somebody can slap you and you refuse to retaliate.

Wami's opinion gives credence to the impact of DDR interventions in transforming the ex-insurgents into peaceful, responsible and law-abiding citizens. Those ex-insurgents who

previously were ignorant of the law are now conscious of the consequences of engaging in illegal activities. As one ex-insurgent, Princewill, stated:

There is a lot of change. For example, there is no more pipeline vandalism, no more kidnapping and armed robbery. The amnesty program has helped some youths to change their mindsets. Many of us have repented entirely, changing the way we think and removing our minds from bad behaviour. Those of us who went to the Obubra camp learned many things that have helped us to live as peaceful citizens, to save our lives and save other people's lives. Therefore, the amnesty program has changed things for good and has brought peace to some communities in the Niger Delta.

Princewill's perspective is a testament to the extent that demobilization activities have been successful in reprogramming the minds of ex-insurgents, which has enabled their transformation into peaceful and law-abiding citizens who now detest criminality and violence. In this regard, Princewill perceives the peacebuilding program as a force for change. He believes he has experienced an attitudinal change which grew from his experience participating in the nonviolence transformation training designed to extricate ex-insurgents from violent behaviour while instilling in them a culture of peace inspired by the nonviolence philosophical orientation. Princewill particularly described his experience participating in the nonviolence transformation training as positive because it inspired a culture of nonviolence among the ex-insurgents, enabling them to think and act as peace ambassadors in their respective communities. It is evident from Princewill's experience that demobilization training had been instrumental to his transformation into a peacemaker.

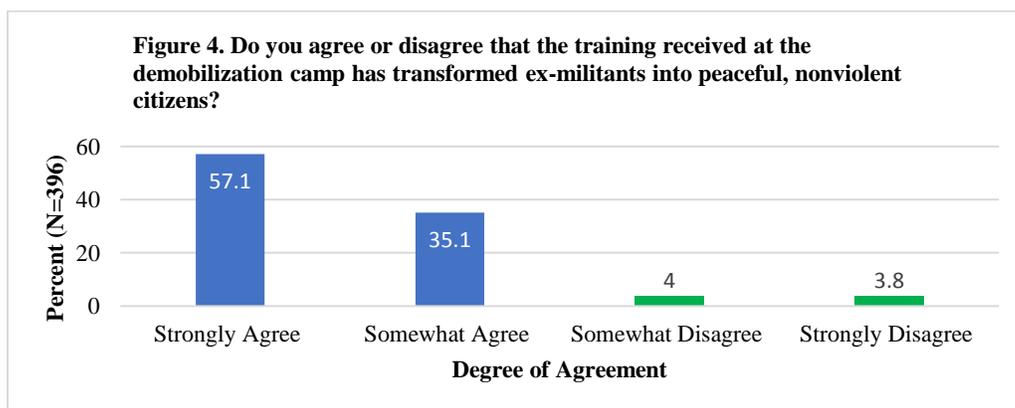
Another unique perspective was shared by Jack, an ex-militant from Rivers, who told me:

I like the program because it has changed many people.....When we were in the creek, we usually struggle with the government. But now the government is making a name. They took us to Obubra to give us some training that has helped us to remove ourselves from violence and all kinds of troubles, with all the benefits they promised us at the training camp.

It is evident from my field research that the Nigerian government has, through the DDR program, inspired hope in those ex-insurgents who saw the peace process as an opportunity to transform

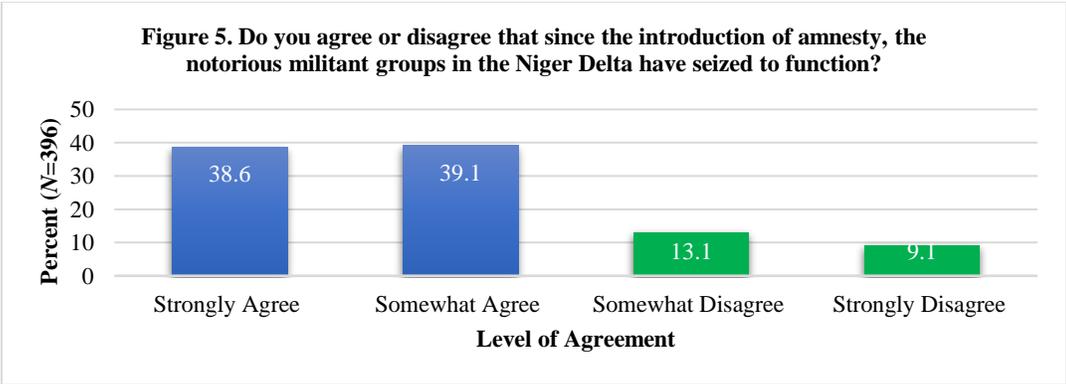
their lives. The decision to surrender their arms and accept amnesty gave them a chance to participate in demobilization activities through remedial education and psychological rehabilitation. I discovered through my interview with Jack that he has an unwavering passion for pipefitting which would help him to lead a life of independence but did not have the opportunity to enrol in the training program on pipefitting. Ordinarily, such an individual who claims to have suffered marginalization will hold a negative attitude to the peacebuilding program. Despite his seeming discontent, he nonetheless maintained a positive disposition to the program and its transformational impact.

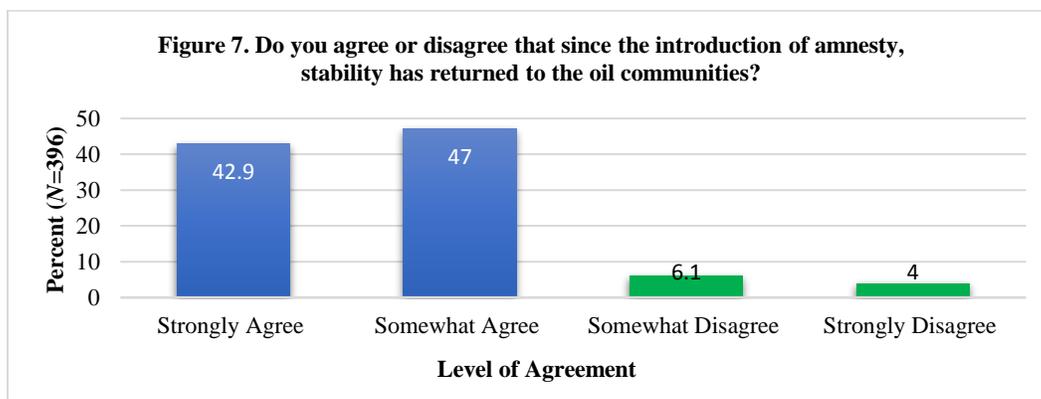
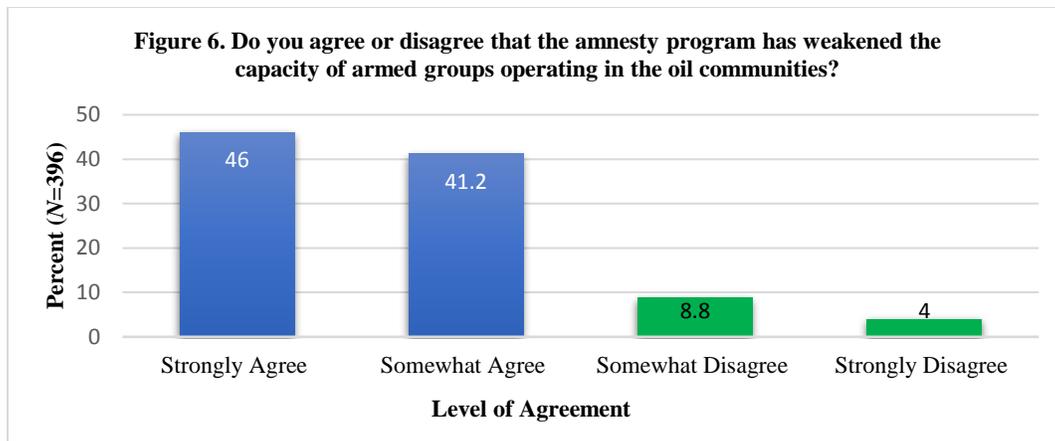
I conducted a simple statistical analysis to complement the qualitative evidence concerning the impact of demobilization training on the intrapersonal transformation of ex-insurgents. The respondents were asked to indicate, using a 4-point Likert scale (*1=strongly agree*, and *4=strongly disagree*) the effectiveness of the demobilization training in transforming ex-insurgents into nonviolent citizens as well as creating the condition for security stabilization in the oil region. More than half (57.1%) of the respondents strongly agree that transformational training has been successful in transforming the ex-insurgents into nonviolent citizens (see Figure 4).



Similarly, respondents were asked to identify the extent to which demobilization interventions might have weakened the capacity of insurgent groups, making it almost impossible

for former insurgents to resume violent and criminal activities including the likelihood of the region relapsing into an armed insurgency. The majority (77.7%) of the respondents either strongly agree or somewhat agree that the notorious insurgent groups in the Niger Delta have ceased to function since the introduction of the peace program. Also, 87.2% of the respondents indicated that they either strongly agree or somewhat agree that the demobilization interventions have successfully weakened the capacity of insurgent groups in the Niger Delta. What this means is that the population of those who believe that the demobilization interventions have been successful in breaking the organizational structure of notorious armed groups in the Niger Delta is more than those who think otherwise, which further bolsters the strength of the qualitative findings. Furthermore, 89.9% of the respondents either strongly agree or somewhat agree that peace has returned to Niger Delta communities because of the success of the demobilization interventions in reprogramming the minds of former insurgents against violent behaviour. These results indicate that in general, respondents attributed the relative stability in the Niger Delta to the transformational experiences of the ex-insurgents (see Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7).





The explanation of these results gives credence to the literature on demilitarization which shows that societies emerging from conflict are at severe risk of relapsing into war because ex-combatants often re-arm to disrupt the peace process (Alden 2002; Spear 2002; Gamba 2003). Williams and Walter (1997, 4) have demonstrated through their study on demilitarization in El Salvador that disarmed combatants often “re-arm” to disrupt the peace process by resuming hostilities against their adversaries. Demobilization thus involves the controlled discharge of ex-combatants from armed groups (Ozerdem 2002, 962; UNIDDRRC 2014). As Knight (2008, 28) notes, “demobilization is a process by which armed groups are disbanded from their military structure and transformed from ‘combatant’ to ‘civilian’ status, often through their registration and processing in temporary centers, including the provision of transitional support, shelter, medical services and remedial education.” For

Alden, Thakur, and Arnold (2011, 14), demobilization involves “breaking the command and control structures” under which rebel constituencies operate and making it difficult for ex-combatants to return to armed rebellion or the battlefield. Demobilization is, therefore, “the single most crucial factor in determining the success of peace operations, without which justice and development will be difficult to achieve in post-conflict societies” (United Nations 2004, 57).

The statistical findings also support the work of Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, 40) which shows that the demobilization phase of the DDR program was designed to transform the mindset of ex-militants by providing them with nonviolent alternatives as a precondition for preventing conflict escalation. As stated in the handover brief of the Presidential Amnesty Program, the demobilization program was designed to liberate former insurgents from “the burden of violence” (Kuku 2015, 47). By adopting the Kingian nonviolence approach as a model for transformational change, the peacebuilders have successfully inspired nonviolent behaviour in the insurgents. Through this approach, the peacebuilders inspired the ex-insurgents to direct their aggression to the issues of injustice rather than the government and oil corporations and to win their understanding through dialogue as opposed to violence. The evidence attests to the success of the peacebuilding program in forcing a ceasefire and engaging former insurgents in programs designed to facilitate their reintegration into civilian society (Okonofua 2016). What is least known is the effects of demobilization activities on the ex-insurgents. The data revealed intrapersonal transformation as a dominant theme which connects demobilization activities with the positive attitudes ex-insurgents. This theme has some implication for conflict transformation theory.

For example, in *The Little Book on Conflict Transformation*, Lederach (2003) show that conflict brings about changes in the structural, personal, cultural and relational dimensions of human experience. He refers to the personal dimension as changes effected in an individual or desired for them, which could be spiritual, perceptual, cognitive and emotional. At the personal

dimension, transformation is both descriptive and prescriptive. Transformation at the descriptive level implies that conflict affects the totality of the individual, including their self-esteem, physical well-being, emotional stability, spiritual integrity, and sense of perception. Likewise, transformation at the prescriptive level refers to interventions designed to reduce the destructive effect of conflict or increase its potential for the physical, emotional and spiritual growth of individuals (Lederach 2003). Lederach's conflict transformation approach helps us to make sense of the concept of intrapersonal transformation and how it contributes to peacebuilding. For example, I asked my participants about their perception of the peacebuilding program and its effects on their personal lives. The responses were thought-provoking and expressed optimism about the transformative impact of the program.

The concept of intrapersonal transformation derives its theoretical premise from the view that participation in armed insurgency brought about significant changes in the personal dimensions of the insurgents' experiences. In turn, these cognitive experiences determine how transformed insurgents perceived the impacts of DDR interventions. The underlying assumption is that peace is a function of the ability of the ex-insurgents to connect with the intrapersonal realm of their being—that is, those aspects of their cognitive experiences that generate internal awareness and, ultimately, transform their attitude to violent behaviour. As Princewill reported:

Before amnesty I was a killer and pipeline bomber. But since 2009 I surrendered everything because of the amnesty program. Because I am peaceful, the community has been peaceful.

It is evident from this statement that intrapersonal transformation lies in the awareness of his role in perpetrating criminal atrocities in the Niger Delta and the recognition that his decision to renounce violence and play a responsible role in society proceeds from the place of consciousness. The crucial lesson points to the fact that when actors in conflict make decisions to change behaviour, their actions can have a positive impact on community security.

For example, the study by Kyoon-Achan (2013, 79) on Indigenous processes of conflict resolution and peacemaking among the Tiv and Inuit communities find that “peace proceeds from a place inside the human soul.” This finding emerged from the worldview of an Indigenous elder in the Tiv community in Nigeria whose perception of peace develops from the place of the human soul. Kyoon-Achan captured this elder’s worldview vividly to mean that “peace is a product of the heart; thus, it is the knowledge a person has that frees them to achieve peace” (2013, 79). This wisdom gives theoretical justification to intrapersonal transformation as a discovery that traces the root of peace to the place of consciousness, that place inside the human soul where decisions about good and evil are programmed and reprogrammed.

My argument is that former insurgents whose minds have been reprogrammed to think at the level of self-transcendence will experience an expansion in their consciousness which then motivate them to aspire towards a higher level of development where nonviolent behaviour becomes a way of life. Under this condition, stability in the Niger Delta is, arguably, a natural consequence of intrapersonal transformation. It is not surprising that when asked whether the peacebuilding program has had any influence on the resurgence of violence, one ex-insurgent Wami, told me:

Whoever has joined the amnesty needs to be careful about involving themselves in violence. When you get into trouble and they realize you’re an amnesty delegate they will hold you responsible because they know you’ve learned about nonviolence.”

This statement indicates that Wami’s attitude has changed since accepting amnesty and participating in demobilization activities that made him aware of the consequences of participating in violence. The implication is that once an ex-insurgent gains cognitive experience that awakens their consciousness about nonviolence, it reinforces their desire to recycle their past life. The impact of intrapersonal transformation on ex-insurgents has, undoubtedly, generated a predisposition to nonviolent behaviour.

The concept of intrapersonal transformation then becomes the cognitive experience that either changes an individual's predisposition to violence or generate within them the desire to pursue a culture of nonviolence. From this theoretical standpoint, I define intrapersonal transformation as the redemptive experience produced by the recycling of hopelessness, frustration, and suffering in pursuit of peace, which is in line with conflict transformation thinking.

At the practical level, the experience of intrapersonal transformation has enabled some ex-insurgents to constitute themselves as change agents in their communities, where they leverage their experiences with violence to educate other community youths who might be planning to perpetrate criminality and violence. Intrapersonal transformation, therefore, arises from the peacebuilders' ability to customize effective demobilization interventions in changing how ex-insurgents see the world, how they construct their visions of peace and their role in transforming the world. The link to conflict transformation suggests that change can occur through deliberate interventions designed to lessen the destructive impact of conflict and enhance its potential for the wellbeing of individuals (Lederach 2003).

Interpersonal Transformation

One of the necessary steps that a post-conflict society can take to prevent the resurgence of armed insurgency is disarmament (Cerretti 2009). According to Alden, Thakur, and Arnold Often, disarmament measures help to create “a safe post-conflict environment by eliminating the means of violence and building confidence among conflict parties and the civilian population” (2011, 14). Confidence-building measures involve relationship-building and communication between the conflict parties and the civilian population.

The research participants were asked to reflect on their level of confidence in the peace process. The participants discussed their fears, beliefs, and hopes. The data revealed interpersonal

transformation as a conceptual category that connects with the theme of transformation and gives a theoretical explanation of the nature of change in the oil region. This refers to changes in the relationship patterns between the ex-insurgents and the state and oil multinationals as well as the civilian population in the oil region who had been adversely affected by conflict. The idea of interpersonal transformation also represents the interventions designed to strengthen communication and foster interaction and understanding between conflict parties, which is fundamental to trust-building and confidence-building. This includes efforts to articulate the fears, hopes and aspirations of the conflict parties as they engage in the processes of peacebuilding.

For example, in *Bridging Troubled Waters*, LeBaron (2002) introduces a holistic approach to conflict resolution that moves “beyond the analytic and the intellectual” domains to identify relationship building as the realm of conflict transformation. She suggests the pursuit of a creative approach to conflict resolution and shows how connection, meaning and identity spring from relationship building. LeBaron sees relationship building as “the medium in which conflict sprout and the soil that births and sustains resolution” (2002, 19). In other words, when people value their relationships, it becomes a resource through which change can happen.

Confidence Building

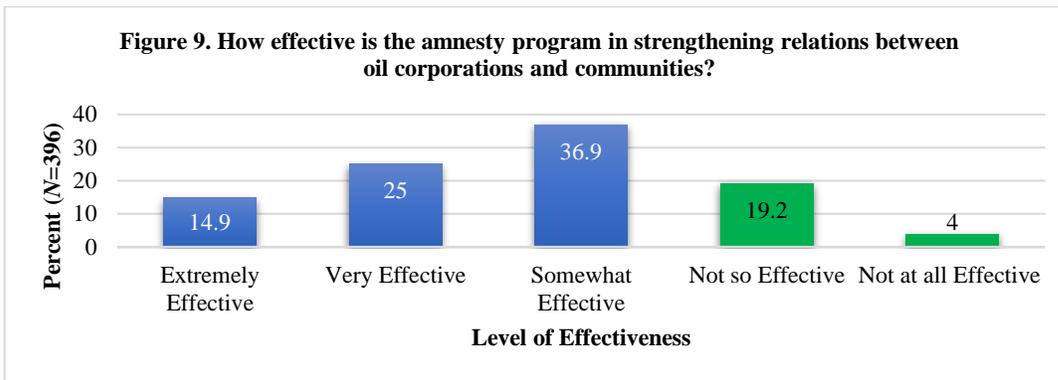
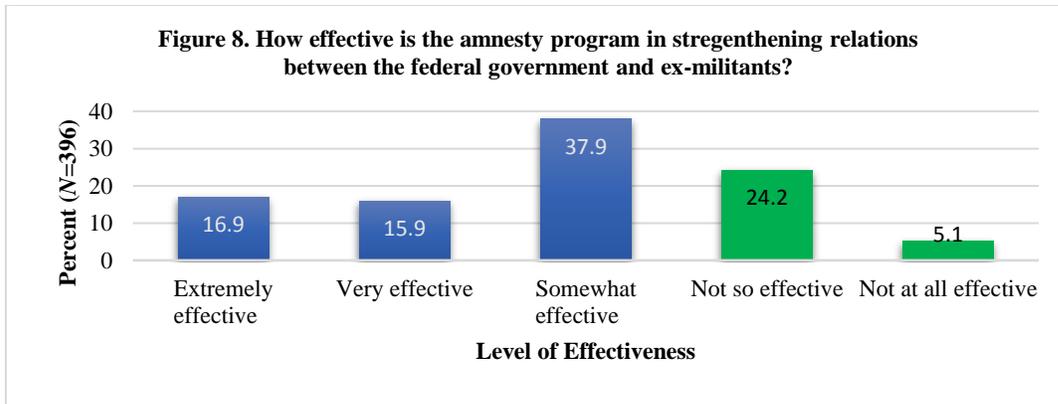
Confidence-building measures focus on the level of communication and relationship strengthening between conflict parties that reinforces their confidence in the peace process following disarmament. My first discovery in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers was the disconnect between the peacebuilders and the corporations, between the ex-insurgents and the corporations, and between communities and corporations. I discovered that the peace process had been successful in mending strained relationships between the insurgents and the state, which has

enabled the suspension of atrocities but unsuccessful in strengthening company-community relations. As one former insurgent Eze, told me:

The government has tried by bringing us out from the creeks. They have given a lot of people hope where there was no hope. However, amnesty has not opened any communication between our community and oil companies and does not encourage oil corporations to develop the communities as a way of building peace.

For many former insurgents, fighting in the creeks was an unpleasant experience even though the decision to participate in insurgency was to overcome poverty and hopelessness. Eze's experience illustrates the impact of the peacebuilding program in alleviating, to some extent, the hopelessness in the oil communities that produces criminality and violence. As this study has shown, the peace process has been instrumental in transforming the adversarial relationship between ex-insurgents and the state but less effective in transforming company-community relations which is the building block to sustainable peace because of the contribution of the oil industry to employment.

I made frantic effort to understand whether the statistical results support the qualitative finding by asking the participants to identify, using a 5-point Likert scale (1=*extremely effective* and 5=*not at all effective*) the degree of relationship-building between the state and ex-militants, and between corporations and communities. 37.9% of the respondents indicated that the peacebuilding program has been somewhat effective in strengthening relationships between ex-militants and the state, while 24.2% believe the program has not been so effective. Similarly, 36.9% of the respondents indicated that the program has been somewhat effective in strengthening company-community relations, while 24.2 % thought it has not been so effective (see Figure 8 and Figure 9).



Despite the success of the peacebuilding program in fighting insecurity, company-community relations remain an arena where peacebuilding interventions have had very little success in the oil communities especially in Akwa Ibom where insurgency does not involve as many hostilities compared to Rivers and Bayelsa considered the hotspots of violent activities. My interview with Akpan—a community youth activist from Akwa Ibom, gives credence to this finding. When asked about his perception of company-community relations, Akpan stated:

We have an unhealthy relationship with ExxonMobil. Whatever we are doing is for the security of our community, not ExxonMobil. ExxonMobil claims to be the federal government. They don't contribute to development, and there is no trust in them. ExxonMobil believes in divide and rule. They instigate conflict between brothers to pave the way for them to continue their operation.

Because insurgency in Ibeno mostly involves nonviolent protests and blockade of company premises to negotiate with ExxonMobil as opposed to armed rebellion, one would expect a cordial relationship between ExxonMobil and Ibeno Youth Council—the progressive youth wing of the

community. It is surprising, however, that company-community relations in this community are frequently strained by what some participants attribute to corporate irresponsibility.

There is also a tendency to deny the existence of violence in Ibeno by projecting a positive image of the community as a peace-loving community despite persistent environmental degradation arising from extractive activities including the lack of attention to the wellbeing of the youth most of whom cannot access job opportunities meant for indigenes. Oppression thrives in Ibeno community because the indigenes see ExxonMobil as their “glass house.” The reference to “glass house” is used metaphorically and imply that “those who live in a glass house do not throw stones.” By projecting Ibeno as a peaceful community, the people have resolved to avoid waging an armed insurgency against ExxonMobil but engage the corporation through passive resistance. Thus, the relative peace in Ibeno is due mainly to the community’s effort to provide its security independent of ExxonMobil, and the refusal of Ibeno youths to subscribe to the influence of notorious insurgent groups operating in other states within the Niger Delta.

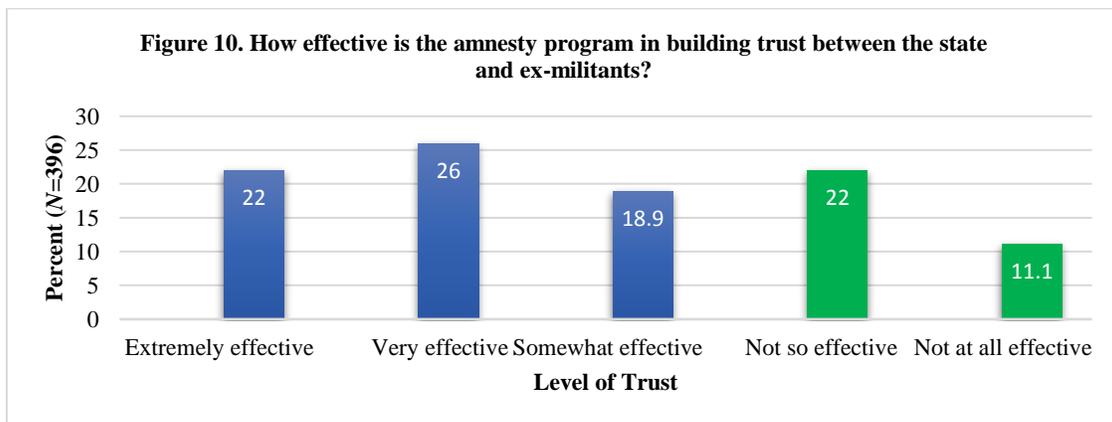
The interview results further revealed that relationship transformation between the State and former insurgents is instrumental to peace. In other words, when peacebuilding has an instrumental value, it can provide incentives for post-conflict stability. The transformative impact of the peacebuilding program is, in this context, evaluated against its capacity to facilitate relationship-building between the state and ex-insurgents. For example, one ex-insurgent, Wami told me:

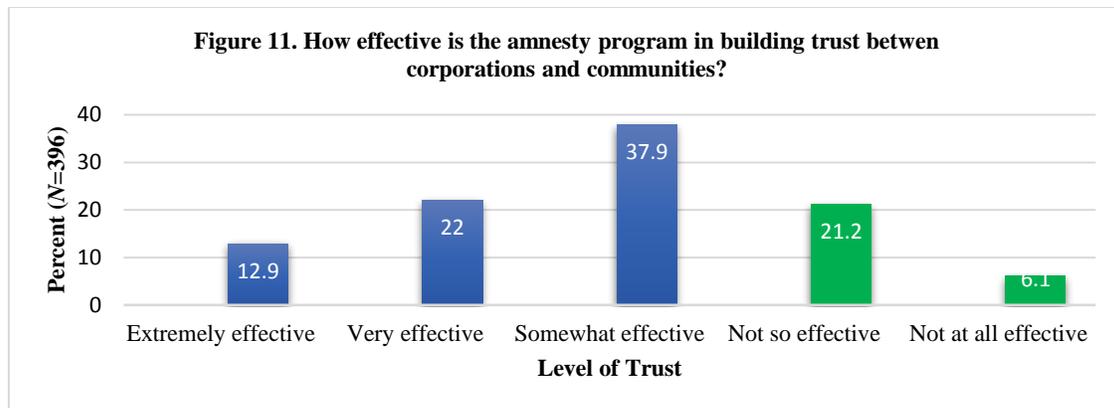
I gave my arms because the federal government promised to give us anything that will help us to improve our lives. They promised to help us enrol in anything we aspire to do, like going to school or learning skills of our choice.

Wami’s opinion suggests that the instrumentality of peacebuilding, that is, the incentives built into the peace process, has fostered a positive relationship between the state and ex-insurgents. This relationship has been sustained by the confidence they repose in the peacebuilders

to fulfil the promises made to them at the demobilization camp. While trust-building has created the enabling environment for relationship transformation between the state and ex-insurgents, the degree of trust determines the nature of this relationship.

Thus, the first indicator considered as a determinant of effective disarmament is the degree of trust between the conflict parties that enabled insurgents to accept the terms of the amnesty and subsequently surrender their arms and ammunition to the state. For example, the participants were asked to identify, using a 5-point Likert scale (1=*extremely effective* and 5=*not at all effective*) the degree of trust building between the state and ex-militants, and between oil corporations and communities. More than one-quarter of the respondents (26%) indicated that amnesty has been very effective in building trust between the state and ex-militants. Similarly, 37.9% of the respondents mostly reported that amnesty was somewhat effective in building trust between oil corporations and communities. The result shows that in general, amnesty has been an effective strategy for facilitating trust-building in the Niger Delta (see Figure 10 and Figure 11).





Furthermore, the concept of interpersonal transformation attests to the changes in the security situation in the Niger Delta. Both the statistical and interview data show significant improvements in the security situation. Some participants expressed optimism concerning developments in the security situation. According to Alex:

Security is very vital. We used to have miscreants in our community where people with gunboats are attacking us but now the situation is better. At least, you can travel by water without fear. Today, white men can go to our communities and inspect projects without the fear of being kidnapped. The security is better, which is a sign of progress.

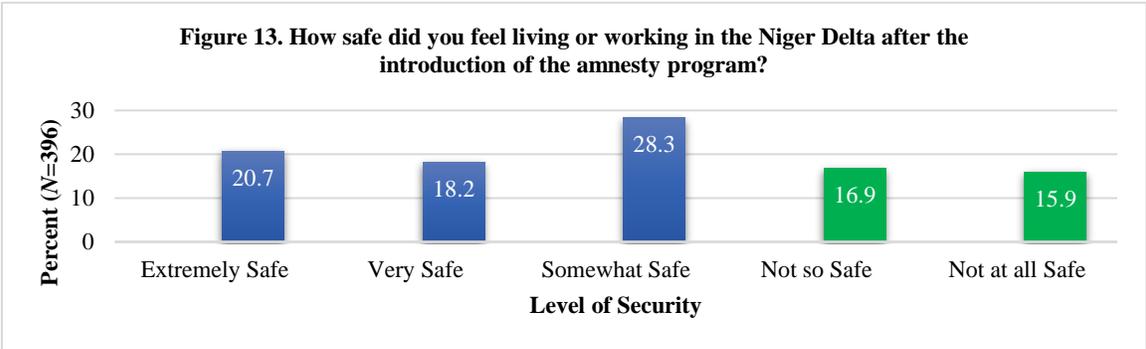
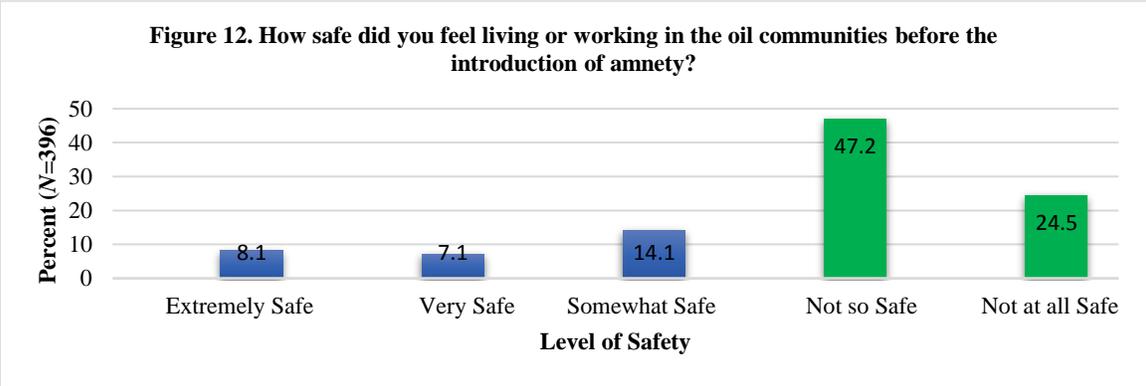
Alex' response attests to the relative calm in Niger Delta communities, which were once the epicentre of criminal activities. The evaluation of change takes into consideration the freedoms people now enjoy in communities that were previously rife with insecurity. These perceptions do not, however, eliminate the violence in the region; it has only reduced them. Several other participants I interviewed shared a similar perspective of change. An ex-militant from southern Ijaw in Bayelsa, Brisibe, told me:

The changes include the pipeline vandalization, water terrorism, armed robbery in the market and kidnaping of white men. All these vices have reduced. They don't occur like before. But its just for the moment. I can assure you that these changes will not be forever.

As a young man who not only lived in a community that was rife with insecurity but also had taken part in an armed insurgency that perpetrated criminal atrocities, Brisibe was certain that significant changes have occurred in Niger Delta communities with regards to security but could

not guarantee the sustainability of these changes. One possibility could be that many ex-insurgents did not submit all the weapons that they had acquired and may use them to resume violence in the future.

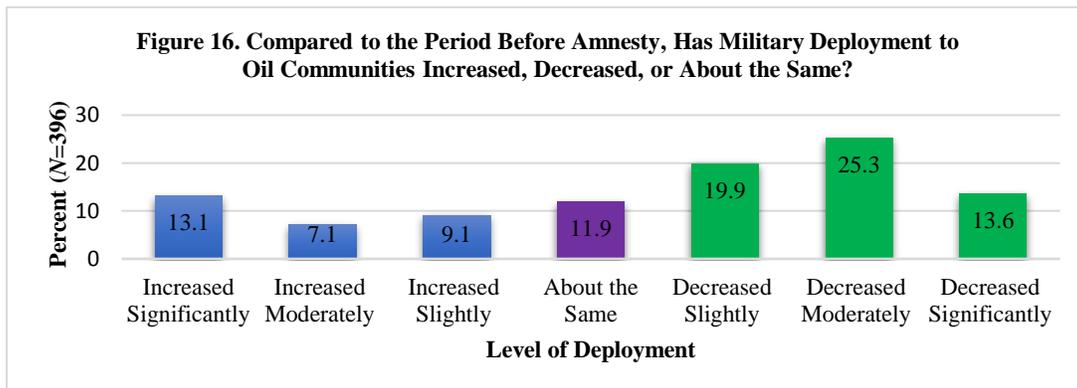
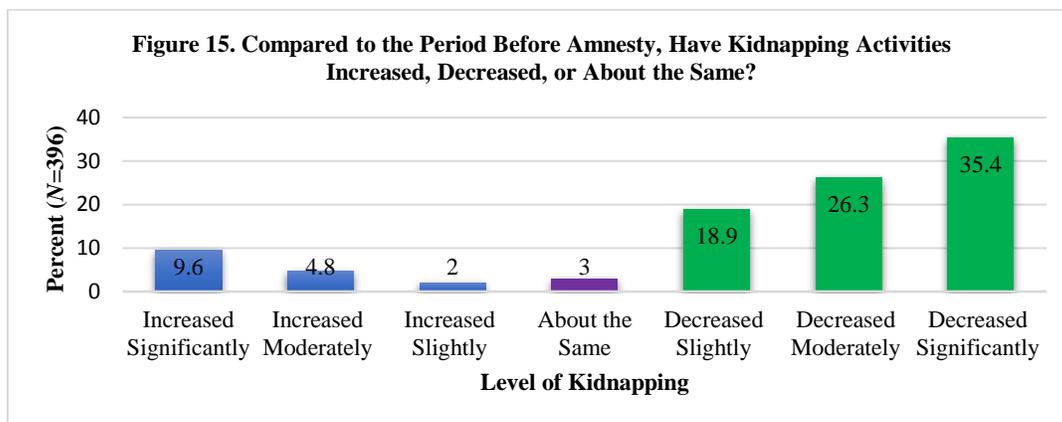
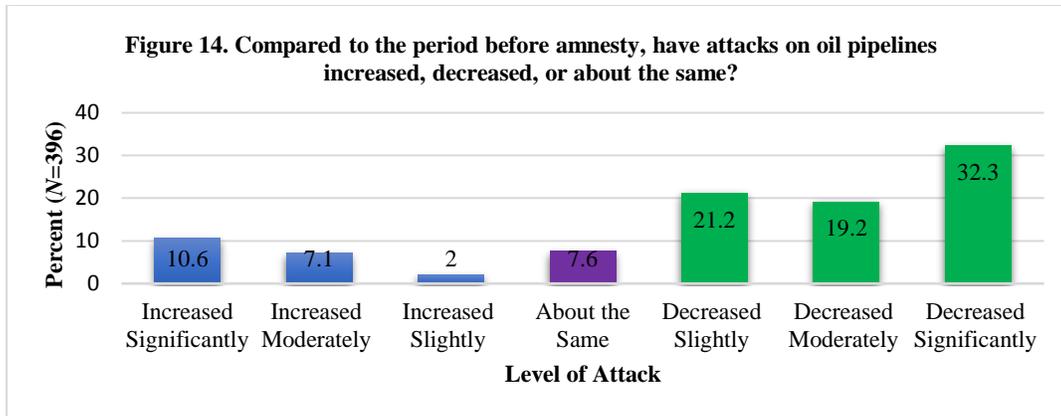
Efforts to evaluate the perceived changes in the security condition required some statistical measures to understand whether the collection of arms from ex-insurgents has reduced the risk of insecurity. Respondents were asked to identify, using a 5-point Likert scale (1=*extremely safe* and 5=*not at all safe*) how they felt living or working in oil communities before and after the introduction of the amnesty program. Nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents indicated that they felt not so safe living or working in oil communities before the introduction of amnesty. In contrast, 28.35 of the respondents stated that they felt somewhat safe (see Figure 12 and Figure 13).



A defining characteristic of pre-amnesty political challenges in the Niger Delta was the spectacular attacks on oil and gas infrastructure, in addition to the hostage-taking of oil workers. While these attacks seemed designed to sabotage the national economy, the criminal dimension posed severe threats to personal and community security as well as the psychological well-being of civilian populations who were vulnerable to incessant explosions, death, and kidnapping activities. In seeking to contextualize the concept of interpersonal transformation as it concerns changes in the conflict pattern and the relationship between conflict actors, I focussed on measuring the changes that have occurred in the Niger Delta in the pre-and post amnesty periods.

Thus, the participants were asked to identify, using a 7-point Likert scale (1=increased significantly, 4=about the same, and 8=decreased significantly) what they think of the attacks on oil pipelines, kidnapping activities, and the militarization of oil communities. More than a quarter (32.3%) of the respondents indicated that compared to the period before amnesty, attacks on oil pipelines have decreased significantly, with the majority (72.7%) expressing a strong opinion concerning the level of decrease (significantly, moderately, or slightly). With regards to kidnapping activities, 35.4% of the respondents indicated that kidnapping activities have decreased considerably. In general, those who believe that kidnapping has reduced slightly, moderately, or significantly since the inception of amnesty constitute 80.6% and are numerous compared to those who believe it has increased or that nothing has changed (see Figure 14 and Figure 15).

With regards to the militarization of Niger Delta communities, 25.3% of the respondents indicated that compared to the pre-amnesty period, the presence of soldiers in oil communities has decreased moderately. Those who think the deployment of soldiers has reduced to some level (slightly, moderately, or significantly) add up to 58.8%. We see that the population is uneven, and those who think that military deployment has decreased tend to be more (see Figure 16).



It is evident from these results that the transition from war to peace in the oil region was characterized by a significant reduction in hostage taking and improvements in personal and community security, which saw civilians and foreign nationals liberated from fear, leading to the resumption of economic activities. Together, insights from the qualitative and quantitative data

reveal some level of improvement in the relationships between conflict actors in the Niger Delta and a corresponding decrease in threats to personal and community security, confirming the impact of interpersonal transformation on peacebuilding.

Beyond the pattern revealed by interview data concerning conflict de-escalation, my informal interactions with former insurgents confirmed that attacks on critical infrastructure and hostage-taking have reduced because the DDR program has transformed most of the ex-insurgents who perpetrated these atrocities. They attribute these changes to the impact of the nonviolence transformation training and the empowerment program - both of which shows a direct relationship between intrapersonal transformation and interpersonal transformation in achieving the goal of peacebuilding. The relative stability in the region, which results from the unwillingness of ex-insurgents to resume violence and criminality, has enabled the government to increase its oil production capacity. Newsom (2011, 2) observed that attacks on oil facilities have dropped significantly, and normal economic activity resumed in the oil region because of the amnesty program. This observation speaks to Lederach's idea that change can emerge from the way in which conflict affects the relationship between actors.

My experience in Rivers state shows that military operations in local communities have previously fostered a siege mentality that is threatening the security of civilian populations. As Cerretti (2009) notes, traditional responses to conflicts have encouraged militarism, which creates the impetus to resort to violence as a means of resolving conflict. Consequently, the militarization of communities has sustained negative attitudes towards the military perceived as an instrument of state repression and, therefore, an enemy of civilians. I recall driving across military checkpoints in Bayelsa and Rivers and made several observations that confirmed my interviews and survey findings. Despite the deployment of armed military personnel in these communities to secure the

highways and in the coastal areas, I did not witness any physical threat to civilians at the time of this study.

Therefore, a significant feature of the DDR framework is the focus on highlighting the threats posed to civilians in post-conflict communities. As Muggah (2007) points out, the termination of war does not necessarily guarantee the security and stability of post-conflict societies while ceasefire, peace agreements and other forms of interventions do not guarantee individual and community safety. Enloe (2007, 4) believes that beyond taking arms out of the hands of ex-militants, “it is perhaps more critical to marginalize the ideology of militarism, and worldviews that see military solutions as effective and the world as a dangerous place best approached with aggressive attitudes.” It is on this premise that the concept of interpersonal transformation, with its emphasis on changes in relationship pattern, establishes its connection to conflict transformation theory. As Lederach (2003, 14) notes:

Transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.

In discussing the modes in which conflict impacts situations of change, Lederach (2003) drew attention to the relational dimension of conflict transformation to explain the changes effected in or desired for the strengthening of relationships with emphasis on issues such as power, emotional, interdependence, and communicative aspects of the conflict. He sees conflict transformation as a representation of how conflict affects patterns of communication and interaction in a relationship, with emphasis on the underlying changes produced by conflict regarding people’s perceptions, pursuits, and how they structure their relationships. Transformation also represents interventions designed to improve communication and foster mutual understanding so that the fears, hopes, and goals of parties are brought to the surface

(Lederach 2003). I believe Lederach's conception of change has theoretical implications most useful for understanding the situation in the Niger Delta.

Although political transformations in the Niger Delta indicates the absence of armed hostilities between armed groups and the state, translating this success into sustainable peace in the oil communities has been a daunting challenge. The reason, according to Ajayi and Adesote (2013), is that amnesty was less of a humanitarian initiative and more of a reactive intervention deployed by the state to buy peace from militants with the hope that restoring security in the Niger Delta will ensure unfettered oil production activities. For example, Agbiboa (2015) argues that while improvements in the relationship between the state and insurgents have led to changes in oil and gas production, the peacebuilding program has not been quite successful in addressing the root of insurgency in the oil region. It follows that the return of peace in the Niger Delta and the subsequent boost in oil production only establishes the efficacy of the peacebuilding program in stabilizing security considered critical in achieving the government's political objective. It is not surprising, therefore, that the nature of peace in the oil region remains somewhat complicated.

Structural Transformation

While conducting fieldwork in Rivers, I met George, an ex-insurgent who successfully transformed his life into an entrepreneur and subsequently became a peace ambassador in his local community, courtesy of the Presidential Amnesty Program. George gave me a tour of his Fish Farm and narrated his experience in the amnesty program. I discovered through my interview with George that the Presidential Amnesty Office had initially promised to purchase land for ex-insurgents who were willing to pursue agriculture but later reneged on its promise and instead opted to support them with finance to lease the land for one year.

George began to encounter challenges when his landlord served him with a quit notice. Determined to succeed, he began negotiating with hotels in the city and soliciting contracts for fish supply. He eventually succeeded in negotiating a loan with a hotel manager based on a repayment plan that required him to supply fish to the hotel until the loan is fully paid out. After selling his first harvest, in addition to the credit he had secured from the hotel, George opted to purchase the land from his landlord for 2.2 million naira (the equivalent of \$US 6,000). George leads a productive life in his community and does not intend to ever participate in violence and criminality.

My interview with George gave me ample opportunity to probe into some critical issues raised during our informal conversation. I asked him to share his opinion concerning the change that has occurred in his personal life and his immediate community that he could attribute to the impact of the peacebuilding program. George told me:

I went to Lagos for a one-week training on how to manage a fish pond business. I acquired skills on record keeping, cash reserve, and customer service. After completing the training, the government empowered me with a fish farm. I am using the skills I learned at the training program to manage my business successfully.

George's experience serves to illustrate the impact of the peacebuilding program in facilitating human capital development through skill training and entrepreneurship opportunities that enable ex-militants like him to reintegrate in civilian society and participate fully in local economic growth as a means of addressing the structural challenges identified as the motivation for fighting in the creeks. Human capital development is undoubtedly one of the creative ways to help ex-militants become better citizens and invested in their communities. George's experience attests to the impact of the amnesty program in transforming the socioeconomic status of ex-militants and enhancing their social mobility. One theme that emerged from this experience was that of structural transformation.

I discovered through my interview with George that he was not the only success story; several ex-insurgents who participated in the peacebuilding program from different states equally gained new skills which are helping them to reintegrate into civilian society and the local economy.

For example, Uche, narrated the impact of the peacebuilding program as follows:

After the nonviolent training, I proceeded to Achievers Farm at Ibogini in Bayelsa state to learn poultry farming for six months. On January 3, 2016, I travelled to Songhai farm in Sapele, Delta state, where undertook a one-week empowerment Refresher Training Course. On March 2016, Colonel Dabiri came to start my empowerment. On the 9th of September 2016, Boro and his entourage came here to commission the project. Today, I can see my dream come to reality. At least I make ten thousand naira every day selling eggs. I have customers. I can no longer go out there to do nonsense, either kidnap people or blow up pipelines. That is how they designed the program. In the end, they will empower you so that you will forget your past life.

It is evident from Uche's experience that the peacebuilding program has contributed to his liberation from unemployment and poverty by providing him with opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills which have helped him to operate a successful business with added value to the local economy. Uche's success is a clear indication that for many ex-insurgents, the Amnesty Program has been a means of breaking the cycle of poverty by redirecting their energies away from violence and investing in entrepreneurial ventures designed to help them reintegrate into civilian society.

I recall my interview with Stella, an amnesty student from Bayelsa whom I encountered at Ritman University in Akwa Ibom. Stella was a kid in the village in the wake of the armed insurgency and had witnessed many atrocities perpetrated by insurgents. Stella recalls vividly how members of her community were living in constant fear and could barely sleep at night due to kidnapping, armed robbery and rape perpetrated by the insurgents. Widespread fear also arose from the contestation between the military and insurgent groups over the monopoly of violence and from the psychological effects of pipeline explosions. She believes, however, that the introduction of the peacebuilding program has reduced activities such as kidnapping and sea piracy

to the extent that residents of the coastal communities no longer experience these attacks. Also, Stella acknowledged the profound impact of the peacebuilding program in the socioeconomic transformation of the former insurgents through training and entrepreneurship opportunities that have helped many to rebrand their personalities as they integrate into civilian society. The following statement captures Stella's perspective vividly:

I could remember how they started this entrepreneurship training program which has given most of our Niger Delta youth opportunities to learn skills, develop themselves, and improve their personalities. I remember people who were previously practicing tailoring but are now expert fashion designers. There are those who were once artisans in the villages but are now technicians and experts. So, I think the program has really helped the youths to develop their hidden talents and potentials.

One could see through Stella's narrative that the peacebuilding program has enhanced the socioeconomic status of former insurgents by facilitating opportunities for skills training in a variety of vocations including entrepreneurship development which altogether have lifted many ex-insurgents out of the trappings of poverty.

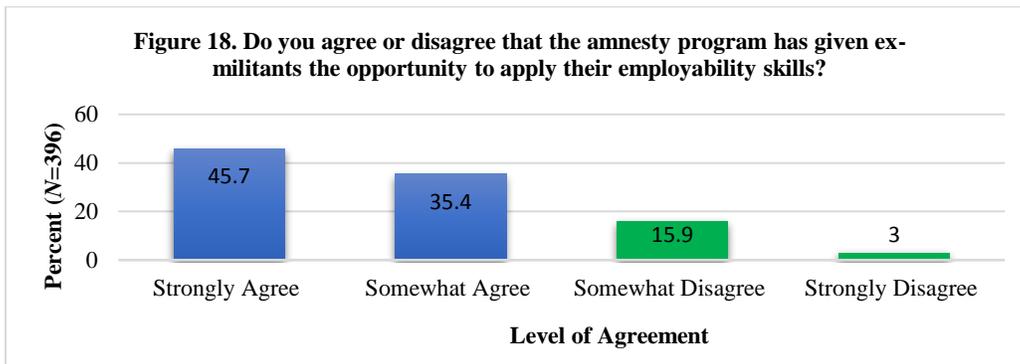
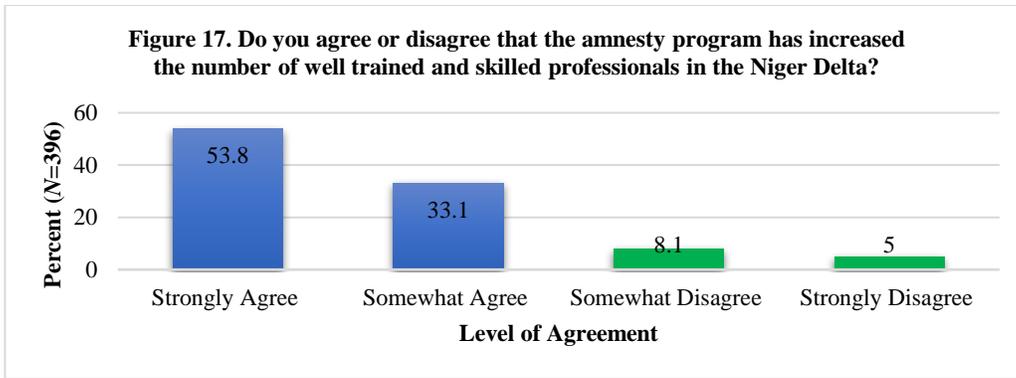
Equally important was my interview with Nwandu, one of the peacebuilding contractors who facilitated the training of amnesty delegates in Asia. I met Nwandu on a British Airways flight from Abuja, Nigeria, to London, England. I introduced myself as a researcher. He then inquired about my research and realized we have something in common—the Presidential Amnesty Program. He narrated his involvement in the amnesty program and shared his experience as a vendor who had undertaken the training of former insurgents in Asia. After a lengthy conversation during the seven-hour flight, he agreed to participate in an interview which took place over Skype, one week after our meeting. When asked about his perception of the peacebuilding program, he told me:

We were assigned several delegates to train in Korea. They received training in marine technology, automobile, pipeline welding, and electrical electronics technology. These are areas that anybody can easily find job opportunities in the Niger Delta. So, we took them to South Korea because technically speaking, South Korea is well above many countries. We wanted them to have the best. Also, there are Korean companies like Daewoo and Samsung that are working in the Niger Delta. We were targeting these

companies as an avenue for their future employment. Within our structure, we have a pipeline of oil maintenance companies and have ways to absorb them. So, when we were training in South Korea, many of them that we have trained and certified as electrical technicians secured jobs in South Korea because they were outstanding. That was our plan. We were concerned about life after training.

Nwandu's experience attests to the impact of the amnesty program in facilitating opportunities for the development of employability skills which have enhanced the capacity of many ex-insurgents, enabling them to function in jobs that demand aptitude in technical skills and problem-solving capabilities. In their effort to help the ex-insurgents build social value, they incorporated into their plan networking programs designed to facilitate employment opportunities for trained and certified delegates as a strategy for reintegrating them into civilian society. This strategy was intended to prevent conflict escalation in the future over the inability of the trained ex-insurgents to secure employment. In many ways, Nwandu's perspective and depth of knowledge gave empirical validation to the impact of the peacebuilding program on structural transformation through human capital development. While the literature has addressed the impact of the program on human capital development (e.g. Akinwale 2010), these studies remain theoretical and not substantiated by empirical findings.

The statistical analysis focused on the degree to which the reintegration program has contributed to the development of a skilled workforce in the Niger Delta. For example, more than half (53.8%) of the respondents strongly agree that the peacebuilding program has increased the number of trained professionals in the Niger Delta. Also, nearly half (45.7%) of the respondents strongly agree that the peacebuilding program has given ex-insurgents the opportunities to apply their education, technical and entrepreneurial skills in developing the local economy (see Figure 17 and Figure 18). We see from this result that the reintegration program has had a significant impact on education, skills training, and entrepreneurship development.



I recall my conversation with McPrince, a former insurgent from Bayelsa, who expressed some optimism about the program’s transformative capacity. McPrince believes the peacebuilding program is a good initiative because post-demobilization activities that focused on entrepreneurship development have helped to alleviate the suffering of former insurgents, enabling them to transform into responsible citizens. Ultimately, his opinion reflected his experience as one of the beneficiaries of the presidential initiative to encourage commercial agriculture among the ex-insurgents for which he initiated and grew a successful fish farm following his completion of the entrepreneurship training. He now has the means to meet his basic needs and provide for his family. Despite experiencing some technical challenges on his farm, he remained optimistic about the capacity of the program to transform violence and criminal behaviour among Niger Delta youths.

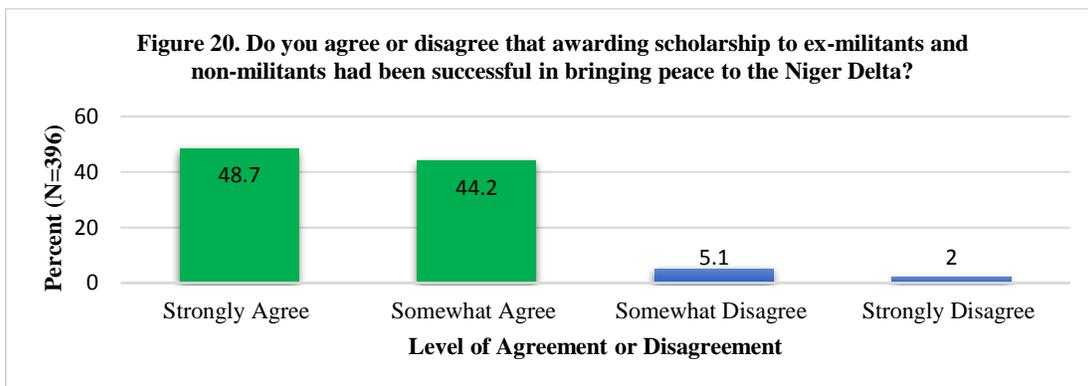
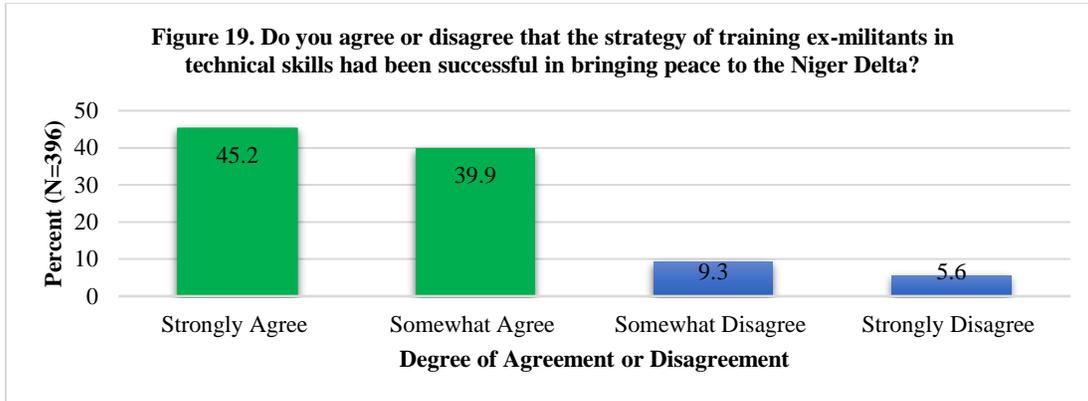
An analysis of these perceptions enabled me to discover *structural transformation* as a conceptual category that gives empirical validation to the theme of transformation as it connects to profound changes in the socioeconomic wellbeing of former insurgents. The concept of structural transformation resonates with the perceptions of several amnesty students I interviewed in Akwa Ibom who did not participate in insurgency but experienced violence in their communities and as a result, could attest to the impact of the peacebuilding program on non-insurgents against the erroneous impression that the program rewards lawbreakers only. For example, a female amnesty student Victoria stated that:

From what I have seen in Bayelsa, the government has tried for helping the young teenagers and the young adults whose parents have no money to train them. I think it's helping a lot. It is a good thing that the government is helping to transform the lives of people who did not participate in violence. By doing this, I think the government can bring about peace in Niger Delta communities.

What Victoria is saying is that many students from low socioeconomic backgrounds could barely afford the cost of attending private universities without the amnesty scholarship. For such students, the scholarship provides a window of opportunity to transform their lives and uplift their underprivileged status. In this regard, structural transformation manifests as the outcome of peacebuilding interventions designed to elevate the status of disadvantaged youths from various communities in the Niger Delta through human capital development.

Further empirical justification derives from the statistical analysis, which shows the impact of the peacebuilding program on the human and social development of ex-insurgents and how this contributes to the understanding of peace. For example, 45.2% of the respondents strongly agree that the strategy of training ex-insurgents in highly technical skills to give them greater opportunities in life has been successful in bringing peace to the Niger Delta. Also, nearly half (48.7%) of the respondents strongly agree that awarding scholarships to ex-insurgents to study in local and foreign universities has been successful in bringing peace to the Niger Delta (see Figure

19 and Figure 20). In general, those who agree that the program has brought some level of peace add up to 85% and are more when compared against those who hold a contrary opinion.



While the success of the peacebuilding program had been the subject of intense debate among scholars, these findings seem to confirm how most participants perceive the program. Although many participants acknowledged the challenges confronting the program, they nonetheless believe that much has been achieved regarding human capital development.

Structural Transformation and Transformational Change

The theme of structural transformation has profound theoretical implications. On the one hand, it reveals the structural conditions that gave birth to the armed insurgency and the

incompatibilities which arose from these dynamics. On the other hand, it uncovers the changes that manifest in peacebuilding processes at the structural level. Conflict transformation theory helps us to conceptualize these changes. As Miall (2004, 2) notes, conflict transformation provides a foundation for conflict analysis and for designing suitable responses to them as well as assessing the effect of these responses. The structural dimension addresses violent conflict at its roots by emphasizing the ways individuals organize and build economic, social and institutional relationships to meet their needs and maximize public participation (Lederach 2003).

It is important to note that in the conflict transformation field, violence is perceived structurally with regards to “needs deprivation” (Galtung 1996, 197). Similarly, Galtung (2000, 16) argues that violence is not a direct act of human action but a lack of “human agency” resulting from great disparities in resource distribution. Which means violence can occur structurally without the use of weapons, such as when people are deprived of their basic needs due to their status or when political processes are designed to marginalize some people while privileging others. To Galtung, inequality and economic exploitation are structures which create a condition that deprives some groups of their needs. Thus, societal contradictions which operate through a vertical structure have consequences for social and economic deprivations that produce the experience of structural violence. In Lederach’s view, conflict transformation focuses analytical attention on the social constraints that encourage the expression of violent behaviour and how such challenges, in turn, affect structural changes in the political, economic and social institutions required to meet basic needs (2003).

As the data has revealed, poverty in the Niger Delta arise from structural constraints that deprive people of their basic needs and lack of access to economic opportunities which subsequently expose individuals to conditions so dangerous as to provoke the experience of

hopelessness. Structural transformation thus refers to the ways the peacebuilding program has enabled ex-insurgents to build economic and social relationships to meet their basic needs as well as gain access to resources. This view of conflict transformation resonates with Burton (1990) who presented human needs as a collection of human development essentials and how they affect social behaviour. In a different publication, Burton (1993) established the case that social conflict develops from unmet basic needs; thus, the goal of conflict resolution is to understand these needs and develop appropriate measures to satisfy them. For Rubenstein (2008, 71) the repression of basic needs and the struggle to satisfy these needs is a motivational factor behind the manifestation of destructive behaviour. Marker (2003) emphasized the importance of human needs such as identity and participation, which Jeong (2000, 70) believe can be satisfied through intellectual achievement, emotional interaction with others, autonomy and social inclusion.

As the data has shown, the most significant evidence of structural transformation is a change in the status of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. Such changes are mostly revealed in the facial expressions many ex-insurgents wear when posing with graduation gowns, marking their transformation from fighting in the creeks to accepting amnesty and participating in the DDR processes and subsequently graduating as engineers, commercial pilots, and marine technicians as well as those owning businesses and leading responsible lives in their communities. While this evidence tells the story of many ex-insurgents and non-insurgents alike, it does not represent the experience of every ex-insurgent and many youths who did not participate in the insurgency.

Cultural Transformation

While in Rivers, I met Karimie, an ex-insurgent from one of the Kalabari communities whose opinion concerning the peacebuilding program has been quite illuminating. Karimie and

his wife were quite hospitable. Given that my research has an ethnographic component, I had to connect with the people's culture to extract relevant information from key informants. I realized that Karimie had a great wealth of information to share because he fought in the creeks and participated in the various phases of the DDR program. Karimie's wife also runs a convenient store that attracts patronage from ex-insurgents who frequent the store to purchase cigarettes and discuss community affairs. By visiting with Karimie, I succeeded in recruiting more than twenty former insurgents to participate in the study.

My first discovery was the level of social inequality in rural communities where the insurgents come from and how the peacebuilding program is either helping to transform these challenges or perpetuating them. It was apparent that until very recently, many ex-insurgents had been living in social isolation and disconnected from mainstream society. Karimie told me: "most of us who were in the creeks never understood what bank account was, and we never knew how to save money in the bank. It was the amnesty program that gave us the opportunity to open bank accounts." There are others like Karimie who had no inkling what it meant to operate a bank account until their enrolment in the peacebuilding program, which required them to travel to Port-Harcourt city.

It is worth emphasizing that at the time I met Karimie in January 2018, he was already in his mid-forties. Which means he was probably in his mid-thirties when the federal government initiated the peace process in 2009. Surprisingly, until his participation in the program, Karimie was trapped in the confines of village life. He had no bank account and no strong connection to the mainstream society except by means of his Nokia cell phone. He opened his first bank account in his early-forties when the present government mandated former insurgents to open bank accounts through which they will receive their transitional support payments (*allowance or*

stipend). This experience illustrates the social exclusion of many Niger Delta youths. At the same time, it reveals the extent that the program has transformed the lives of former insurgents who were previously isolated from mainstream society.

The Emergence of a New Social Class

I discovered through this research that the processes of reintegrating former insurgents into civilian society engender a “pull factor” through rural-urban migration. Such migratory trend has enabled socially isolated youths to experience life outside the confines of creek life and gain cultural exposure through a range of training programs designed to facilitate their reintegration. For example, many who had not experienced city life in Nigeria were deployed overseas for various training programs to give them a new cultural experience in unfamiliar cultural terrains. The result has been the transformation of former insurgents from the complexity of life in the creeks to the trappings of cultural globalization in countries where the cultural dynamics are incompatible to the environments where they have been uprooted from.

According to the Special Assistant on Media in the Presidential Amnesty Office, Daniel Alabrah, training ex-insurgents in offshore locations has the advantage of exposing them to environments they are not familiar with, which would enable them to socialize with people outside their immediate environments as a way of integrating with the larger society (cited in Vanguard 2014). This decision was strictly in compliance with the United Nations codes on DDR which recommends the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants outside their familiar environment and, in some cases, foreign locations where specialized training opportunities are readily available (Kuku 2015, 74). The exposure given to ex-insurgents has made it impossible for

those who are now exposed to western education and city life to return to the creeks. As Dike notes:

There is a lot of change because many people who were living in the creeks are now living in the city, undertaking education and skills training. Many of them are now educated ex-militants in the region and are calm. Since we now live in the city our old mentality about violence has changed. We are now thinking broadly, not the way we were thinking while in the creek. So, the program has helped a lot.

Dike's experience not only exemplify the complexity of life in the Niger Delta creeks but also it gives validity to the impact of the peacebuilding program as a force for change.

A significant discovery that helps to understand the impact of peacebuilding on cultural transformation is how the processes of reintegration lead to the emergence of a new social class in the Niger Delta as ex-insurgents began to gain social mobility through education and training opportunities that exposed them to new cultural orientations. Bourdieu (1985) developed the concept of cultural capital to analyze how education provides individuals with social mobility – that is, advantages that enable people to achieve a higher status in society. Indeed, the program has liberated many ex-insurgents from the hopelessness that pervaded their experience in the creeks to studying in countries like the United Arab Emirates, the UK, USA, Malaysia, South Korea, Canada etcetera where they become members of the urban society. Such transformations have contributed immensely in enhancing the social capital of ex-insurgents through educational and training opportunities. In turn, these opportunities have elevated their status to emerging elites compared to many youths in rural communities who did not enjoy these privileges. Their integration into the global culture and their new orientation to life meant that those who eventually return to Nigeria after the completion of their training programs would be joining a new social class, making it impossible to contemplate violence or engage in criminal behaviour.

Cultural transformation is, therefore, understood as changes in the wellbeing of ex-insurgents through by interventions (e.g. training and education) that facilitate cultural exposure

and the opportunity to build their cultural capital as a mechanism for addressing poverty, inequality and conflict. This discovery resonates with the views of many participants – both ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. For example, Dickson, an amnesty student at Ritman University in Akwa Ibom, told me:

I think the amnesty program is impacting the youth in one way or the other. Many youths have been brought out of the rural communities to experience other environments and people around the country including enrolling in educational opportunities. Even if you can't go to school the entrepreneurship program can help you to transform your life. Many amnesty youths now understand the world outside the village and are able control their behaviours.

Dickson's opinion seems to suggest that education and entrepreneurship opportunities have enabled ex-insurgents to experience life outside the confines of their rural communities. Thus, their exposure to a new cultural orientation has resulted in behaviour change. The amnesty vendor, Nwandu, expressed a similar view with Dickson. They both believe that exposing the ex-insurgents to unfamiliar cultural environments is a significant way of transforming their mindsets. As Nwandu stated:

You know removing these boys from the creeks to South Korea was a significant change. So, the Koreans ensured the boys didn't feel so intimidated by the environment and culture shock. They told me they could easily create a curriculum that will tap into the mindset of those boys. They trained in marine welding and how to do everything in a vessel. So, if a welder, for example, is not available, another person should be able to step in and perform the task. I also felt that in doing that they might be able to play a role in the maritime upon their return to Nigeria.

Nwandu's experience in South Korea attests to the maxim that travelling plays a vital role in educating the mind. Nwandu chose South Korea with the mindset of a nation-builder. After conducting extensive research on the ideal location to train the delegates, he arrived at South Korea which, in his thinking, represents a Newly Industrializing Country where the leaders who contributed to its development are still alive and may be able to tell their unique stories and inspire the delegates. In the context of the peacebuilding program, education implied learning that occurs as the delegates experience other cultures and lifestyles that sync into their consciousness, enabling

them to integrate into society. Thus, if travelling is part of education, then we are assured that those ex-insurgents uprooted from the rural communities and deployed for educational and training programs within and outside the shores of Nigeria would be returning as refined citizens - well educated and prepared to make positive contributions towards the development of the nation.

The quantitative data support the concept of cultural transformation as 45.2% of the respondents strongly agree that facilitating training opportunities for ex-insurgents has given them the opportunities to integrate into society and contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. Also, 48.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the amnesty scholarship has enabled many ex-insurgents to study in local and foreign universities where their exposure to other cultures will contribute in transforming their mindsets (see Figure 20 and Figure 21). This finding resonates with Augsburger (1992) who notes that conflict transformation occurs when there is substantial metamorphosis in one of three elements: the process of transformation leads to a change in attitudes by changing negative perceptions; the process of transformation leads to behaviour change; and where the process of transformation transforms the conflict itself by removing incompatibilities between the parties. This suggests that the concept of cultural transformation is consistent with conflict transformation thinking.

Building Peace Through Cultural Transformation

Lederach (2003) introduces the cultural dimension as that which underlines the ways that conflict transforms group dynamics and how culture influences the processes of responding to conflict. From this theoretical standpoint, transformation aims to identify the “cultural resources and mechanisms for the effective handling of conflict” (2003, 26). In the context of the Niger Delta peace process, education and skills training are some of the cultural resources that have been

mobilized to facilitate peacebuilding. Although education and skill training represent measures undertaken by the peacebuilders to transform the lives of former insurgents, cultural reorientation occurred through the processes of removing these young men and women from hostile environments in the creeks and integrating them into the urban or global cultures.

While not undermining the significant role that human capital development plays in nation-building, it is argued, however, that the peace process encourages a technocratic form of education, such that imposes dominant cultural knowledge on the learners, most of them illiterates by virtue of their inability to read and write, and therefore have less power to influence the worldviews of the expert but conditioned to see the world from the perspective of the trainers. By training the ex-insurgents in Europe, North America and Asia, where cultural knowledge transmits through languages that are alien to the cultural knowledge of the learners, the local cultural civilization become subsumed under the dominant culture. The development of cultural capital thus produces positive and negative consequences that are critical to the evaluation of peacebuilding outcomes in the Niger Delta.

Cultural transformation, in this sense, emphasizes the mechanisms of knowledge transfer from the expert to the novice, which seems to dominate DDR practices in the Niger Delta. Lederach (1995) communicates a bottom-up practitioner approach to peacebuilding, which recognizes implicit knowledge as common knowledge of experience and explicit knowledge as training-based learning. Drawing on Friere's (1970) concept of "banking education" in which the student is an empty receptacle of expert knowledge, he describes the prescriptive model as the transfer of specialist knowledge to the subject through universally applied training standards and is anecdotally the packaging and selling of solutions (Lederach 1995). These practices are not only evident in the Refresher Training Course on entrepreneurship undertaken within Nigeria, but also

in the dissemination of knowledge to amnesty delegates overseas who now return with a new cultural orientation far detached from their identity. By adopting DDR as the framework for peacebuilding, the peacebuilders impose a universal culture which reproduces the dominant peacebuilding civilization driven by the liberal peace project.

In *Building Peace*, Lederach (1997) examined the nature of contemporary armed conflict and shows that these conflicts are primarily internal, and arise in the context of underdevelopment and poverty, making peacebuilding an enormous task. Lederach contend that international peacebuilding approaches are poorly suited to respond to the dynamics which manifest in these communal-type conflicts. Walker (2004, 527) argues that the discipline of conflict resolution sustains "ontological violence" by imposing western views on local people, thereby marginalizing Indigenous approaches and ways of transforming conflict. Walker drew comparisons between western and Indigenous worldviews to examine their characteristics and how their differences impact upon conflict transformation. Given the prevailing power relations, "decolonizing the discipline of conflict resolution involves developing a deeper understanding of, respect for, and acknowledgement of traditional worldviews (2004, 546-47).

Studies by Tusó (2000, 2016, 28) have shown that Indigenous principles of peacemaking were relevant throughout history but became buried under colonial and western forms of education. In *Creating the Third Force*, Tusó and Flaherty (2016) moved beyond the prevailing liberal peacebuilding debate to make a compelling case for the historical emergence of Indigenous knowledge systems which fosters cultural relativism and the growing interest in a diversity of people holding alternative belief systems that contribute meaningfully to a variety of peacemaking processes. Arguably, Indigenous approaches to peacemaking are fundamental to conflict management and resolution because they are rooted in spirituality, social groups, and the

traditional principles of responsibility and accountability (Tuso 1999, 2000, 2016). What is important is that peacebuilding approaches that marginalize local perspectives are less likely to produce a sustainable resolution of conflict. This thinking resonates with Avruch and Black (1991) who have criticized the western, mono-dimensional, problem-solving models of conflict resolution which, they argue, fails to make explicit how this model differs from other cultural approaches.

Avruch (1998) developed the *etic* and *emic* approaches to cross-cultural conflict resolution to demonstrate the role that culture plays in conflict resolution. The *emic* approach is an attempt to understand a culture through the lens of people who practice it, where culture originate from inside, compared to the *etic* approach, which assumes all cultures must fit into a universal category. This conception of culture promotes the imposition of a monolithic culture often leading to the marginalization of local worldviews. Drawing on Avruch, the concept of cultural transformation proceeds from the understanding that the implementation of DDR interventions that emphasize western education, training and exposure as the ideals of peacebuilding promotes the *emic* conception of culture, where change is induced by external factors rather than from within the cultural experience in which conflict originated.

The CISI Model of Conflict Transformation

I developed the CISI model of Conflict Transformation as a conceptual model that shows how the Niger Delta peacebuilding system progresses through four levers of change, representing the outcome of DDR interventions. The CISI model considers the fact that the DDR system operates as a programmatic system with training activities and programs designed to transform the post-conflict society by seeking to change the status and behaviour of the ex-insurgents. The underlying logic behind the CISI model is that conflict creates the need for problem-solving; thus,

conflict transformation requires close attention to the dynamic changes occurring in the post-conflict society. Ultimately, change is generated through the creative processes of peacebuilding and manifest at the cultural, interpersonal, structural and intrapersonal levels.

The CISI model shows that conflict transformation occurs where there is a considerable change in four elements. First, the process of intrapersonal transformation must lead to changes in the attitudes of ex-insurgents, engineered by the level of self-awareness. Second, the process of interpersonal transformation must lead to fundamental changes in the behaviour of ex-insurgents, engineered by relationship building. Third, the process of structural transformation must proceed from changes in the socioeconomic status of ex-insurgents and measured against their ability to overcome the structural barriers that made them vulnerable to violence, such as unemployment. Finally, the process of cultural transformation must proceed from the exposure of ex-insurgents to external cultural environments capable of transforming their worldviews and attitudes toward violent behaviour. Cultural transformation is thus a manifestation of positive behaviours amongst ex-insurgents, produced through access to cultural capital, which enables their interaction with the rest of society.

The philosophical rationale behind the CISI model is that post-conflict transformation begins with self-awareness and progresses through an effort to meet the economic needs of aggrieved parties. Change is determined by the level of self-awareness among the ex-insurgents concerning the transformative power of nonviolence. The changes in attitude and the corresponding changes in the socioeconomic status of ex-insurgents then creates the condition for relationship transformation. Changes in relationship patterns between actors become sustained through the exposure of ex-insurgents to a new cultural orientation, engineered by their access to social capital and interaction with unfamiliar environments and cultures. While these four

dimensions of change do not promise to eliminate the conflict, in the context of Nigeria’s oil region, they have contributed to post-conflict stability. The challenge is whether the peacebuilders can take advantage of the relative stability to address inequality in the oil community.

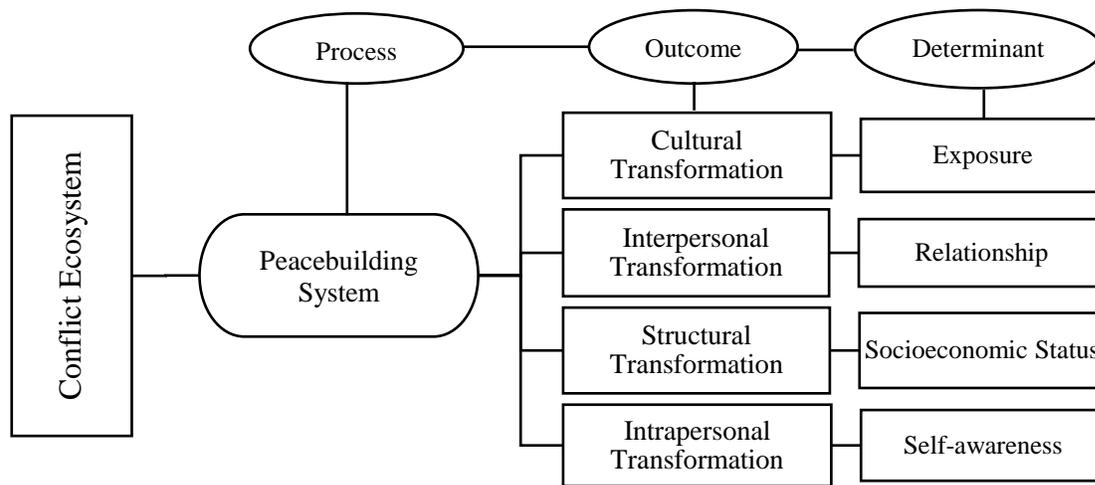


Figure 21. The CISI Model of Conflict Transformation

The CISI model of conflict transformation has theoretical implications that add substantially to the expansion of conflict transformation thinking. Väyrynen (1991, 163) believe intractable conflicts rooted in values and interests may be addressed only through the process of transformation, and identified “actor transformation, rule transformation, issue transformation, and structural transformation” as four ways in which transformation occur at the micro and macro levels of a conflict system. Actor Transformation refers to the changes in the conflict parties which often happen when a new set of actors appear; Issue transformation reflect changes in the political agenda of the conflict; Rule transformation is a redefinition of the norms that define how conflict actors interact with each other; while structural transformation implies changes in the structure of the conflict system (Väyrynen 1991). Väyrynen believes that in situations where conflict becomes complex, transformation, rather than resolution, provides a better option.

Similarly, Lederach (2000) had developed four dimensions of conflict transformation that echoes Väyrynen's approach but takes a theoretical twist which moves beyond Väyrynen's perspective to add the cultural, relational and personal aspects of conflict transformation. In Lederach's view, the personal dimension deals with changes in the emotional, spiritual, and perceptual issues of a conflict, while the relational deals with changes in the interaction and communication between conflict actors. Likewise, the structural dimension deals with the underlying patterns of decision-making in a conflict system, while the cultural dimension refers to changes in the cultural pattern in responding to conflict (Lederach 2000).

In contrast to Väyrynen and Lederach, I have developed the CISI model as a new approach to conflict transformation framed by the ways that ex-insurgents react to changes in internal and external conditions. This model is most suitable for evaluating the process and outcome of post-conflict peacebuilding following DDR implementation. Although the CISI model echo similar concepts with Lederach and Väyrynen, there are significant variations in the indicators that were measured and the conditions that were satisfied theoretically to arrive at empirical conclusions that link DDR interventions to conflict transformation and subsequently forms the basis for the development of the CISI model. While Lederach uses transformation in both personal and cultural contexts, there are variations in how these concepts apply in our various models and the experiences that inform these ideas.

Contrary to Lederach who refers to the personal dimension of change as the emotional, spiritual, and perceptual issues of conflict, my model broadens the theoretical contours of conflict transformation by shifting away from spiritualism and emotionalism to evaluate the cognitive processes that produce fundamental changes in a conflict system. My model essentially focusses on how ex- insurgents react to changes in their consciousness, or to changes in their social

wellbeing or environment. My argument is that violence and criminal behaviour often emerge from a lack of awareness. Thus, once the minds of ex-insurgent are reprogrammed to a new level of consciousness, the experience awakens within them an internal revolution which then inspires them to new levels of discovery where nonviolence becomes not just a choice but also a way of life. At the core of intrapersonal transformation is the role that education plays in generating cognitive experience, which differs substantially from Lederach's understanding of the personal dimension, and a departure from Väyrynen's approach.

Also, Lederach sees cultural change in the context of changes in the cultural pattern in responding to conflict. Culture, in Lederach's context, refers to the dynamics which arise from the application of top-down, expert-oriented practices and local knowledge systems in responding to conflict. My approach differs substantially because it focusses on how members of armed groups react to cultural change—that is, how removing them from familiar environments and exposing them to external cultural environments that enhance their social mobility can lead to conflict transformation.

My conception of structural transformation also differs from that conceived by Lederach and Väyrynen. For example, Väyrynen uses structural transformation in the context of changes in the structure of the conflict system while Lederach equates the structural dimension with the underlying patterns of decision making within a conflict system—both implying some form of power dynamics. In contrast, I use structural transformation to show how changes in the socioeconomic status of ex-insurgents induce behaviour change and how behaviour change, in turn, creates the condition for conflict transformation. The CISI model is therefore consistent with conflict transformation thinking and fills a significant gap in the literature, which also defines its uniqueness, originality, and replicability across post-conflict contexts beyond the Niger Delta.

Conclusion

This chapter evaluated post-conflict transformations in Nigeria's oil region to determine how the design and implementation of DDR interventions affect transformational change. The data yielded four conceptual ideas that attest to the impact of DDR interventions. The first conception of change revealed in the data was that of intrapersonal transformation, defined as changes in the attitude of ex-insurgents generated by the consciousness of nonviolence produced through transformational education. Transformational education instilled in the ex-insurgents some nonviolence principles which generated inward change through mental conditioning and self-awareness that manifested in the development of positive attitudes and behaviours. The theoretical implication is that beyond taking arms from insurgents, the search for lasting peace must take into consideration interventions that help ex-insurgents to win the battle within. Education was key to the process of conquering the inner self and propelling the individual towards positive thoughts that are resistant to violence. However, transformational education should be holistic and customized to liberate the human spirit through creativity, innovation and imagination.

Furthermore, this study has shown that transformation did not only occur as an inward experience. It is also an outward experience produced through changes in the socioeconomic well-being of ex-insurgents. Thus, the second conception of change revealed in the data was that of interpersonal transformation, which occurs at the relational level and attests to the impact of DDR in fostering positive relationships between ex-insurgents and the state, in strengthening communication between adversaries, and in reinforcing their confidence in the peace process. The third conception of change was structural transformation, which attests to the impact of DDR in creating the conditions for improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of ex-insurgents by providing them with alternatives to violence and criminality. The last conception of change was cultural

transformation, understood as the outcome of reintegration processes designed to give ex-insurgents a new cultural orientation by reintegrating them into unfamiliar cultural terrains.

Finally, this chapter has attempted to put these four dimensions of change into context and explain their connection to the development of the CISI model of Conflict Transformation. While the CISI model develops around the four conceptual ideas, it captures the emergent patterns revealed by the qualitative data, complemented by quantitative evidence. Therefore, the model mirrors the multiple dimensions of change produced through the DDR interventions and is a useful resource for analyzing peacebuilding processes and outcomes in other Niger Delta states as well as post-conflict societies beyond Nigeria. The next chapter will examine power and empowerment in post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta.

Chapter Six

POWER AND EMPOWERMENT IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING PROCESSES

Introduction

Hardly will you engage an ex-insurgent, or a group of ex-insurgents, in a conversation concerning the Niger Delta peace process without the term “empowerment” dominating the conversation. In several conversations I initiated with the peacebuilders in Abuja, the rhetoric of “empowerment” was invoked repeatedly in a context that engenders some mechanism of power between the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents who, in the Niger Delta peacebuilding lingo, are described as delegates. The vocabulary of “empowerment” also appears as a dominant discourse in several government publications promoting the success stories emerging from the DDR program, which often feature ex-insurgents as beneficiaries of a variety of entrepreneurial initiatives designed to achieve the goal of reintegration. My field experience shows that empowerment was the common denominator used by both the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents to appraise the positive and negative impacts of the peacebuilding program, particularly those interventions designed to achieve the goal of reintegration.

This chapter examines the perceptions of power and empowerment in post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta and makes the case that the complex interaction and relationship between the peacebuilders and those whom the peacebuilding interventions are intended to benefit lies at the heart of programmatic challenges confronting demobilization and reintegration practices. This chapter adds substance to the peacebuilding debate in the Niger Delta and outlines critical successes and failures of the DDR program. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the search for ways to operationalize the impact of reintegration processes in the Niger Delta

must move beyond the peacebuilders' framework to consider the perceptions of ex-insurgents and their visions of empowerment. Without an approach to peacebuilding that builds implicitly on a holistic conception of empowerment which takes into consideration local perspectives and ideas, the current framework, which propagates a materialistic understanding of empowerment based exclusively on the ideals of liberal peace, serves to impose some dominant power relations.

This chapter proceeds from the first objective of this study: to evaluate the impact of the amnesty program with regards to the changes that have occurred in the Niger Delta because of the material investment in DDR interventions. In achieving this objective, this chapter seeks to answer the following question: What are the perceived successes and challenges associated with the adoption of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta? Through the analysis of interview data to ascertain the impact of the DDR interventions, power and empowerment emerged as two significant themes that resonated with many participants. In the sections that follow, I introduce these themes and then discuss their theoretical contribution to the peacebuilding literature.

Conceptions of Empowerment

Ajibola (2015) has made the first scholarly attempt to examine the role that empowerment plays in the Niger Delta peace process. Underlying Ajibola's study is the need to understand whether the amnesty program has the potential to ensure the "successful reintegration of ex-insurgents into society and whether the empowerment of ex-insurgents can "stimulate peace and development" in the oil region (2015, 3). Her study identifies education and vocational skills training as an innovative approach to empowering violent youths in the Niger Delta and re-channelling their energies into other avenues. She also identifies the "post-training employment"

of ex-insurgents as other challenges requiring urgent attention for the amnesty program to fully achieve its objectives (8). In contrast, her study revealed that “empowerment is not enough to sustain peace and development in post-conflict Niger Delta” due to the multi-dimensional context of the problem including the fact that the program only addresses the needs of ex-insurgents while ignoring other constituents and the environmental context of the problem (9). Agbiboa (2013) has drawn on relative deprivation theory and Edward Azar’s protracted social conflict theory to explain how oil extraction and environmental challenges are implicated in a protracted social conflict in the oil region, arguing that the amnesty program has not been successful in tackling the underlying grievances of Niger Delta people. While empowerment had been instrumental to the positive and negative perceptions of the peacebuilding program, no study to date has explored the perceptions of power and empowerment through the eyes of the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents and how this contributes to post-conflict transformations.

Following my initial contact with the peacebuilders I was handed several publications featuring the success stories emerging from various empowerment initiatives sponsored by the Presidential Amnesty Office in the areas of education, aviation, automobile manufacturing technology, plastics manufacturing, transformer repair and maintenance technology, welding and fabrication, construction, marine technology, woodwork and carpentry, catering and hospitality, oil and gas. These publications also include photographs of ex-insurgents receiving their empowerment packages from the vendors and snapshots of what the peacebuilders considers the exemplar of a “transformed life.” Some publications include personal information of ex-insurgents who have been empowered, such as real names or business names, photographs, locations, and contact details. I used this information, in addition to the contacts released to me from the amnesty

database, to identify some program beneficiaries and to verify the nature of the empowerment programs and their socioeconomic impact.

The starting point of my inquiry was the handover brief by the former Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, Kingsley Kuku, in April 2015, where the word empowerment was mentioned three times in the 119-page document. First, the report cited empowerment with regards to previous interventions in the Niger Delta where the former President Jonathan was appointed to serve as a member of the Committee on Empowerment in 2006. Second, empowerment appeared in the document as a set of reintegration activities that include financial empowerment through micro-credit, business support, job placement programs, and the development of cooperatives. Third, empowerment appeared in the document as a unit within the governance structure of the Presidential Amnesty Program (see Kuku 2015, 16, 41, 103).

My conversation with the peacebuilders revealed that the limited attention given to empowerment was because the previous administration of Kingsley Kuku focused more on the training of amnesty delegates to equip them with the knowledge and skill sets required to reintegrate in the economy and less on post-training empowerment programs. The renewed focus on empowerment following the appointment of Paul Boroh as coordinator of the amnesty program arose primarily from the discovery that thousands of amnesty delegates who had undergone training were redundant. Empowerment emerged as a reintegration strategy through which the peacebuilding program has revealed its transformative impact as well as its most critical failures.

Empowerment as Business Set-up

Until the sacking of Paul Boroh as Amnesty Coordinator on March 13, 2018, the policy drive and strategy adopted by the Presidential Amnesty Office in achieving its reintegration

objectives was to facilitate the empowerment of trained but redundant ex-insurgents. One area of empowerment that gained substantial attention as a reintegration strategy has been business set-up for amnesty delegates who have undergone empowerment training. A review of amnesty publications shows that hundreds of delegates have been empowered with the resources and tools to launch their entrepreneurial ventures based on their chosen vocations. While this effort has been effective at improving the well-being of many ex-insurgents and their families, my attempt to understand the various perceptions of empowerment began with an exploration of the peacebuilders opinion and then moving down to explore grassroots perceptions. When asked what empowerment means from the lens view of the peacebuilders, Angela shared an insightful perspective as follows:

Empowerment is a source of increasing and upgrading your economic livelihood or putting you into a commercial activity. So, when we do empowerment, you must be trained. The office will ensure you are trained in one course or the other before empowering you. From there, you are given business ideas on what you can do. Once you decide on a line of business, you will receive a Starter pack as an indication of being empowered. The starter-pack is not a big business but something that will help you to make a living.

Empowerment, as described by Angela, implies giving ex-insurgents an economic lifeline. This approach involves the deployment of demobilized insurgents in entrepreneurial training to enable them to gain the skills required to operate successful enterprises. During the entrepreneurship training, the participants receive a range of business ideas based on the government's policy focus. Recently, there had been an emphasis on using agriculture to drive entrepreneurship in Nigeria, which saw the rise of amnesty Refresher Training Courses on cassava farming, fish farming, and poultry farming.

As part of the training requirements, the trainees would have the opportunity to create their preferred business names, and after that present their details for business registration before the release of their business Starter-packs. In other words, empowerment, as defined by the

peacebuilders, moves beyond skills training to include post-training Start-up packages in the form of merchandise, equipment, and agricultural facilities to help the beneficiaries establish their businesses. Through this approach, many ex-insurgents have been empowered with commodities such as electronics or truckloads of cement to start-up retail enterprises, while others are set-up with either a fish farm or a poultry farm. This approach to empowerment seems to resonate with all the peacebuilders. For example, Ebi, stated that:

Empowerment is setting you up in your trade area. Setting you up in the trade area you have chosen, or the office has earmarked for you. That's what we consider as empowerment. You probably met some people in the field in their shops; we always set them up with businesses. That's what we consider as empowerment.

To be empowered means that the participants must choose their trade areas or train in trade areas which the Amnesty Office has identified as a priority in meeting the government's strategic objectives. After the completion of the training program, the delegate receives a set of material goods to launch their small enterprises. At this stage, they are considered empowered and reintegrated into civilian society.

I made a frantic effort to validate the peacebuilders definition of empowerment by engaging with ex-insurgents who have been empowered, seeking to understand where their opinions converge or diverge. I identified Jeff from the amnesty publication, recruited him over the phone and set up an appointment for an interview. Jeff suggested I interview him at his business location, which will enable me to verify the nature of his empowerment. Before commencing the interview with Jeff, I did an ethnographic scan of his business premises and then engaged him in an informal conversation to ascertain the nature of the empowerment and its viability as an economic lifeline. During my ethnographic observation, I saw thousands of newly moulded blocks ready for the market. This observation gave justification to the peacebuilders' definition of empowerment as a small enterprise designed to provide beneficiaries with a lifeline. Jeff noted during the interview

that although the government had empowered him with a business Starter-pack that includes a block moulding machine, 100 bags of cement, head pans, shovels, and four truckloads of sand to set-up a block moulding industry, the vendor contracted by the Amnesty Office to supply his equipment delivered a dysfunctional block-moulding machine that made his empowerment unsustainable. While the government is promoting Jeff's business as evidence of successful empowerment, Jeff did not share the same views. Instead, he was generally distraught with the nature of empowerment.

I also met an ex-insurgent who runs a successful fish farm in one of the coastal communities in Rivers. I discovered through an interview with him that his success derived from the knowledge he gained from the entrepreneurship course he attended in Lagos, where he learned the basic principles of business management. After the government had empowered him with the facilities required to set-up a fish farm, he had to take his destiny in his hands by putting the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills into practice. This ex-insurgent expressed an unwillingness to return to the creeks or engage in criminal activities that will put his life in danger but has chosen to rechannel that energy into his business. I met several other ex-insurgents in Rivers and Bayelsa running successful businesses that grew from their empowerment with business Start-up packs. When asked about their understanding of empowerment, Wami told me, "empowerment is when the government releases goods to me to trade with and make a profit." These range of entrepreneurial initiatives were undertaken to facilitate opportunities for ex-insurgents as part of reintegration interventions.

These examples support the claim by the former amnesty boss Paul Boroh, concerning the positive impact of the peacebuilding program. While presenting the scorecard of the amnesty program during a briefing in Abuja, Boroh stated that in the nine months he had been coordinator,

836 ex-agitators have been empowered with business Starter-packs in areas such as cassava milling, fish and poultry farming, building materials, timber sawmill, welding and fabrication, cinematography and fashion in Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Ondo, Imo and Edo states (see <http://osapnd.gov.ng>).⁵

Empowerment as Capacity Development

Sustaining the current security climate in the Niger Delta requires effort to design and implement peacebuilding strategies that minimize the risk of violence by helping former insurgents to meet their expressed needs. Strong capacity has been identified as an essential requirement for the success of peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. In this context, capacity development emphasizes interventions designed to teach the former insurgents the skills for personal survival or increase their opportunities in life through access to education, training and resources.

Investment in the educational training and capacity building of ex-insurgents is undoubtedly a significant element of peacebuilding. For example, the study by Ajibola (2015) identified the importance of education and vocational skills training as an innovative approach to transforming violent youths in the Niger Delta. Likewise, the study by Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, 4) shows that the federal government has deployed 2,500 ex-insurgents for educational training in tertiary institutions and 13,000 deployed in local and foreign training centers in 2014. According to federal government publications, 13,145 ex-insurgents have received training in various skills acquisition programs including vocational and formal educational institutions (see Amnesty News vol. 1, no. 4, 4). In this context, empowerment has come to be associated with human capital development.

⁵ This statement is based on Boroh's presentation of the score card of the Presidential Amnesty Program during his ninth month in office.

The impact of human capital development was evident in the lives of the amnesty students I interviewed at Ritman University in Akwa Ibom, who were generally gratified by the windows of opportunities the amnesty scholarship has opened for them. I discovered that the amnesty scholarship has been quite impactful, especially for those students from poor and low-income families who could barely afford the exorbitant tuition in private universities. Thus, their selection as scholarship recipients gave them the opportunity to study in a private university where they will hone their skills as tomorrow's leaders. One amnesty student Aniefiok, told me:

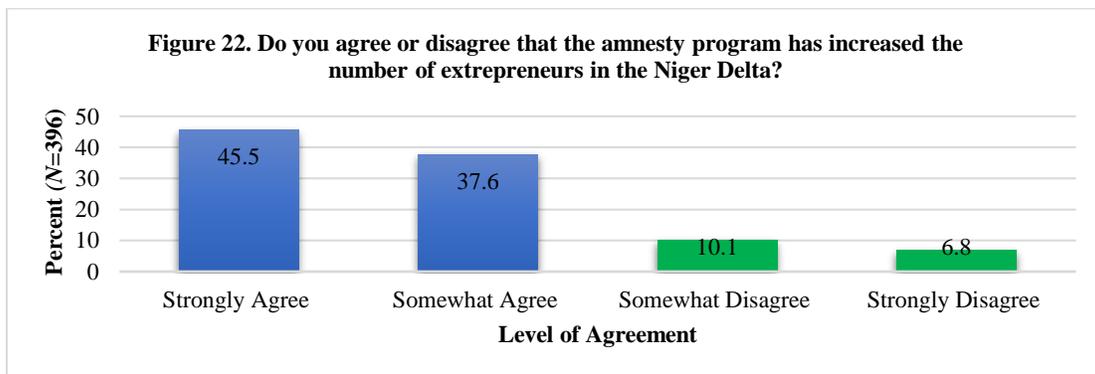
Some of these beneficiaries were hopeless in going to school because of their poor family status. Meaning the program has reduced the cost of education which would have been the sole responsibility of parents. It has contributed to human capital development. Thousands of these youths were deployed overseas for skills acquisition. After the completion of their training, they were empowered and engaged in different businesses established in the region. Some of them are currently employers of labour.

Aniefiok perceives empowerment as purely human capital development and believes this peacebuilding strategy has improved the lives of Niger Delta youths through education and skills training both within and outside Nigeria, thereby enhancing their capacity to contribute to the development of the Niger Delta.

In the statement published on the Presidential Amnesty Program website, Boroh stated that 2,152 youths from the Niger Delta were awarded full scholarship under the amnesty program to study in 32 institutions of higher learning across Europe, North America, Asia and the Caribbean, while 2,723 youths were studying in 32 universities across Nigeria (see <http://osapnd.gov.ng>). These examples attest to the impact of human capital development as a strategy for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. A significant concern raised by some ex-insurgents, however, was the selective deployment of delegates for overseas and in-country training. The Presidential Amnesty Program identified limited opportunities for in-country training in the priority areas of the amnesty program as the core reason for training ex-insurgents overseas. Removing insurgents from the creeks and exposing them to offshore environments where they gain transferable skills in a variety of

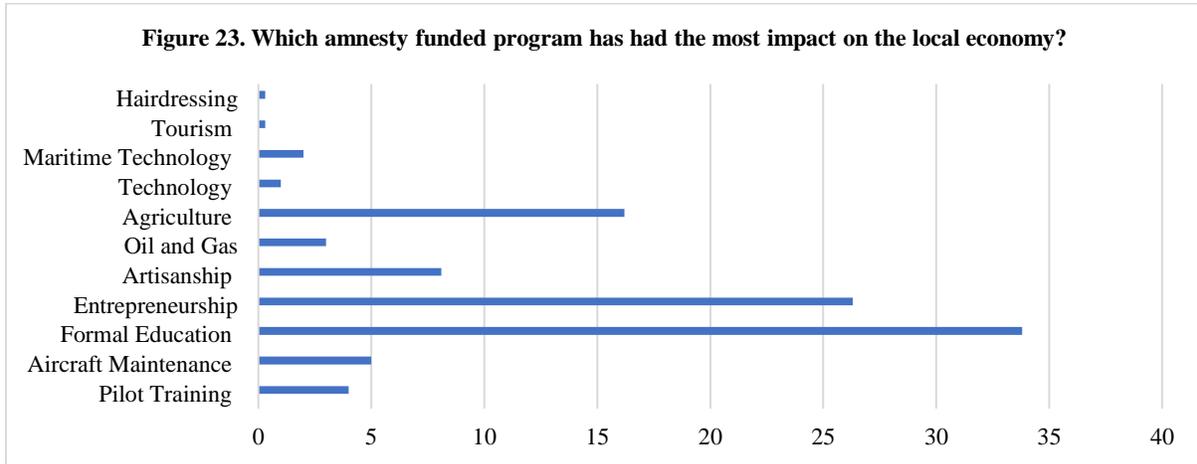
vocations is a form of empowerment that would enhance their value in society upon their return to the Niger Delta (Kuku 2015, 74).

My interest, however, was to ascertain the impact of human capital development on skilled workforce diversity. Thus, respondents were asked to indicate, using a 4-point Likert scale (*1=strongly agree*, and *4=strongly disagree*) the degree to which the amnesty program has contributed to the development of skilled workforce diversity which has increased the number of entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta. Nearly half (45.5%) of the respondents strongly agree that the peacebuilding program has increased the number of entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta, while 37.6% somewhat disagree with this opinion. Also, more than half (53.8%) of the respondents strongly agree that the program has increased the number of well trained and highly skilled professionals in the Niger Delta (see Figure 22 and Figure 17 in the previous chapter).



Concerning reintegration programs that have made the most impact on the local economy, 32.3% of the participants indicated education, followed by entrepreneurship (26.3%), and agriculture (16.1%) (see Figure 6.3). The role that education plays in human development in the oil region is a testament to the positive impact of the peacebuilding program. Some scholars describe this impact as “empowerment” (e.g. Ajibola 2015). I interviewed amnesty students from low-income families in the Niger Delta, who told me they used their scholarship funding and

allowances to support their siblings and parents. I also spoke to another group of students who dream of transforming their education into entrepreneurial endeavours that would contribute to poverty reduction in their communities or seek public office to fight for their people. These dreams attest to the positive impact of the program.



It is evident from the statistical information presented in Figure 24 that besides education, entrepreneurship and agriculture have been the most impactful programs on the local economy. The Federal government has, in partnership with institutional and corporate stakeholders, deployed thousands of ex-insurgents for various training programs on agriculture as a precondition for their empowerment with agribusinesses. OSAPND has maintained documentation of delegates graduating from training or showcasing Starter-packs as an indication of being empowered. These results give empirical validity to the definition of empowerment as human capacity development.

Empowerment as Startup Capital

While conducting field research in Rivers, I had the opportunity of interviewing ex-insurgents who featured in several amnesty publications as success stories credited to the amnesty

program. Those who participated in the demobilization training at the Obubra camp had the opportunity to identify their choice of vocations before deployment for training. George indicated interest in operating a mini-mart and had completed entrepreneurship training in Lagos but lacked the financial resources to hone his entrepreneurial skills. Following the change in government in 2015, the Amnesty Office shortlisted George for a one-week Refresher Training Course on record keeping and customer service and after that empowered him with a fish farm and Startup capital.

When asked what empowerment means to him, George stated that:

My understanding of empowerment is that I wanted to do something and was looking for somebody to help me with one hundred thousand naira. But when amnesty came, I embraced it and after the demobilization training at Obubra, I was sent for entrepreneurship training to learn how to manage a business. After completing the training, the government empowered me with a fish farm. I am putting my skill sets into practice to support my business. This experience is what I define as empowerment.

Through the eyes of George, one gets to understand empowerment as financial assistance given to an individual in need of Startup capital to start a business as well as skill training and business setup to support entrepreneurship development. Empowerment, in this sense, embodies a set of monetary transactions along with technical activities which enables the peacebuilders to facilitate the economic reintegration of ex-insurgents. Capital, in this context, refers to financial (money), human (knowledge and skills) and physical (land and machinery).

This perception of empowerment corresponds to the perspective shared by Boma, a female ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who featured in the amnesty publication as one of the success stories of the program. After several telephone conversations with Boma, I finally travelled to her community on January 15, 2018, to interview her and verify the story she had narrated over the phone concerning her empowerment. On arrival at her community, she told me she had relocated her business. She then took me to a store with a set of refrigerators loaded with fresh fish. I observed that Boma was operating a different line of business from what the government is promoting in the amnesty publications. She told me her interest was to run a fish farm but instead

they decided to empower her with some merchandise. When asked about her perception of empowerment, she said: “empowerment means money, it means giving us money. I need money to start my business again.”

It is evident that Boma didn't feel empowered despite featuring in the amnesty publication as one of the success stories of the program. She believes her empowerment failed because she received low-quality merchandise from the vendor assigned to implement her empowerment. So, she decided to venture into a new line of business and needed Startup capital to launch her dream.

Empowerment as Entitlement

Travelling to Bayelsa was a rewarding experience. My meeting with Boma gave me the opportunity to recruit Jackson, who identified as a leader of one of the notorious insurgent groups in Bayelsa that accepted amnesty in 2009. Jackson's dream was to own a car dealership business and had anticipated that his empowerment would be an automobile. Given the cost of funding this line of business, his dream couldn't fall through. A few days after our meeting, Jackson and a group of ex-insurgents from Bayelsa were deployed to Benin city for a one-week Refresher Training Course on cassava processing and fish farming. Initially, the training raised their expectations about the possibility of receiving their Startup packages, which would enable them to launch their entrepreneurial dreams. But this did not happen. I received a call from Jackson on January 22, 2018, informing me of their experience at the Refresher Training Course in Benin city. Their hopes crumbled at the realization that the Amnesty Office did not make provision for their post-training empowerment. Jackson told me: “they don't want to give us our empowerment,” which seems to suggest the denial of entitlement by those who have the means to meet that need.

My telephone conversation with Jackson gave me an insight into the dynamics of empowerment that resonates with the experiences of other ex-insurgents and Niger Delta youths who feel marginalized by the peacebuilders. The conception of empowerment revealed through my interaction with these participants was that of entitlement.

Jackson's idea of empowerment emphasizes the benefits he anticipated from the peacebuilding program for which he surrendered his arms to the government to accept amnesty. He stated unequivocally that: ".....I need my empowerment so that my life will also change." Jackson's language also suggests he was evaluating his wellbeing against his counterparts who have reaped fortunes from their participation in the program. What is important, however, is the belief among many ex-insurgents that they are inherently deserving of empowerment to the extent that it becomes a right. The peacebuilders seem to share this perspective, although they tend to restrict the definition of entitlement to the amnesty Starter pack released to those who have undergone the empowerment training. When asked about the process of empowering the amnesty delegates who have completed the training, one peacebuilder told me: "We have a Starter pack. The delegates have it. Before the vendor arrives, they know their entitlements." Perhaps, this sense of entitlement may have been fostered by the inability of the peacebuilders to communicate to the delegates their substantive benefits.

Akpan, who claims to be a youth leader from Ibeno community did not participate in insurgency but believe those who chose to be peaceful have been denied their entitlement to the training and empowerment opportunities given to insurgents and as such should be carried along.

According to Akpan:

My people are not benefitting from this amnesty training and empowerment. They should introduce empowerment for those who chose to be peaceful. Those maintaining the peace are youth leaders like me and all other youths in the community. We also have the less privileged in society who do not benefit from the empowerment. So, they need to empower

them by giving them training opportunities overseas and engaging them in the entrepreneurship training programs.

This expression serves to convey Akpan's discontent with the training and empowerment processes which elevates the interests of youths who use violence to engage with the state while marginalizing those who chose to be peaceful and law-abiding. Not only is Akpan advocating for the marginalized youth in his community, but also, he seems to be advocating for some form of wealth redistribution to ensure the entitlements earmarked for the amnesty delegates does not benefit only those who chose to engage the state with violence while alienating peaceful citizens.

Empowerment as Employment Opportunity

While reviewing the amnesty publications, I came across statistics of amnesty delegates who have been employed by some foreign companies where they undertook various training programs. For example, Samsung Electronics offered employment to 14 delegates after the completion of their training in mechatronics and welding. Scuola Edile Genovese in Italy employed 49 delegates who trained in marine mechanics. Proclad Group in Dubai retained 50 delegates on completion of their training in welding and fabrication. Other 151 delegates got direct employment after their training in mechatronics, electrical installation, underwater welding, oil and gas drilling and pipeline welding (see Amnesty News vol. 1, no.4, 4). While the post-training employment of some ex-insurgents is arguably a significant determinant of the positive impact of the program, there are many challenges.

For example, while in the field, I met former insurgents who have received training in different skills and vocations but could not find employment. Some returned to Nigeria after completing their training in the UAE, South Africa and Malaysia but were generally resentful due to unemployment. When asked what empowerment meant to them, Anderson—an ex-insurgent

from Kalabari in Rivers, told me: “empowerment means employment. Empowerment is when companies come to a community to create jobs.” What Anderson is saying is that vocational skills training is only a means to empowerment, not the end of empowerment. In other words, giving ex-insurgents technical skills without job opportunities where they will apply the skills they have learned, only produces an army of reductant and disempowered ex-insurgents waiting for an opportunity to resume violence. For this category of participants, the most significant definition of empowerment is employment opportunities. Dagogo was another ex-insurgent I interviewed in Kalabari, Rivers, who shared a similar perspective with Anderson. According to Dagogo:

Most people chose fish farming and other vocations, but those of us who prefer working in the industries are unemployed. What will they use to empower us? They should deploy us to the industrial sectors to put our skills to work.

Dagogo believes that trained ex-insurgents will feel empowered only when they can find employment in the oil and gas industry where their skills will have practical relevance. Given that thousands of trained ex-insurgents are facing difficulty finding jobs in the oil companies, the lack of opportunities to put their practical skills to work has fostered a sense of disempowerment. Grievances have arisen from the comparison of their situation with other ex-insurgents who are doing better. I also find a striking similarity between Dagogo’s understanding of empowerment and George’s perspective that:

.....Many people are doing welding work. Look for companies and laisse with them to employ the youth. If the companies are unwilling to hire the boys, they should empower them with businesses or welding equipment that will enable them to secure small contract jobs in construction projects. When you are doing something, you will think of peace. But when you are jobless, you will think of violence.

George understands empowerment as the ability to facilitate employment opportunity for the youth through a range of strategies including through partnership development with industry actors or support with the capital needed to become self-sustaining entrepreneurs. From this

perspective, empowerment means facilitating employment opportunities to liberate the youth from idleness.

The statistical results from the survey support the qualitative evidence linking employment with empowerment. For example, respondents were asked to identify, using a 5-point Likert scale (*1=Extremely responsive* and *5=Not at all responsive*) the responsiveness of the amnesty program to unemployment and poverty reduction. Also, respondents were asked to identify, using a 3-point Likert scale (*1=Better* and *3=Worse*) changes in the unemployment situation in Niger Delta compared to the pre-amnesty period. Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate, using a dichotomous scale (*1=Yes* and *2=No*) whether ex-militants are facing difficulties gaining employment upon reintegration. 30.1% of the respondents noted that the amnesty program had been very responsive to youth unemployment. Also, 45% of the respondents believe that compared to the pre-amnesty period, youth unemployment in oil communities has reduced. On the contrary, 24% said it is worse, while 31% reported that the job situation is about the same. Concerning whether ex-insurgents are facing difficulties reintegrating into the economic life of society, 63% of the respondents indicated Yes, while 37% responded No (see Figures 24, Figures 25, and Figures 26).

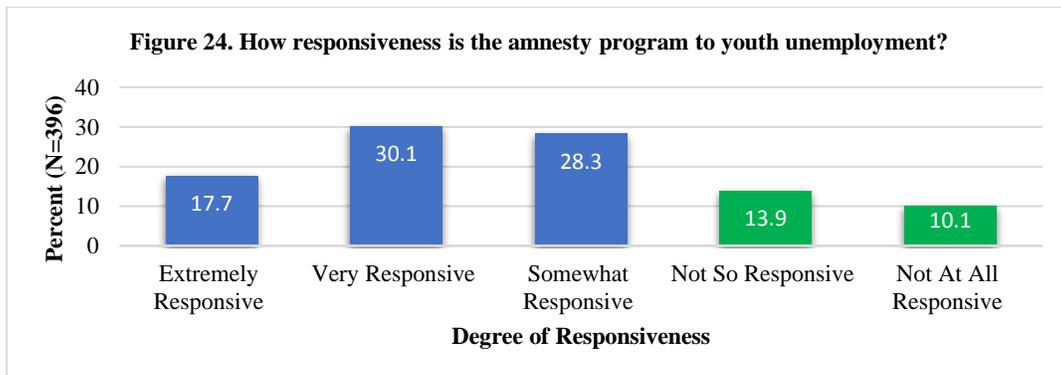


Figure 25. Compared to the period before amnesty, do you think the unemployment crisis is better, worse, or about the same?

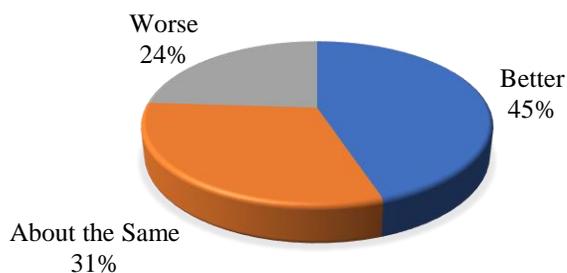
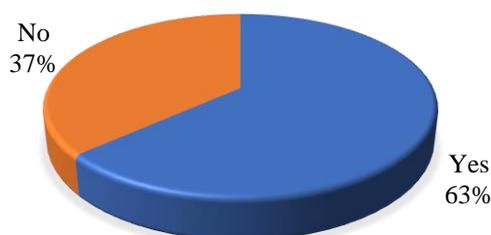


Figure 26. Did ex-militants face difficulties gaining employment upon their reintegration?



Gender Sensitivity of the Peacebuilding Program

The study by Oyewo (2016) attempted to point out the vulnerability of women and girls during the Niger Delta conflict and how the low participation of female insurgents in post-conflict reintegration activities pose a challenge to the amnesty program. While this challenge does not undermine the importance of the program, Amusan (2014, 5928) contend that “the perceived success of the amnesty program remains a failure so long as it fails to address the plight of women and girls.”

While reviewing government reports concerning the amnesty program, I stumbled into a few stories that attest to the positive impact of the peacebuilding program on female ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. For example, Alate Jackreece dropped out of high school due to poverty, and

after many years of living in deprivation, decided to join the insurgency where she sojourned in the creeks and eventually got married to one of the commandants. Jackreece who, until her enrolment in the amnesty program, could barely read and write, narrated her experience sleeping in tents, in the darkness of the Niger Delta creeks, where she drank alcohol most of the time - an experience she does not wish to return to anymore. However, after her demobilization at the Obubra camp, the Amnesty Office deployed her for entrepreneurship training at the Centre for Creative Arts in Port-Harcourt. In addition to her training in poultry, fish and snail farming, Jackreece learned other skills in soap making as well as the production of insecticides and air freshener, eventually becoming a supplier of soap to car washing businesses in the city (see Amnesty News vol. 1, no. 4, 38).

Another prominent story is that of Ngozi Idigbe, who emerged as the only female pilot trainee in a group of 32 Commercial Pilot License holders who underwent Jet/Type-Rating training at two world-class aviation training institutions under amnesty sponsorship. Idighe was also one of the 16 pilot trainees decorated as commercial pilots on April 13, 2013, following their graduation from the Afrika Union Aviation Academy in Mafikeng, South Africa. Ngozi, who has enjoyed a growing reputation as the first female pilot produced by the amnesty program, was also deployed, along with 23 delegates from the Niger Delta, for Jet/Type-Rating training at the Lufthansa Flight Institute in Frankfurt, Germany (Amnesty News vol. 1, no. 4, 18, 19, 27-28). While these stories, in a way, exemplify the positive impact of the peacebuilding program on women empowerment, the Amnesty publications only capture a few stories that glorify the positive effects of the program while marginalizing the voices of several other female stakeholders. To unravel how the program impact women, I had to contrast government-sponsored publications against the experiences of female ex-insurgents in the local communities whose struggles,

achievements, suffering and aspirations tell the amnesty story.

One of such women was Bridget from Rivers, who told me she joined the insurgency to overcome the suffering in the village and believe she fought for the future of her daughter who is currently a medical student at the University of Port-Harcourt. Bridget had saved up her amnesty earnings including profit from her small business to sponsor her daughter through medical school with the hope that she will graduate and add to the number of medical personnel in the Niger Delta. According to Bridget, “My daughter’s success is proof of the effectiveness of the amnesty program.”

After a careful review of several amnesty publications, in addition to my field experience, one issue that raised critical concerns in this study was the gender insensitivity of the peacebuilding program. I discovered that of the 30,000 registered amnesty participants in the nine states, only 822 are women. It means women constitute 2.74% of the entire amnesty participants. While this study is not intended to undertake a gender analysis, the interviews and survey results enabled me to understand how participants perceive gender dynamics in the peacebuilding program. The main concern is whether men and women are given equal opportunity in the various training and empowerment programs. Bridget shared her experience as follows:

Generally, women participated equally in all aspects of the amnesty program. Even in the training camp, women participated equally. However, the amnesty has not addressed all the needs of women. They have not settled some women. For example, last year they brought a newspaper, and if your name is there, you will be called upon to undergo four months of training after which they will empower you. From there, they could meet the concerns of some women but not all.

Bridget’s opinion is that women participated equally in all phases of the peacebuilding, although like their male counterparts, they did not have much power in deciding the appropriation of their reintegration benefits. Bridget’s experience suggests that there is a selectivity bias in the administration of the empowerment program as she believes some women are yet to access their

empowerment. The term *settled*, or *settlement*, as used in Bridget's expression, is synonymous with post-training empowerment.

Other ex-insurgents attested to the impact of peacebuilding in promoting gender equality through a variety of empowerment processes that have elevated the socioeconomic status of some women. I find the opinion expressed by Emenike particularly insightful:

The amnesty has empowered some women in things like tailoring. I saw when they brought sewing machine and generator and paid the rent for one girl who indicated interest in hairdressing.

Emenike spoke from experience, and his opinion gave credence to the views expressed by many ex-insurgents I interviewed who did not perceive any disparity between male and female participants in the appropriation of their reintegration benefits. This position confirms my interview with Benson, who stated categorically that female ex-insurgents did not experience marginalization but enjoyed the same rights and privileges as their male counterparts.

Other interviewees expressed contrasting views about women's participation in the program. One insightful perspective that revealed the tensions in the program was that of Nwoke, an ex-militant from Ogoni community in Rivers whom I recruited during the Refresher Training Course on Cassava and Fish Farming. According to Nwoke:

If I can't have access to all these things is it women that can have the access? What I want you to understand is that men are leaders of the day. We are their leaders. I don't see anything the women are doing. At the level we were operating, women are behind us.

Nwoke's position highlights the difficulty that male ex-insurgents face while trying to access their reintegration benefits as former warlords often redirect these benefits to their loyalists. Because male ex-insurgents who are bold to confront these leaders are having difficulty accessing their benefits, Nwoke believes it would be difficult for their female counterparts to access similar benefits. In his thinking, men provide leadership while the women follow. His opinion does not,

however, imply that the program marginalizes women; it does imply that even though they all have equal opportunities, it is the men who usually make things happen.

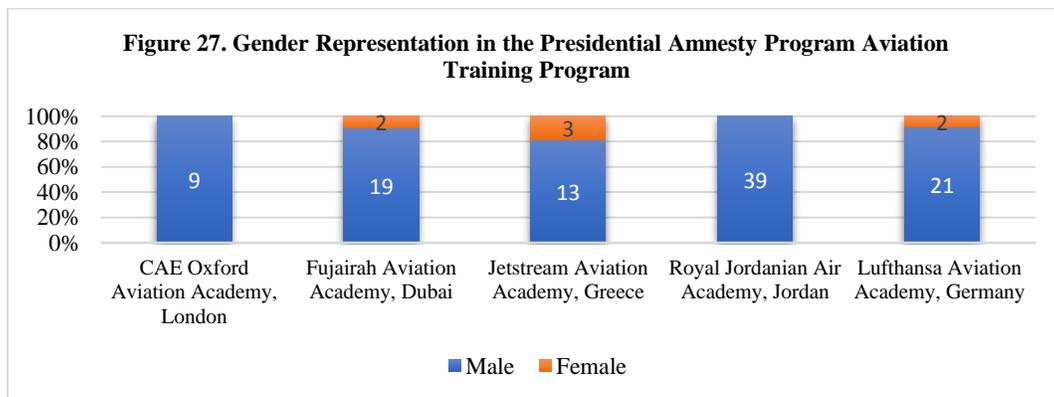
The gender bias in peacebuilding became noticeable at the Refresher Training Program, which drew a predominantly male population of ex-insurgents from Rivers and Bayelsa with no female representation. This disparity was evident while interviewing one of the vendors who acknowledged that the delegates deployed to South Korea for marine training and electrical installations were predominantly male. The gender disparity brings to light my conversation with one of the peacebuilders who did not believe that women should be given equal opportunities with the men because they did not contribute as much to the battle in the creeks as the men did. In his words:

Some women joined militancy as helpers to militants, not fighters. They were not involved in the war but were collecting information for militants. So, men and women cannot be given equal opportunity because fighting requires arms bearing and arms are synonymous with men, not women.

This opinion highlights the structural tensions in the peacebuilding program – the fact that women rarely get recognition for their role as fighters and, in most cases, their participation in the insurgency seems relegated to the status of “helpers” and “cooks” who were conscripted into the insurgency by their boyfriends. A study by Oriola (2016, 466) shows that women participated in the oil insurgency as perpetrators rather than victims and that most of the female insurgents viewed their roles as antithetical to their gender. Similarly, an earlier study by Oriola (2012) examined the fundamental role played by Niger Delta women in shaping the insurgency and contend that women constituted a significant source of spiritual reinforcement. While these studies suggest that women played combatant roles during the insurgency, Amusan (2014, 5929) notes that “there was total neglect of women and girls during the conception of the amnesty program.” The main concern for

Amusan is that those who designed the amnesty program undermined the role that women played during the insurgency, or that they are indeed the object of the conflict.

Concerns about the gender-sensitivity of the peacebuilding program remain critical because, as Amusan notes, “many women became single parents after losing their husbands in the struggle” (2014, 5929). Other scholars contend that because women are mostly affected by conflicts, they have equal rights to participate actively in shaping decisions affecting their lives (Bjarnegård and Melander 2013; Crawford, Lebovic and Macdonald 2014). This rights-based, gendered perception of women and peacebuilding has theoretical significance with regards to power and empowerment, especially when considering the inferior status which the peacebuilders confer on women, their exclusion from peacebuilding processes, including denying them of certain entitlements. Gender disparity was evident in the Aviation training programs in the UK, UAE, Greece, Jordan, and Germany, which had a disproportionate gender representation that is biased toward men (see Figure 27).



Source: Produced by the Author based on field data

This evidence illustrates the structural challenges in peacebuilding processes. Whether gender disparity represents a direct consequence of the poor implementation of DDR interventions or the fact that women generally played a marginal role in the insurgency, is subject to debate. For

example, a former Head of the Reintegration Department in the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, Lawrence Pepple, in an interview with Femi Adefila on Insight TV stated that “even the planners of the program said “one man, one gun. So, they did not envisage that women were combatants; they were porters, wives, and conscripted girlfriends” (Pepple 2014). Pepple believes the program is a success because it has given some women a lifeline even though they were not active combatants.

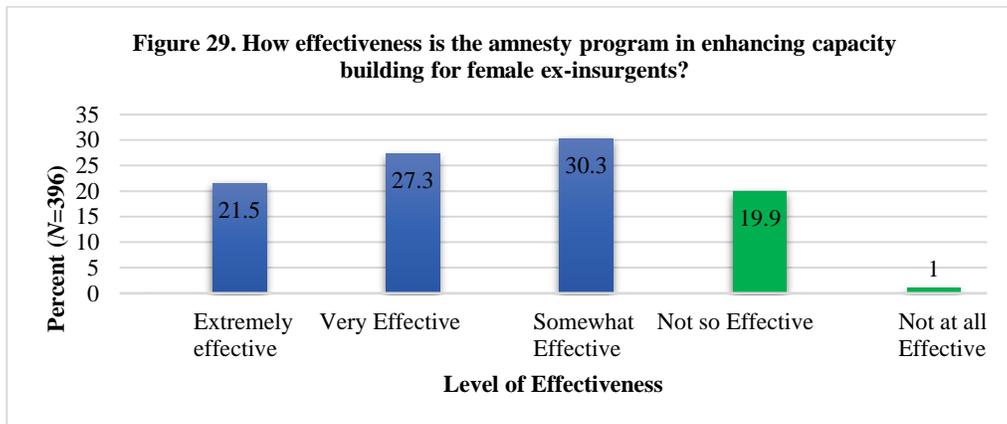
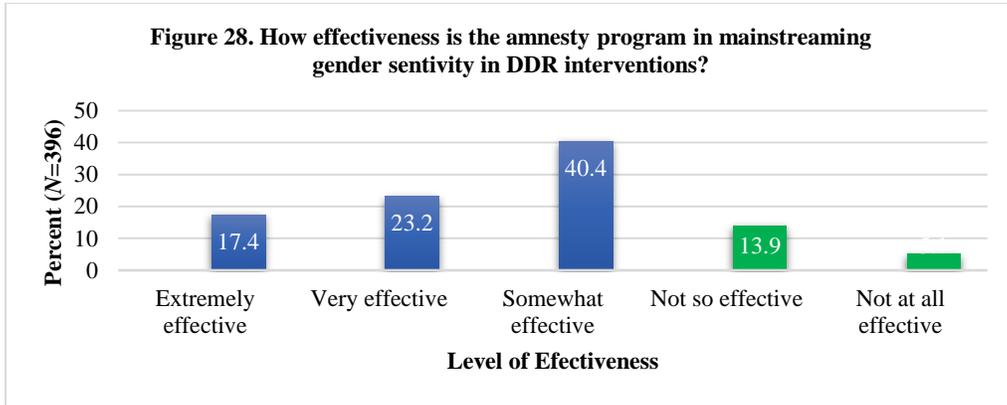
One peacebuilder, Angela, brought more clarity to the misperception surrounding the gender sensitivity in the program when she stated that:

Don't forget the program is closed, meaning it's not inclusive. When we talk about women, we are referring to women in the program which is 822. So, when we talk about women empowerment, we are limited to the 822 women in the program, and that include female students. So, women empowerment is not generalized. The only way other women are empowered is through their husbands. For example, a man can hand over his empowerment to his wife.

Angela does not deny the perceived gender insensitivity of the program but contends that the program is “closed,” meaning it is not intended to benefit women in general. What this implies is that the peacebuilders deliberately restricted the empowerment to women enlisted as ex-insurgents or amnesty students only. While the narrow focus on female ex-insurgents presents a limitation, it does not, however, imply that the program marginalizes women. The exception applies only to male ex-insurgents who at the time of training have gotten opportunities that are better than what the amnesty could offer them and may choose to transfer their empowerment to their spouses.

I performed some simple descriptive statistics to provide evidence in support of the degree of gender sensitivity in peacebuilding processes. Thus, respondents were asked to identify, using a 5-point Likert scale (*1=Extremely effective* and *5=Not at all effective*) the degree of gender sensitivity in DRR processes. Concerning gender equality, 40.4% of the respondents indicated that the program has been somewhat effective in mainstreaming gender equality in the various DDR processes. Similarly, 30.3% of the respondents indicated that the program has been somewhat

effective in enhancing capacity building for female ex-insurgents through education and skills training (see Figure 28 and Figure 29). This analysis supports the qualitative result concerning the gender sensitivity of DDR interventions because it shows that even though the program is biased towards the male ex-insurgents, it does not outrightly marginalize women.



Empowerment and Women’s Agency

To further contextualize the nature of empowerment, what deserves attention is gender representation and women’s agency. There is a dearth of empirical studies dealing specifically with how post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta impacts women. Okonofua (2011, 12-13) has attempted to demonstrate the gender insensitivity of the peacebuilding program as women

constitute a relatively small percent of the total population of ex-insurgents. This realization is crucial because as Nillson (2005) observed, comparatively female insurgents tend to have limited access to information, skills, employment opportunities and knowledge. This disparity exists because “peacebuilding processes” often equip men with more reintegration benefits than they do to women (Okonofua 2011, 13). The conclusions drawn by these scholars buttresses the findings of this study which shows that gender representation in the Niger Delta peacebuilding process is skewed disproportionately against women who are mostly perceived as helpers conscripted into the insurgency by boyfriends, rather than agents fighting for the liberation of their region and, as such, deserve equal representation.

Although Okonofua (2016) has made a significant attempt to demonstrate the success of the peacebuilding program in rehabilitating and reintegrating former insurgents into civilian society, his analysis gives attention to questions concerning the impact of DDR on women. How the program might be enhancing women’s agency to make independent choices concerning their emancipation has not been addressed. Amusan identified the marginalization of women in the “conception of the amnesty program” as a critical challenge confronting peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta (2014, 5929). Equally important is the study by Oyewo (2016) which points out the vulnerability of women and girls during the insurgency, and how post-conflict reintegration practices marginalize women, thereby revealing a critical challenge confronting the program. For Oyewo, this challenge does not undermine the uniqueness of the program, which derives from the limited participation of stakeholders, an internal funding mechanism, and the training of militants beyond the shores of the conflict environment. Amusan contends that “the perceived success of the program remains a failure so long as it fails to address the plight of women and girls” (2014, 5928).

It is evident that the peacebuilding program undermines the agency of female ex-insurgents in designing interventions for enhancing their capacity so that their voices and needs remain marginal in the search for lasting peace. It is these dynamic processes of empowerment that define the positive and negative impacts of the peacebuilding program.

Empowerment and Disempowerment

On 10 January 2018, I made an appointment to meet with Benson, an ex-insurgent from Rivers. I identified Benson from the amnesty publication as one of the beneficiaries of the empowerment program. The publication profiled Benson as an “empowered” ex-insurgent running a successful electronics enterprise in Rivers. Until I met Benson, my thinking was that the electronics store was operational, which would give me an opportunity to evaluate the nature of the empowerment and its impact. We agreed to meet at the exact business address indicated on the publication. I arrived at the address an hour earlier to survey the environment before our meeting but could not locate an electronics store in that address. Instead, I saw a restaurant owned by a woman in her late fifties. I inquired from local vendors, but none of the individuals I spoke with knew about the electronics store. When Benson eventually arrived at the location, he told me a different story, that his electronics enterprise failed because he received counterfeit goods packaged in original boxes. He soon realized the goods had low market value and decided to auction them and shut down the business. In summary, Benson believes his empowerment failed because the vendor contracted to set-up his business delivered counterfeit goods to him, often crested with original Samsung labels while the product inside wears a “No Name” label. These products are often returned at the discovery that they are counterfeit, causing him to lose

customers. Benson was prompted to shut down his business because he was not making any profit and could not afford to continue paying rent.

It is evident from my interview with Benson that he had received some merchandise which could have changed his life but felt disempowered because the vendor contracted to facilitate his empowerment delivered counterfeit goods to him which were less attractive to consumers. However, Benson's claims raise a plethora of questions. The question is, did the business fail due to mismanagement or because the goods were counterfeit? One would think that Benson has mismanaged his empowerment and was making up the stories to cover up for his managerial incompetence. However, hearing similar stories repeatedly from several ex-insurgents who reside in different communities or states gave validity to Benson's claims. Benson's experience resonates with that of Eze, the first ex-insurgent I interviewed in Rivers, who expressed a deep sense of frustration over the failure of his empowerment project and felt the government did not empower him because his poultry farm failed. Eze attributed the failure of his empowerment to the vendor's inability to deliver the quantity of feed required to grow his poultry so he could sell the chicken and use the proceeds to sustain the business. From Eze's perspective, the vendor fails to meet his obligations to the beneficiaries. He stated unequivocally that:

The government is trying to bring peace in Niger Delta, but contractors are causing havoc. The contractor they sent to empower me messed up the whole empowerment by not releasing the bags of feed as promised. My chickens died because I received less of the feed I was promised by the contractor. So, he did not empower me.

Eze's experience attests to the role that vendors play in creating conditions that make the beneficiaries of various empowerment projects to feel disempowered and why it seems the peacebuilding program has made a tremendous impact in the lives of some ex-insurgents and not in others. The experience raises critical questions concerning what empowerment means to those who are impacted negatively. Even though an ethnographic survey of Eze's poultry farm shows

evidence of a failed empowerment project, I wasn't quite apprehensive because I thought he must have mismanaged his opportunity. But hearing similar stories repeatedly in different communities prompted me to solicit the peacebuilders' opinion concerning these claims. One of the peacebuilders, Ebi refuted these claims as follows:

Most of the problems you saw in the field are self-inflicted. If they gave you a shop stocked with merchandise, our office would monitor you for a certain period. But we can't watch you for eternity. And it's expected that your business will grow. But if your business doesn't improve, is it the fault of our office? You went through training. You also went through the refresher training on entrepreneurial skills development before your empowerment. So, when you chose to mismanage your business eventually, is it the fault of our office?

I find a disconnect between the peacebuilders' narratives and the narratives of the beneficiaries. On the one hand, the ex-insurgents feel disempowered because they claim the vendors have diverted their empowerment. On the other hand, the peacebuilders claim the beneficiaries have all been empowered and reintegrated but have only mismanaged their enterprises. In these two scenarios, the constant variable is the vendors serving as the middleman between the peacebuilders and the beneficiaries. These perceptions and misperceptions reveal the tension between power and empowerment in post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. What is important, however, is the disconnect between the realities in the communities and the success stories projected in amnesty publications which, in my opinion, oversimplify the impact of the peacebuilding program.

Power, Empowerment, and Peacebuilding

Although empowerment has been a central theme in the peacebuilding debate in general, the nature of empowerment remains a critical concern. This study found different perceptions of empowerment, reflecting the perspectives of the peacebuilders and those of the beneficiaries. While the discourse on empowerment has increasingly become the dominant vocabulary in DDR

interventions in the Niger Delta, the scholarly discussion to date has focused exclusively on human capital development (e.g. Ajibola 2015). Given the limited empirical literature on empowerment, we know very little how peacebuilding interventions generate notions of power and empowerment by reconfiguring relations between conflict actors. This limitation leaves us with the question of what “empowerment” really mean to both the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents who are targets of various empowerment programs. What deserves more attention is the distinction between empowerment as perceived by the peacebuilders and discussed in research on peacebuilding and empowerment as viewed by the ex-insurgents who participated in the peace program.

The conception of empowerment articulated by the peacebuilders is vertically integrated. It implies some measure of power not in the sense of the power exercised by the ex-insurgents to make choices over their destinies or transform the resources in their land into sustainable sources of livelihood, but one that equates empowerment with liberal peacebuilding visions based on top-down interventions that prioritize human capital development and entrepreneurship. Since top-down empowerment ties directly to material wellbeing, perceptions of relative deprivation have generated an attitude of disempowerment among the target beneficiaries. This discovery is both useful and thought-provoking because it relates directly to the impacts of the peacebuilding program.

Although empowerment appears as a prominent theme in peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta, the research to date has given little attention to this subject, except for the recent study by Ajibola (2015). Despite the limited scope of Ajibola’s research, it raises significant concerns regarding the importance attached to the success of the reintegration program, and whether the nature of empowerment has the potential to promote peace and development in the Niger Delta. Following an extensive study of the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland, Byrne (2010) argues that sustainable conflict resolution requires economic empowerment. Although violence reduction is arguably a significant element of peacebuilding, real success depends on efforts to provide employment opportunities for the ex-insurgents after their training, while also accommodating those who have not

benefitted from the program to avoid a relapse into violence (Ajibola, 2015). While Ajibola's argument gives credibility to my findings, her conception of empowerment as strictly human capital ignores the multifaceted contexts in which the peacebuilders and the beneficiaries perceive and misperceive empowerment.

Therefore, the starting point of my analysis is the understanding that empowerment as conceived by the peacebuilders and reflected in Ajibola's work, takes the form of a top-down intervention that involves the imposition of power, thereby undermining the agency of the beneficiaries of these interventions. I argue that the peacebuilders' conception of empowerment proceeds from a materialistic medium of power that position the peacebuilders as the giver or source of empowerment and the beneficiaries as morally deserving recipients of some material benefits. The psychological impact of this material conception of empowerment creates a system of dependency among the recipients who continue to look up the peacebuilders as their source of hope. This materialistic conception of empowerment, while it operates through a top-down mechanism of power, robs the beneficiaries of their agency.

For example, Samman and Santos (2009) identified numerous definitions of empowerment that converge around the concept of agency, referring to the ability of individual and group actors to make purposive choices. This conception of empowerment resonates with an earlier study by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007, 6) who defined empowerment in terms of human "agency, self-direction, self-determination, liberation, participation, mobilization, and self-confidence." The development theorist, Sen (1985) communicated a similar view of empowerment as a person's freedom to achieve the desired goal and focus analytical attention on the individual. Similarly, a World Bank publication by Alsop, Bertlson, and Holland (2006) defined empowerment as the process of strengthening people's "capacity to make choices" without constraints and "to

transform those choices into the desired outcomes.” The common thread binding these definitions is the concept of agency.

My experience at the Refresher Training Course on Cassava Processing/Fish Farming and Entrepreneurship for ex-insurgents between January 16-19, 2018, revealed the tension between the peacebuilders’ agenda in the city and the aspirations of ex-insurgents who reside in the rural communities. Although the empowerment training was designed to help the beneficiaries understand the processes involved in transforming cassava into different entrepreneurial ventures, the knowledge was transmitted using technical language, not minding the literacy levels of the recipients. This challenge created some resistance at the training center, as some ex-insurgents, deficient in their ability to comprehend and translate technical information into cultural knowledge, perceived the training as irrelevant to their socioeconomic development.

This observation was important because the ex-insurgents who participated in the training possessed similar characteristics with those I met in Rivers and Bayelsa with regards to literacy, communication abilities, exposure, and intellectual abilities. They all demonstrated proficiency in Pidgin English but lack original English language proficiency, which is the language used in the design and implementation of the empowerment training. What ignited my curiosity the most was the discovery that more than 95 percent of the participants in the training course could barely read and write in English. This discovery further exposed the level of illiteracy in the rural communities and the importance of engaging with the ex-insurgents in designing suitable and appropriate interventions that take into consideration the level of intellectual development, cultural sensitivity, and the environmental conditions in the rural and isolated communities.

This approach to training and empowerment uncovers the power dynamics which manifest itself in peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. To fully contextualize these dynamics with

regards to notions of power and empowerment, it is crucial that we draw attention to Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which serves as the theoretical footing for conflict transformation. Freire drew his intellectual influence from Marxism and Fanon's (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth*, to lay the foundation for a critical analysis of "humanization" and "dehumanization" in society, marked by the existential conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, and the struggles by the oppressed to regain their lost humanity. Freire argues that being oppressed is a dehumanizing experience because oppression negates the conditions believed to be fundamental to the experience of humanization. The fact remains that the experience of dehumanization inhibits the capacity of the oppressed to imagine creative ways of changing the world around them.

At the heart of Freire's pedagogy is the way in which education has been used as a tool for oppression—what he calls "banking education"—and how the teacher-student relationship can be transformed into one of mutual discourse and discovery. Thus, Freire's theory underlies the idea that education was a critical element in either perpetuating oppressive conditions, or in helping to create a more democratic society. Freire believes that by influencing people to adapt to the oppressive conditions in which they find themselves, they become less capable of imagining the world around them as something that is capable of transformation. He notes that the "banking concept" of education attempts to control how people think about the world, leads people to adjust to the world of the oppressors, and inhibits their creative imagination (Freire 1970, 77). This process leads to self-depreciation, whereby the oppressed, "having internalized the image of the oppressors" and have adopted their opinions, are afraid to liberate themselves (47).

Following Freire, I contend that disempowerment occurs when the ex-insurgents are made to think less of their agency, cultural knowledge, experience, and intellectual abilities. In other

words, the top-down processes of training and empowerment denies the beneficiaries the opportunity to contribute to the conceptualization of the solution to their problem. The implication is that empowerment programs that focus on cassava production and entrepreneurship gave little attention to the fact that the soil conditions in the oil communities may not support cassava production due to pollution. This realization explains why some participants expressed a lack of interest in the cassava training, while others prefer training in fish farming to take advantage of their coastal ecosystem. Some participants believe they already possess practical knowledge in cassava production and only needed entrepreneurial training in fish production, which is a lucrative industry in the coastal communities, especially when undertaken on a commercial scale.

Given the conflicting expectations, participants who did not identify cassava farming as their priority refused to pay attention to the training. Their attitude to the training created the impression that the peacebuilders were imposing the cassava training against their will while denying them the opportunity to make their own choices with regards to the type of empowerment they consider feasible in their coastal communities. For example, one ex-insurgents stated that “the main problem with the amnesty program is that the top does not connect with the bottom.” What this means is that the peacebuilders have chosen to impose training and empowerment on the ex-insurgents rather than engaging them in designing appropriate solutions to their problems, taking into consideration the feasibility of the coastal ecosystems where the insurgents reside. The imposition of values framed as empowerment has continued to create a feeling of disempowerment among the ex-insurgents who feel disconnected from solutions that are designed to improve their lives.

Ginty (2012) has raised concerns about the implication of technocracy for contemporary peacebuilding, arguing that the technocratic turn in peacebuilding is reinforced by the complex

mix of structural and proximate factors, so that responses to conflict are pre-determined by their discursive framing by powerful actors. Using historical and contemporary examples, Ginty (2008) shows how the standardization of international peace interventions in civil war situations often fails to deliver peace. The concern for Ginty is that the dominance of western peacebuilding approaches limits the space for traditional and Indigenous approaches as well as the feasibility of co-existence. While traditional approaches are grounded in spirituality and customs, western approaches are based on technical principles. Ginty's work thus underlines the feasibility of synthesizing western and indigenous approaches to support peacebuilding interventions.

The strength of Ginty's work lies in its ability to not only underline gaps in international peacebuilding but also to recognize that sustainable peace requires a plurality of visions. While I agree with Ginty's argument and its implication for the Niger Delta peace process, there are differences in the levels of analysis between his approach and mine. For example, Ginty developed his approach based on empirical observations of the challenges emerging from international peacebuilding practices that are often in tension with local realities. His approach thus offers a trenchant critique of liberal peace while proposing methodological hybridity in peacebuilding. In contrast, my approach develops from the critical challenges emerging from a nationally-driven peacebuilding process utilizing liberal peacebuilding principles. Despite the differences in the levels of analysis, both approaches emphasize the preponderance of technocracy in driving international and national peacebuilding processes.

Lederach (1995, 64) describes this "prescriptive model" of training as the transfer of technical knowledge to subjects and distinguishes this from the "elicitive model" which represents a bottom-up approach and source of discovery that does not rely on expert knowledge and the application of universal standards but relationship transformation. Lederach notes that in the

“elicitive model,” training resources are sourced locally while the training seeks to address needs within the surrounding conditions (1995, 64). Unlike the “prescriptive model” where the lead participant acts as an expert, the “elicitive model” limits the leader’s role to that of a facilitator. In a broader sense, the “elicitive model” views “Indigenous knowledge as a valued resource for creating and sustaining appropriate models of conflict resolution in a particular setting” (56). This distinction does not imply that the elicit model promotes Indigenous knowledge; instead, it is considered a more effective model in enhancing the capacity and creativity of participants in discovering solutions that best address their needs. The “elicitive model” thus represents the most creative approach to conflict transformation that envisions conflict as an opportunity for change (Lederach 2003).

My field experience shows that the consultants hired to train the ex-insurgents in cassava farming had no practical farming experience. As such, they focused on the theoretical aspects of cassava farming and entrepreneurship and less on the actual practice of cassava farming. In many ways, the consultants failed to consider the various processes undertaken by local farmers that culminate in the final cassava product much less introduce some innovation in cassava production. While the participants were drawn from rural communities where agriculture is the mainstay and, therefore, possess knowledge of seasonal variations, the consultants did not incorporate in their training modules the cultural experiences of the participants as well as their knowledge of environmental conditions in their respective communities. Very importantly, the training modules did not cover lessons on seasonal changes, soil conditions, shifting cultivation, preparation of the land, the type of cassava stems and how to position the cassava stems on the ground for effective yield. In addition to this, the consultants failed to include lessons on the preparation of the farm

after planting and the land tenure systems in local communities to ensure the training is culturally sensitive and that it adapts to the cultural knowledge and experiences of the trainees.

Therefore, the peacebuilders focussed on depositing technical knowledge on the trainees rather than blending technical and local-cultural ideas on cassava production to develop innovative models of maximizing their entrepreneurial potentials within the context of their local economies and environmental conditions. I recall one ex-insurgent who told me: “I don’t have land to plant cassava, so the training is not useful to me because I will not be able to put the knowledge to practice.” It is through these dynamic processes of education and training that empowerment—as conceived by the peacebuilders—creates a sense of disempowerment among the ex-insurgents. It is evident that the peacebuilders completely ignored regional dynamics, the fact that the local environments in oil communities are not cassava-friendly due to pollution so that the cassava training given to the ex-insurgents will be meaningless without including in the peacebuilding program efforts to remediate the endangered environments to support agricultural productivity in the oil communities.

While not dismissing the successes achieved through the various empowerment programs, my field experience revealed the disconnect between the peacebuilders policy focus on using cassava production to drive the empowerment process and the actual priorities of the ex-insurgents. This experience was evident at the Refresher Training Course in Calabar where I met a group of delegates from Rivers and Bayelsa drinking beer while the session was ongoing. I introduced myself and my mission and after that inquired why they were not participating in the training session. They told me unanimously that they had no interest in cassava production. During the interview, many participants re-echoed their lack of interest in the cassava training. It is unlikely

that such participants will succeed as farmers since they appear demotivated about the training but concerned mainly with their per diem. This observation revives interest Lederach's work.

In *Preparing for Peace*, Lederach (1995) takes a practitioner approach to peacebuilding which recognizes implicit knowledge as common knowledge of experience and explicit knowledge as training-based learning. Drawing on his experience conducting seminars in Costa Rican villages, Lederach and his participants developed a conception of empowerment from the Spanish word *capacitacion*, inspired by the cultural knowledge of the participants whom the training was intended to benefit (1995, 21). By breaking down the concept of *capacitacion* into linguistic components, they discovered its deeper meanings in connection with verbs such as "I can," "capable," and "power." From this ontological standpoint, the notion of *capacitacion* became a fundamental idea that links to "social empowerment." Empowerment, as used in this context, means "overcoming obstacles and making possible the movement from 'I cannot' to 'I can'" (21). This notion of empowerment ties closely with the underlying logic behind the peacebuilding program. In many ways, the program has elevated the status of youths who previously had given up on their dreams to finally believing in themselves and their potential to rise from downtrodden conditions in the oil communities to becoming pilots, aircraft maintenance technicians, marine technicians, fashion designers, university graduates and entrepreneurs.

The notion of self-empowerment also translates to another conception of empowerment based on the consciousness of interpersonal relations, what Lederach describe as *confianza*—a Spanish word that describes "empowerment as mutual dependence" (1995, 21). Connecting the words *capacitacion* and *confianza* leads to the understanding that our power, abilities and accomplishments derive from our interdependent relationships with others. In this context, Lederach believes that peacebuilding works for the empowerment of people to participate actively

in decisions concerning their destinies. This notion of empowerment underlines the practical challenges of the Niger Delta peacebuilding program, the fact that many ex-insurgents were not given the opportunity to decide their destiny but forced to subscribe to empowerment programs that align with the policy priorities of the peacebuilders. This tendency has fostered what I call the *Oliver Twist syndrome* among ex-insurgents who perceive the empowerment as their entitlement.

The *Oliver Twist syndrome* derives from my field observation and refers to the insatiable attitudes of ex-insurgents. I found that ex-insurgents who have benefitted from the empowerment program but blame the vendors for the failure of their businesses are seeking re-empowerment. Most of them disguise as disempowered ex-insurgents by soliciting additional empowerment to compensate for losses they claim to have suffered because of the poor coordination of the empowerment program. This syndrome is persistent among ex-insurgents who are generally dispassionate about their empowerment. In such cases, empowerment becomes reduced to the realm of materialism, where some beneficiaries immediately feel disempowered once the value of their material benefits depreciates.

The Mechanistic Model of Empowerment

One of the complexities of the peacebuilding program lies in the process of empowering ex-insurgents in purely materialistic that are not culturally sensitive. I coin the term *mechanistic empowerment* to describe a peacebuilding process that is excessively materialistic in its outlook, especially its emphasis on using mechanisms such as financial empowerment and wealth acquisition as a means of transforming conflict (see Figure 30). Mechanistic empowerment represents a top-down approach to peacebuilding where empowerment is programmatic and

organized in stages and using technical training, start-up capital and business set-up to reintegrate ex-insurgents and get them off the DDR pipeline.

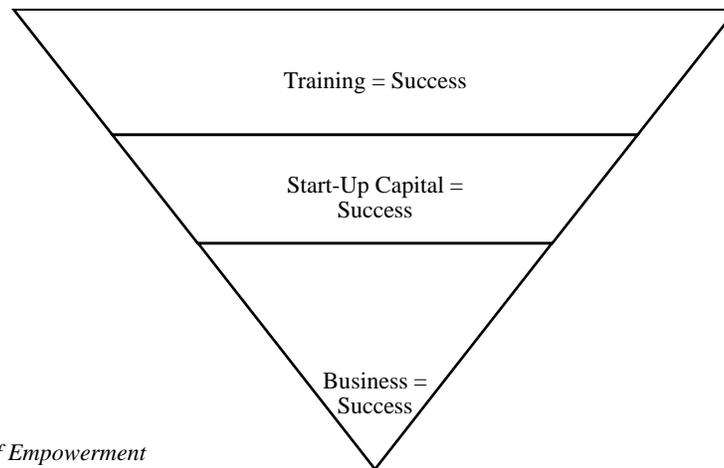


Figure 30. Mechanistic Model of Empowerment

The *mechanistic model* of empowerment is evident in the deployment of 177 delegates to South Africa, England, Greece, Jordan, Germany, and the UAE for Pilot and Aviation Maintenance Engineering training of which only 63 were certified as Commercial Pilot License holders (Amnesty News vol. 1, no. 4, 4). While these training opportunities are indispensable for achieving the government's strategic objectives, concerns arise as to how the experience translates into employment in the aviation industry. These concerns are germane, considering that the former amnesty boss Paul Boroh had told newsmen that 120 ex-insurgents who have received pilot training abroad were unemployable (Suleiman 2015). This development has two implications. The first implication is that the pilot training acquired by the ex-insurgents may be insufficient to enhance their capacity to operate as professional pilots in commercial airlines. In other words, providing ex-insurgents with pilot training does not necessarily translate to employment as professional pilots. The second implication underlines the risk of hiring ex-insurgents to fly commercial planes as many airlines will be unwilling to risk their reputation and the security of

their customers at the slightest discovery that the pilot is a former militant may provoke fear among passengers. It is true that the state has granted amnesty and pardon to these insurgents. The danger is that some pilots are at risk of losing prospective job opportunities at the discovery of their past transgressions as militants and criminals. One may argue that the peacebuilders failed to take into consideration the risk of investing in the training of pilots who will face employment barriers post-graduation. I argue that this top-down, liberal conception of peacebuilding that conceives of empowerment materialistically does not necessarily translate to improvement in the wellbeing of the ex-insurgents and as a result is less likely to produce positive peace.

It is for this reason that I turn attention to an alternative vision of peacebuilding driven by a bottom-up approach to empowerment, what I describe as ecological empowerment. The starting point of this discussion is the work of Donais (2009) which outlines liberal and communitarian forms of peacebuilding as two readily distinguishable visions with significantly contrasting assumptions with regards to the role that local actors play in post-conflict peacebuilding processes. According to Donais, liberal peacebuilding represents an effort to “transform war-torn societies into functioning liberal democracies, where the liberal democratic framework is seen not only as the gold standard of good governance but also as the most secure foundation for sustainable peace” (2009, 5-6). Roland (2002, 638) contends that the liberal vision of peacebuilding, which derives its origin from the liberal peace, “sees peacebuilding as an effort to bring post-war societies into conformity with the international system’s prevailing standards of domestic governance.”

Contrary to liberal peacebuilding, Donais introduced communitarian peacebuilding as another vision of peacebuilding from below commonly associated with the work of Lederach (2009, 6). Unlike liberal peacebuilding which stresses the imposition of a universal governance template on post-conflict societies, Donais notes that “peacebuilding communitarians uphold the

rights” of societies emerging from conflict to decide their destinies, regardless of whether such decisions “correspond with emerging international norms” (6). Bush (1996, 86) acknowledges that “the challenge of rebuilding post-conflict societies is to nurture and create the social, economic and political space within which local actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources required to build a peaceful, just, and prosperous society.” From this perspective, communitarian peacebuilding stresses the importance of deriving peace from the cultural resources of those affected by war. While the liberal peacebuilding framework predominates the design and implementation of the Niger Delta DDR process, the perspectives expressed by the ex-insurgents and their ideas about empowerment corresponds to the communitarian vision of peacebuilding introduced by Donais, which derives its theoretical roots from the work of Lederach.

The challenge of adhering to a “bottom-up” building approach as posited by Lederach is that peacebuilding derives from cultural knowledge of experience, and thus it sees culture as static rather than fluid and subject to change. What this implies is that how communities experience conflict and how they construct their experience with regards to peacebuilding differ across cultures and change over time due to generational differences and the influence of cultural globalization. While Lederach has made a successful attempt to communicate a bottom-up understanding of peacebuilding that is emancipatory and resonates with the perspectives of local people, his conception of empowerment suffers some theoretical limitations.

Also, Lederach’s conception of “social empowerment” seems more like a theory of motivation than a liberatory approach. This argument is true especially when mirrored against the social complexities in post-conflict societies such as the Niger Delta where former insurgents who represent a different generation hold a radically different approach to empowerment that is community-oriented yet links up to institutional forms of change. Lederach fails to contextualize

the nature of communitarianism and what community means in the context of peacebuilding since armed groups often themselves as a community—both in the construction of war—and in negotiations of peace. My definition of empowerment suggests helping disadvantaged groups to exercise their agency and thereby to transform their ideas and resources within their immediate environments into sustainable opportunities. Based on this inspiration, I develop the concept of *ecological empowerment* to provide a communitarian model of peacebuilding that corresponds to the perspectives expressed by the ex-insurgents and their perception of empowerment.

The Ecological Model of Empowerment

The top-down, mechanistic model of empowerment reveals itself in the experiences of several ex-insurgents I met in Rivers and Bayelsa who had undertaken overseas training in marine welding and marine technology but could not secure employment since the oil multinationals are unwilling to hire them. Another category of ex-insurgents I met in Rivers told me they are facing employment discrimination in the oil and gas industry because they were issued sub-standard certifications from their overseas training programs that are incompatible with the Nigerian standard. These challenges thrive because the program was designed with a liberal peacebuilding template that imposes a mechanistic form of empowerment on the ex-insurgents while neglecting ecological conceptions of empowerment which aligns with the visions of the beneficiaries and takes into consideration the economic opportunities within the coastal communities.

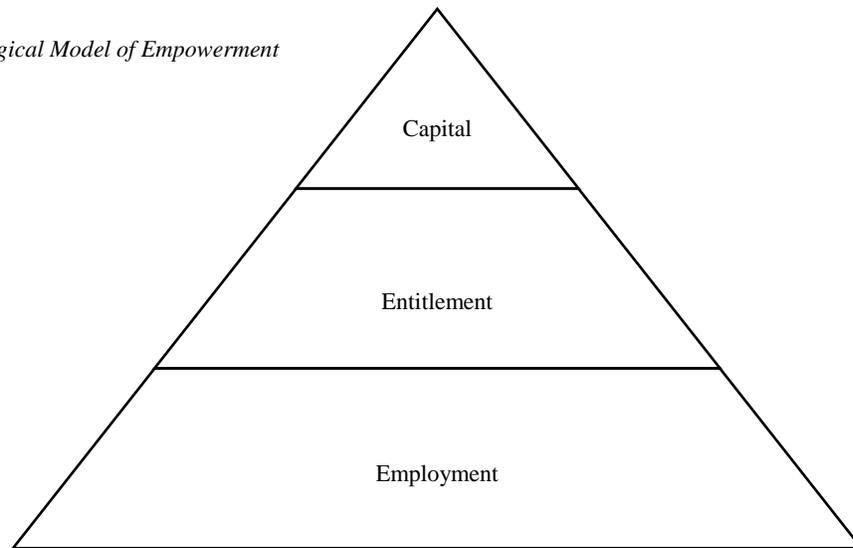
I define *ecological empowerment* as a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding derived from people's ability to maximize their agency in exploring peaceful solutions to their problems by utilizing the economic resources within their immediate ecosystem. In the ecological model of empowerment, capital does not necessarily derive from economic resources but a combination of

economic, social and cultural resources that enable disarmed and demobilized insurgents to invent peaceful solutions that are culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable (See Figure 31).

The ecological model of empowerment also confers a sense of entitlement to the beneficiaries of peacebuilding interventions. In other words, empowerment cannot be given to people as pre-determined solutions. Instead, people must understand that they are inherently deserving of rights and special treatments as indigenes of the oil communities. Education and technical training should then enhance their capabilities to gain employment, expand their freedoms, and lay claim to these rights without discrimination, in accordance with the legal framework of society. I contend that empowerment that leads to sustainable peace takes place when peacebuilding interventions are enabling, rather than constraining the exercise of human agency.

Although reintegration programs in post-conflict societies have traditionally focused on enhancing the economic well-being of ex-insurgents, Alden, Thakur, and Arnold (2011) note that effective reintegration must, in addition to economic considerations, facilitate the social integration of ex-insurgents. As Knight (2008, 29) points out, “sustained reintegration” occurs when ex-combatants become productive members of their communities. According to Ferguson (2010, 152), the reintegration of ex-combatants into “productive civilian life” is key to post-conflict security and recovery. For Donais (2009) peacebuilding must take into consideration the cultural exchange between local and international actors rather than the preponderance of the liberal peace which often marginalizes local cultural visions.

Figure 31. Ecological Model of Empowerment



The idea of ecological empowerment suggests that people must derive their sense of empowerment from their inherent abilities to explore solutions to their problems using the resources within their immediate ecosystems. So far, the numerous ex-insurgents deployed to Malaysia, South Korea, UAE, Canada, U.S.A and Great Britain for education and professional training did not return to Nigeria to contribute to nation-building as the goal of the amnesty program stated but are working and deploying their knowledge and skills to develop those societies where they currently reside. Also, those who returned to settle in Nigeria have abandoned the rural communities in the Niger Delta to resettle in the cities, which raises questions concerning the effectiveness of the peace process in the development of the oil region.

Conclusion

The subject of empowerment has been fundamental to post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. Because economic intervention has been a substantial requirement for sustainable peace, it may well be the case that effective peacebuilding in the Niger Delta requires the investment of enormous material resources. If empowerment is indeed a pre-requisite

to successful peacebuilding in the oil region, then the debate around the nature of empowerment, its manifestation, impact and consequences to date, may need to proceed beyond human capital development. As demonstrated in this chapter, the complex relationship between the peacebuilders and the local insurgents with regards to their understanding of empowerment lies at the heart of programmatic challenges confronting reintegration practices.

For the peacebuilders, empowerment proceeds through materialistic, vertically integrated interventions which involve the implementation of capacity building, skills training and entrepreneurial activities, thereby creating the impression that such interventions may motivate the ex-insurgents to pursue peace. This intervention logic proceeds from a top-down approach to peacebuilding, whereby the beneficial effects expected from the peace process as catalysts for transformation, were defined by the peacebuilders. For many participants, empowerment represents the disappointing outcome of the mechanistic approach to peacebuilding, which focusses on technocratic strategies of reintegrating the ex-insurgents into society. On the contrary, the participants emphasize an ecological approach to empowerment with a communitarian disposition which takes into consideration the knowledge and cultural resources of those affected by conflict as significant in exploring solutions to sustainable peace.

It seems from the various perspectives that the ex-insurgents and the peacebuilders are talking about similar, and in most cases, different things when referring to empowerment. This understanding leaves us with the questions of what “empowerment” really mean in the context of the Niger Delta peacebuilding program. If one could conclude by merely listening to the opinions of the ex-insurgents, it would be evident that many empowerment programs which the peacebuilders advertise as success stories are not entirely successful. Instead, there is a pervasive sense of disempowerment among the ex-insurgents whose empowerment projects failed due to

technical challenges in the design and coordination of reintegration processes. In general, it is the role played by the peacebuilders in frustrating the empowerment program and the managerial irresponsibility on the part of many ex-insurgents that generate the experience of disempowerment.

This chapter has argued that the search for new ways to operationalize the impact of DDR processes in the Niger Delta must move beyond the peacebuilders' framework to consider the perceptions of the ex-insurgents and their visions of empowerment. The challenge in the Niger Delta peace process is not the ability of the government to invest resources in peacebuilding but the limited empirical analysis on the nature of the empowerment and how to integrate the visions of those who have lived through the experiences of violence into the peacebuilders' visions. This chapter, therefore, moves beyond understanding the mechanistic conception of empowerment to articulating an ecological model of empowerment and shows the implications of these conceptual models in understanding the positive and negative impacts of the peacebuilding program. In other words, the dynamics through which peacebuilding processes produces and reproduces, or configures and reconfigures, power relations as well as deny or enhance human agency through a range of programmatic activities are at best understood through the mechanistic and ecological models of empowerment. Unlike the mechanistic model, the ecological model is more transformative, ensuring that reintegration processes take into consideration the agency of ex-insurgents as well as community members who did not participate in the armed insurgency. The next chapter will examine the conditions that encourage or discourage conflict escalation and de-escalation in the Niger Delta.

Chapter 7

CONDITIONS THAT ENCOURAGE CONFLICT ESCALATION AND THE COLLAPSE OF PEACE

Introduction

On 17 January 2018, I travelled to Ibeno, the leading oil-producing community in Akwa Ibom and the operational base of ExxonMobil. Ibeno is a peaceful community located on a swampy terrain overlooking a beautiful sandy beach along the Atlantic Ocean and is composed of 26 gazetted villages situated on the eastern, northern, central, and western flanks of the coast with recognized institutions of traditional leadership. The coastal communities are vulnerable to fluctuations in the tidal range caused by the cumulative effects of gravitational forces exerted on the Atlantic coast. These environmental conditions frequently render many villages on the eastern flank inaccessible during periods of rising sea levels. The same problem persists on the western flank of the coast, which is vulnerable to insecurities arising from sea piracy while security interventions by state agencies are relatively absent due to lack of transportation and communication infrastructure. Despite the massive oil wealth extracted from these communities, they remain isolated from mainstream society due to a lack of physical infrastructure. The complexity of these communities means that more resources are needed to build infrastructure. As I travelled across the oil region, it became apparent that Ibeno communities represent a sadly neglected group in the longstanding history of the Niger Delta peace process, where negligence continues to define the complicated relationship between ExxonMobil and the Ibeno Youth Council (IYC).

Before leaving Ibeno, I decided to take snapshots of gas emission from ExxonMobil flow stations to remind myself of the complexity of life in these wealthy communities and their

vulnerability to environmental harms, which mirrors the contrasting experiences of Niger Delta communities in general. However, pollution arising from gas flaring is a common experience in the Niger Delta. So, the experience did little to mutate my imagination of the eerie beauty and powerfully evocative wetland ecosystem that stretches across the coastal landscape from where the Ibeno community derives its natural resource wealth. Instead, I reflected on the stories I heard by talking to youths and adults sitting at the Ibeno beach and my observation of the lived experiences of Ibeno residents. I also reflected on the fate of Ibeno youths who could barely access job opportunities meant for indigenes due to lack of technical skills. Eventually, these jobs are diverted to benefit outsiders. My experience was not different in other oil communities in Rivers and Bayelsa, where I interviewed ex-insurgents, whose dispositions bore the expressions of hopelessness and violence. Only by interacting with ex-insurgents to connect with their perceptions of the tensions within their communities, will one fully grapple with the despair in these communities and why winning the war in the Niger Delta without first transforming the conditions that encourage the escalation of insurgency remains a daunting challenge.

This chapter's objective, therefore, is to explore the state of peace in the Niger Delta by identifying significant relationships between DDR interventions and changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors as well as changes in conflict trends over the life cycle of the peace process. My goal is to analyze the conflict escalation and de-escalation dynamics in the Niger Delta and to determine the conditions that would encourage the regeneration of future insurgencies. The research question driving this chapter is as follows: What are the perceived successes and challenges associated with the adoption of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta? In addressing this question, I will focus on the problems emerging from the DDR interventions and how they influence the conflict trend in the Niger Delta.

Conditions that Encourage Conflict Escalation Pre-Amnesty

The preeminent scholar, Coser (1956, 8) defined conflict as “a struggle over claims to status, power, and resources in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rival party.” Coser’s definition draws attention to significant features of conflict, such as the conflict actors and their motivations. So far, a large body of scholarship has offered various explanations of the motives behind the armed insurgency in the Niger Delta. Given the complexity of the Niger Delta conflict and variations in the causal factors, conflict scholars rarely agree on a common causal variable. To fully evaluate the challenges emerging from the DDR interventions, it is imperative that I connect with the ex-insurgents at a deeper level to understand their underlying motivations for participating in the armed insurgency.

Youth Unemployment

My research shows that joblessness is a fundamental governance challenge in the oil region and one of the primary drivers of armed insurgency. I recall my interview with Bestmann, an ex-insurgent from Bayelsa in his mid-twenties. Bestmann was recruited into armed insurgency as a high school student because his parents were poor, and he needed some income to support himself through school. Insurgency became an option for Bestmann because of the immediate financial benefits it offers through illegal activities such as oil bunkering. According to Bestmann:

I joined militancy because I didn't have a job. So, its unemployment that drove me to join militancy. Amnesty has helped us to stop fighting. I dropped my weapon because of amnesty. The community is now enjoying peace.

Bestmann is essentially saying that his motivation to pick up arms was to liberate himself from unemployment. While he expresses regret over the atrocities he committed as a teenage insurgent who acted under the influence of his commandants (warlords), he believes, however, that joblessness left him with no option but to join the insurgency. My experience in the three

states shows that youth unemployment is the biggest challenge in the oil communities, which sees an army of redundant youth complaining about the system they believe has deprived them of their rights and the opportunities to realize their full potentials.

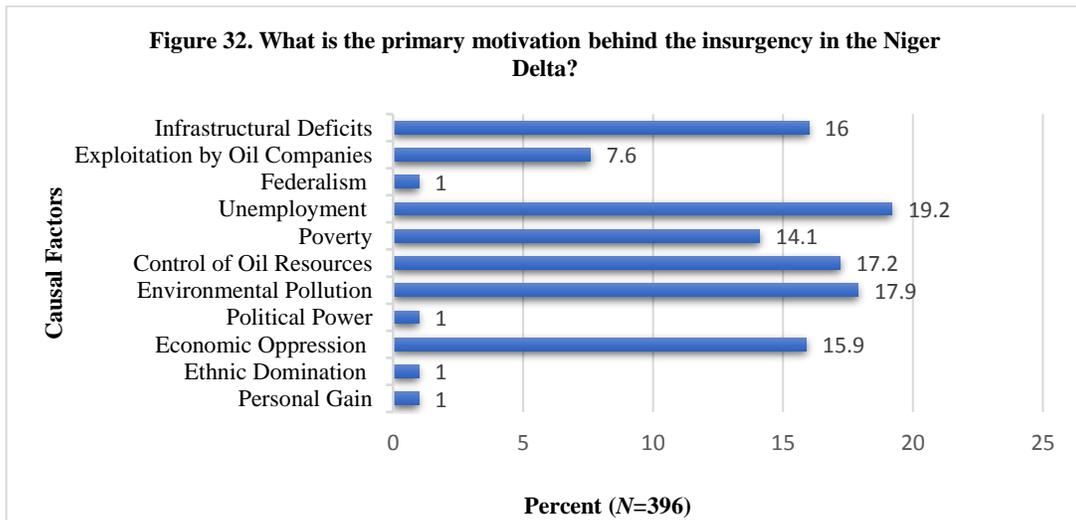
While other factors are taken into consideration in the decision to participate in the armed insurgency, the unemployment challenge in the region seems to dominate other factors. I recall my interview with Eze, who, with a stern look on his face, told me:

I joined militancy because we have oil companies such as Shell, Elf, and Agip operating in my community. We are not benefitting from these companies. They are not doing anything for the youths. No jobs for community youths because the companies are not employing us. So, I could not continue to suffer unemployment while the resources in my community are benefitting outsiders. That's the reason I picked up arms to make sure our community is benefitting from employment opportunities from the oil companies.

Eze's experience suggests that unemployment stems directly from the unwillingness of the oil multinationals to employ community youths. His opinion echoes that of Chidi, another ex-insurgent who told me, "We had an aim for the struggle. The aim was lack of infrastructure and unemployment. The youth are stranded. We have a lot of graduates in parts of the Niger Delta without jobs." While there is a general recognition of the unemployment crisis in the region, Chidi believes that armed insurgency was motivated mainly by the growing number of jobless youths who chose to express their frustration by means of violence. This finding is consistent with the study by Ikelegbe (2006), which examined the causes of youth insurgency in the Niger Delta and found unemployment as one of the reasons identified by aggrieved youths. The development challenge in the Niger Delta is such that infrastructure, education and healthcare are mutually reinforcing. According to the Niger Delta Human Development Report:

Poverty in the oil region is rooted in "economic stagnation; agricultural underdevelopment from soil infertility; unemployment; poor quality of life due to shortages of essential goods, facilities and money; isolation and poor communication; government insensitivity; and an unhealthy environment spreading disease and malnutrition" (UNDP 2006, 36).

The UNDP Report captures vividly the experiences of Niger Delta youths who told me they joined insurgency to fight against underdevelopment and poverty in their communities, and in the entire Niger Delta region. Akpan (2014, 45) observed that the marginalization of minorities from the political and economic mainstream had been a source of discontent against the Nigerian state. Folami (2017) traces the root of conflict in Delta state to disparities in the distribution of natural resource rents. The statistical results show that of the 84.8% of respondents who participated in the insurgency 19.2% identified unemployment as their primary motivation compared to the 17.9% who identified environmental pollution, resource control (17.2%), infrastructural deficits (16.0%), economic oppression (15.9%), and poverty (14.1%) (see Figure 32). This evidence gives validity to Arnson and Zartman’s (2005) “needs, creed, and greed” thesis, which theorizes insurgency as the result of structural and systemic factors such as identity, relative deprivation and greed against the argument that these conflicts are strictly the result of greed.



The theoretical evidence reveals that armed insurgency in the pre-amnesty era was not motivated by self-serving objectives. Instead, structural and systemic issues which arose from

poverty, unemployment and relative deprivation are the motivations behind these struggles. This perspective underscores the work of Idemudia (2009, 307) who contends that “marginalization and relative deprivation as well as political and economic issues, are the root of the conflict.” These structural conditions had sustained the conflict dynamics from the colonial era as represented by dotted lines indicating pre-existing conditions that build up to events in the 1990s (point A) when confrontational struggles became visible, culminating in the explosion of armed insurgency in the 2000s which ended in 2009 (point B) when the Yar’Adua government introduced the current peace process (see Figure 33).

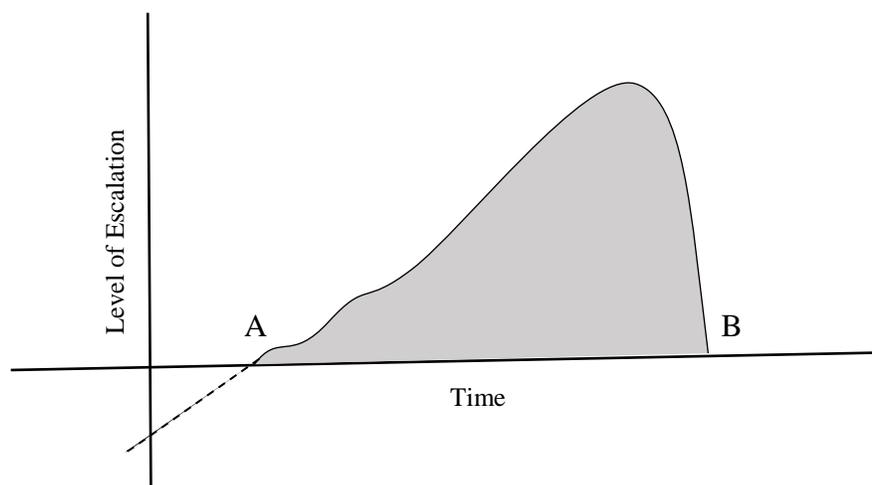


Figure 33: Conflict Escalation Dynamics in the Niger Delta

Conditions That Encourage the Regeneration of Post-Amnesty Conflict

The collapse and revival of the Niger Delta peace process following the presidential proclamation of amnesty for insurgents revived questions about the condition which motivate insurgent groups, at different intervals, to resume violence after the implementation of a DDR program that is believed to have created a successful transition from war to peace. It is evident from the data that these insecurities are diverse and interwoven as are their causes and the

perpetrators. Ultimately, the regeneration of insurgency in the post-amnesty era is linked to multivariate factors, such as exclusion in DDR design and implementation and political retribution.

Exclusion in DDR Processes

This study identifies exclusion as one of the negative outcomes of peacebuilding that resulted from the failure of DDR interventions in the Niger Delta. One of the antecedents to the regeneration of armed insurgency following the declaration of amnesty in 2009 and subsequently the implementation of DDR interventions, was the government's initial refusal to incorporate so-called "Third Phase Militants" into the peace process. "Third Phase Militants" represent a group of actors who threatened to resume hostilities on oil and gas infrastructure should the federal government fail to accommodate them in the peace process (Odiegwu 2012). This group of actors who emerged on the premise of exclusion from the peace process and its benefits have claimed responsibility for various atrocities in the Niger Delta (Oyadongo 2012). This wave of insurgency left many Niger Delta youths in possession of weapons which they mobilized for subsequent insurrections. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016) have examined how exclusionary practices that characterized the design and implementation of the amnesty program affect peacebuilding outcomes in the Niger Delta. They argue that the government's commitment to the peace process ignores a sound programmatic mechanism that will provide the inclusionary basis for demobilizing and reintegrating ex-insurgents and harnessing a multi-stakeholder effort towards the peace process.

The realization that the peacebuilders focused exclusively on rewarding lawbreakers while they overlooked the concerns and aspirations of other vulnerable constituents who suffered similar injustices with the insurgents gave impetus to the regeneration of armed insurgency. According to

Akinwale (2009, 204), the exclusive focus on the well-being of the insurgents overlooked political issues such as kidnapping and hostage-taking that affect victims of the insurgency who did not participate in violence. As Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011, 57-58) point out, “the bypassing of disaffected non-insurgents not only left mostly intact the grievances fuelling the insurgency, but also it has fuelled a widespread belief among Nigerians that their government only responds to lawbreakers as opposed to law-abiding citizens.” The amnesty program thus represents an incoherent and fundamentally flawed, peacebuilding and reconciliation strategy, so long as it neglects the insecurities of other constituents who suffered similar violations but refused to pick up arm against the state and oil multinationals. This observation leads to the conclusion that exclusion was the main motivation behind the violent campaigns orchestrated by the “Third Phase Militants.”

Despite the security challenges prevailing in the region, which threatens to undermine the peace process, the positive impact of peacebuilding has brought stability to the socioeconomic and even sociopolitical environment of the region. A development expert I interviewed, William communicated an insightful perspective that attests to the state of security and insecurity in the oil region. William believes that insecurity arising from the activities of insurgents who mobilize arms and explosives to blow up oil and gas pipelines or go rampaging and kidnapping migrant workers has dropped drastically. While security arising from the activities of such actors has improved, William stated that “ironically, some other forms of insecurity have arisen or keeps arising, being the swan song among political elites because they mobilize various gangs against one another.” Insecurity, as implied in William’s narrative, is two-dimensional and refers primarily to acts of violence perpetrated by insurgents who have been granted a pardon for their transgressions, and new acts of violence sponsored by political elites with vested interests. What William is essentially

saying is that activities such as political kidnapping, hostage taking and pipelines bombing, which were prevalent prior to the Presidential proclamation of amnesty for insurgents have reduced. However, new forms of insecurity have arisen in the post-amnesty period, dominated by the activities of cult groups and gangs who perpetrate atrocities at the behest of political elites, not so much to those group of insurgents for which the state initiated the amnesty program.

Interestingly, subnational governments in the Niger Delta, such as Rivers state, have launched an independent amnesty program to address insecurity associated with the prevalence of gang violence. Over 20,000 members of different gangs and their leaders in Rivers surrendered their arms to the state government in November 2016, to enlist in the amnesty program, with thousands of arms, ammunition and explosives recovered (Channels Television 2016). The subnational amnesty program is significant because it exposes the failure of the federal government amnesty program to disarm the Niger Delta of small arms.

The Political Retribution Thesis

One of the defining characteristics of the peacebuilding program is that security threats that arose from the activities of “Third Phase Militants” continued intermittently but with a low level of violence until the emergence of The Avengers in 2016. On February 13, 2016, The Avengers released a statement on its Blog and social media platforms declaring war against the state. Its violent campaign was encapsulated in the catchphrase “Operation Red Economy,” which expressed its goal was “to cripple Nigeria’s economy” (Ewokor 2016). As part of its declaration, The Avengers expressed its discontent with President Buhari’s leadership and his selective anti-corruption war which seems to target the opposition and individuals sympathetic to former President Jonathan (see www.nigerdeltaavengers.org/2016). The Avengers campaign, its motives

and targets created the need to probe into the nature of insurgency by asking the participants whether they think the peacebuilding program might have influenced the resurgence of insurgency after seven years of stability in the oil region. Brisibe, an ex-militant from Bayelsa stated:

Niger Delta Avengers were a group of people that came together to worry. Although they are still part of the struggle, we didn't know them; we didn't know them as the real men, the real freedom fighters. They were unknown men that came from nowhere, sponsored by our political leaders.

Brisibe perceived The Avengers as a set of political actors who emerged to shake the system. The phrase “to worry” as used in the context of his narrative, means “to shake up the system.” In many ways, his perception drew attention to the underlying political forces which manifested itself in the resurgence of The Avengers, and how elite politics became implicated in the recent phase of the insurgency. What is interesting about Brisibe’s perspective is his refusal to recognize The Avengers as public-spirited actors who are committed to the Niger Delta cause, but a politically motivated group of insurgents sponsored by the political elites to undermine the legitimacy of the Buhari administration which they perceive as a threat to their interests. To buttress this position, another ex-militant McPrince stated:

You know the meaning of Avengers. The explanation is that Niger Delta people saw that when Goodluck was president Boko Haram was terrorizing the government. So, Niger Deltans attempt to revenge the present government have resulted in The Avengers doing what Boko Haram had done to the past government.

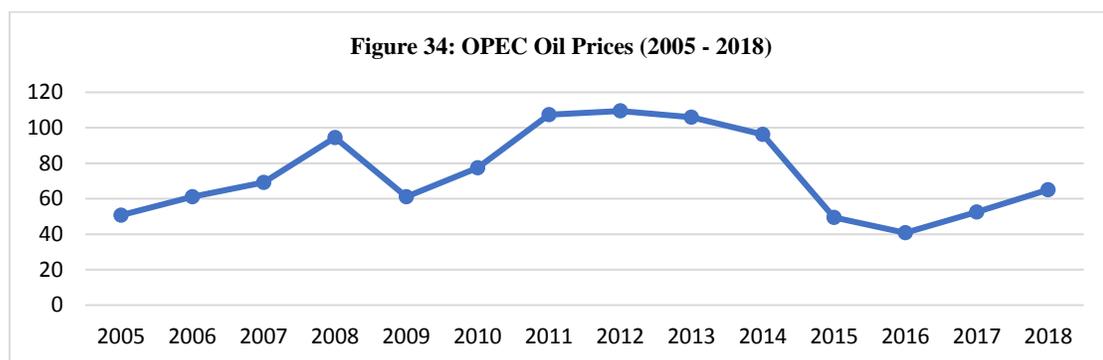
The Avengers is a politically motivated insurgent group which mobilized a violent campaign against the Buhari administration, the same way Boko Haram unleashed terror on civilians, often capturing territories in northeast Nigeria to delegitimize the Jonathan administration. In this context, political retribution occurred as a form of ethnic antagonism reflecting Nigeria’s North-South political tensions, and a strategically calculated revenge with a political objective—to undermine the legitimacy of the state. For example, in its “Operation Red Economy” declaration, The Avengers gave President Buhari two weeks ultimatum to fulfil a set

of conditions, which includes the “implementation of the report of the national Confab; Continuous funding of the amnesty program; and the reversal of the allocation of oil blocks to reflect 60% for citizens from the oil-producing states and 40% for citizens from the non-oil producing states. Others include the clean-up of endangered lands in the Niger Delta and payment of compensation to all oil producing communities; the opening of the Nigerian Maritime University at Okerenkoko; a public apology for the murder of Chief D.S.P. Alamiyesegeha; and the unconditional release of Nnamdi Kanu, the Leader of the IPOB” (www.nigerdeltaavengers.org/2016).

A cursory review of these conditions reveals the political undertone of The Avengers. For example, the first condition requesting the implementation of the report of the 2014 National Conference has political implications which underline the clamour for national restructuring and the implementation of a federal structure that would grant the Niger Delta region control over its natural resources. This clause is important because, under the present revenue derivation principle, states do not exercise the right to ownership and control over natural resources (Adangor 2015). As Sagay (2008) argues, the struggle for true federalism has become one of the causes of violence in the Niger Delta. Although some of the conditions stated by The Avengers appealed to issues of human rights, social justice and self-determination, the political construction of the insurgency as a vengeful mission suggests that the struggle accorded greater priority to political retribution than to social justice concerns. Also, the geopolitical construction of its discourse raises critical concerns as its conditions extend beyond the fundamental sites of struggle in core Niger Delta states to include secessionist struggles in eastern Nigeria driven by Biafra nationalism.

A significant discovery in this study is the role of the oil economy in determining periods of stability and instability in the oil region. Periods of instability were characterized by surging oil prices in the international market as well as dramatic cuts in oil production. The pressure imposed

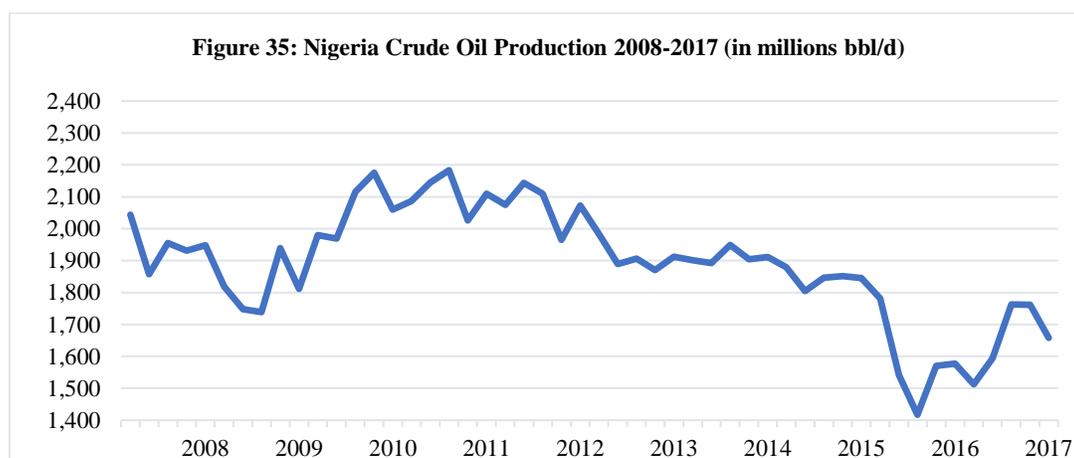
on Nigeria to meet its production quota amidst declining output and surging prices forced the state to negotiate a ceasefire. For example, oil prices rose from \$50.64 in 2005 to \$94.45 in 2008 and then dropped to \$61.06 between 2008 and 2009 (see Figure 34). In the wake of insurgency in 2008, which deepened the instability in the oil region, oil output dropped to 1.7 million barrels per day in the third quarter (see Figure 35). The lethal combination of declining oil output and falling oil prices forced the Yar'Adua government to declare amnesty for insurgents in June 2009 as a precondition for the implementation of non-coercive peacebuilding measures. By 2010, Nigeria's oil production output had increased to full capacity but began declining a few years later due to challenges that arose from the first phase of the amnesty program and renewed agitations for the accommodation of the Second and Third-Phase Militants.



Source: Prepared by author based on OPEC Oil Prices Data from 2005-2018.

Nigeria recorded its lowest oil output in the third quarter of 2015 following President Buhari's victory in the presidential election and his decision to terminate the amnesty program, which drew condemnation from a group of Niger Delta elite. But armed insurgency did not resume until February of 2016. This period was particularly significant in the life cycle of the Niger Delta peace process because the resumption of hostilities by The Avengers caused a 50% cut in crude oil production by May 2016 (see Figure 35). This period also coincided with the fall of oil prices

from US\$50 in 2015 to \$US40 by 2016—the lowest in the past decade (see Figure 34). Arguably, The Avengers had achieved its strategic goal—to shut down the economy. The negative signals on the nation’s economy forced President Buhari to negotiate a ceasefire. The region began to stabilize after The Avengers committed to a dialogue with the state on the condition that they will be allowed to choose their mediator—Chief Edwin Clark—and after that decided on a ceasefire.



Source: Prepared by author based on OPEC Crude Oil Production Data for Nigeria from 2008-2017

The unwillingness of The Avengers to initially commit to a negotiated settlement could be due to its determination to shut down the Buhari government perceived as promoting reform that served to threaten the interest of political elites in the Niger Delta. One of the ex-insurgents I interviewed in Bayelsa, Benson, told me: “The Avengers had nothing to do with the amnesty program. Rather, politicians whose interests were threatened by President Buhari decided to sponsor the group to oppose the government.” This opinion gives empirical justification to the political retribution thesis.

It is essential that I clarify the nature of elites implicated in the Niger Delta insurgency. The first class of elites are leaders of the various insurgent groups who, because of their participation in violence and the peace process, transformed into government contractors,

eventually amassing enormous material wealth that continues to reinforce their influence in the oil region and national political circles. The second class of elites are politicians who grow their power base by funding armed groups who perpetrate atrocities ranging from political kidnappings to bombing of oil and gas infrastructure. It is not surprising that violence resumed in early 2016 when Buhari's anti-corruption rhetoric began to threaten the interests of some powerful elites.

Because of the urgency to countervail Buhari's anti-corruption war, which ostensibly targets the opposition and special interest groups, including threats to terminate the peacebuilding program, the oil region began to experience cycles of *remilitarization*. By *remilitarization*, I mean a situation whereby a demilitarized territory relapses into violence as conflict spoilers mobilize to disrupt the peace process or delegitimize the state by resuming hostilities on critical infrastructure. The concept of remilitarization is demonstrated in Figure 36 which shows the re-escalation of conflict in 2016 (point B) after a long period of stability following the demilitarization of the region in the first, second and third phases of the amnesty program in 2009 (point A), 2010 and 2012.

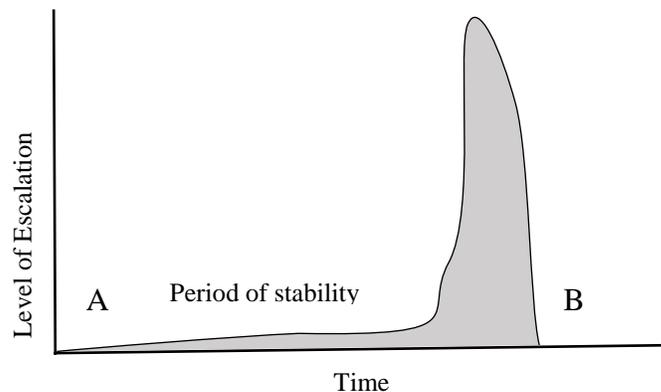


Figure 36: Conflict Re-escalation in the Niger Delta

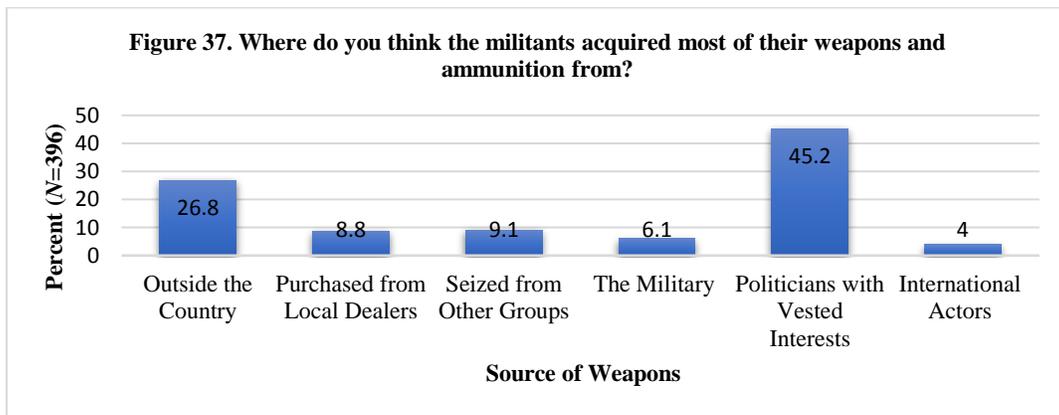
In a statement released by The Avengers spokesperson Murdoch Agbinibo, on its Blog on August 20, 2016, The Avengers announced a conditional ceasefire and agreed to negotiate with

the Buhari government. But in a region with a history of violent interruptions, the security situation in the Niger Delta remains uncertain in the absence of a sustainable negotiated settlement between the government and insurgent groups, and between the government and Niger Delta people. Amidst this uncertainty is the truism that the geopolitical setup of The Avengers and its impact on the nation's economy bear a striking resemblance to the previous wave of insurgency that ended in 2009 when the Nigerian state put in place the amnesty program to stabilize the region and increase its oil output. Thus, the resurgence of armed insurgency in defiance of Nigeria's military capabilities and the threats to continue hostilities should the military continue its tactical aggression on oil communities, evokes concerns about the complexity of the Niger Delta peace process. Looking at the destructive capacity of The Avengers and its strategic target in comparison with the previous insurgent groups, one would agree that without political support, the local insurgents will have no resources to fund their operations, especially the attacks on Bonga platform—Shell's biggest facility on the Gulf of Guinea. Whether or not renewed violence in the region is public-spirited or politically motivated depends on several factors. What is important is the need to design effective conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent the mobilization of armed insurgency as a strategy for political negotiation. As one regional expert stated while responding to a question about the emergence of The Avengers during a media interview with Channels TV:

Well, first, am not sure people at the grassroots are the ones who are agitating. The man at the grassroots has a lot of issues to deal with that he doesn't have the luxury of agitation. He has the big problem of making a daily bread that he doesn't have time to deal with blowing up pipelines etc. But the technology and equipment required to blow up the pipes the average man in the Niger Delta doesn't have it. So, we must look at that as well, who are the real people behind these incidents? It's not the local guys in the community who are struggling with just getting fresh water to drink. (Okigbo 2016).

Okigbo's argument is that the youth in the villages who are living in abject poverty and deprivation and barely contemplating their daily survival have limited resources to carry out such magnitude of destruction without the backing of political elites with vested interests and the

resources to support an armed insurgency. Okigbo’s argument does not, however, imply that these local youths cannot undertake such activities; it does mean that the equipment needed to blow up pipelines and other critical infrastructures are expensive and beyond the reach of the local youths. To reinforce the political retribution thesis, I asked the research participants where they think the insurgent groups in the Niger Delta acquired most of their arms and ammunition. Nearly half (45.2%) of the respondents indicated that they got them from politicians with vested interests, while 26.8% stated that they got them from outside the country. The rest (28%) of the respondents selected other sources (see Figure 37).



Conditions That Would Encourage the Regeneration of Future Conflict

During the interview phase of this research, I asked the participants whether they foresee future insurgency emerging in the Niger Delta and, if yes, what they consider as the sources of future insurgency. Several respondents raised critical concerns about the likelihood of future insurgency in the Niger Delta should the federal government violate the terms of the amnesty program and its obligation to the welfare of ex-insurgents. The responses to this question reveal two critical themes concerning the likely causes of future insurgency. The first theme is that of Devaluation-Alienation, while the second theme is the Peace Economy. Together, these two

themes combine with corruption to create conditions for conflict escalation that may throw the Niger Delta into another cycle of militarization.

The Devaluation-Alienation Thesis

The concept of *Devaluation-Alienation* underlies the intentional rejection or denial of employment opportunities to ex-insurgents due to their past transgressions, leading to feelings of worthlessness and alienation from the benefits of the peace process. This thesis has implications for the nature of reintegration. For example, the interview results show that *Devaluation-Alienation* manifests in different forms that attest to the experiences of many participants. Emenike, an ex-militant from Rivers narrated his experience as follows:

After the training, you take your certificate to oil companies to seek for employment. The moment they discover you're an amnesty delegate they will tell you outrightly that you're unemployable because of your status as an ex-militant. Shell doesn't want to see you, and you dare not draw close to Shell gate. You are a militant. I think that this will further increase the problem of militancy in the future.

Emenike believes that trained ex-insurgents have difficulty integrating into the labour market due to employment discrimination in the petroleum industry. Emenike's experience draws attention to the intentional discrimination against former insurgents by employers due mainly to their past transgressions. Many ex-insurgents like Emenike who trained in vocations they thought will jumpstart their career in the oil and gas industry are facing employment challenges because the oil multinationals have blacklisted them.

Some ex-insurgents from Rivers who have surrendered their arms and participated in the demobilization exercise at Obubra since 2011 expressed similar concerns. They were concerned about the delay in their deployment for reintegration training following their successful demobilization. According to Dariye:

The amnesty has made a lot of difference in people's lives. But there are others who have gone for training but can't get jobs. I have a friend who has graduated from his degree

program through amnesty training but can't find a job. It's like an omen to pronounce amnesty to the companies. They will treat you as if you are a criminal. Even those who have been trained in various skills have difficulty getting jobs because the companies are afraid or unwilling to engage them due to the stigma of being ex-militants.

It seems that many people are apprehensive of anyone who had participated in an insurgency. The level of apprehension has resulted in employment discrimination against former insurgents. The peacebuilding program therefore fails to facilitate company-community relations in a way that will dispel the fear of ex-insurgents and its impact on employment discrimination. Otherwise, sustainable peace will be impossible without economic reintegration through employment.

Several ex-insurgents from southern Ijaw in Bayelsa also claimed to have surrendered their arms but are neither trained nor empowered. They believe some powerful actors are working against their interests by denying them their entitlements or chose to give them less of what they feel they deserve based on what the government had promised them. One aggrieved ex-insurgent, Ebele stated that “There will be conflict in the future, the worst fight. The worst fight.... Because the amnesty only benefitted those who choose education.” It is evident from this expression that those group of ex-insurgents who have surrendered their arms to the state but have yet to reap the rewards of peacemaking feel alienated, hopeless and resentful and will likely pick up weapons in the future. The appropriate concept that captures the experiences of this group of ex-insurgents is *Devaluation-Alienation*.

I find a relationship between Ebele's expression and that of Bridget who believes the boys who fought in the creeks have been marginalized in the peacebuilding largesse compared to those who did not risk their lives to fight:

The boys who struggled in the creeks but whose names have been removed from the amnesty program and replaced by those who didn't participate in the struggle may go back to the creeks to start fighting in the future. But those benefitting from the amnesty do not have any incentive for violence and will not return to the creeks to fight again. For example, I witnessed the entire struggle in the Niger Delta. When the military was bombing the villages, we often run to the bush to hide. But when those who fought the military in the creeks surrendered their weapons to accept amnesty only to find their

names removed and replaced with names of people who didn't take the risk of fighting, there will be problems in the future.

Bridget spoke from her experience as a young woman who had witnessed the suffering in the creeks and the extraordinary risks taken by community youths to courageously confront the military forces who, for the most part, engaged them with airstrikes that caused an enormous physical and psychological impact in the local communities. Some of the ex-insurgents who feel alienated from the amnesty benefits either by denial of access to education and skills training opportunities became vulnerable, powerless and hopeless. Their hopelessness was compounded by the discovery that their names had been replaced with individuals who didn't participate in the struggle but had leveraged on powerful connections to politicians or influential personnel in the Presidential Amnesty Office to enrol in the program. The continuous alienation of these actors from the benefits of peacebuilding constitutes a potential threat to security and may be the motivation behind a future insurgency. However, those benefitting from the peace process have a little incentive of returning to the creeks to wage violence.

However, the DDR program began to cause resentment in conflict-affected communities when the ex-insurgents who committed atrocities of varying proportions in their communities were deployed overseas for education and training and suddenly returned to Nigeria as pilots or engineers while those whom they had violated or jeopardized their source of livelihoods were still languishing in poverty and hopelessness. The former amnesty boss Kingsley Kuku decided to mitigate this risk by balancing the ratio of ex-insurgents against non-insurgents in the distribution of peacebuilding benefits, using an innovative strategy such that for every insurgent deployed overseas for training and is rehabilitated successfully, a non-insurgent is recruited from the same community and deployed to a western university for education. However, the beneficiaries recruited for this category were mostly from Kuku's ethnic group, which gives justification to the

influence of nepotistic tendencies in the deployment of delegates for overseas training. These nepotistic tendencies notwithstanding, what is important is that indigenes of the Niger Delta have had an opportunity to access western education regardless of whether they participated in insurgency or not or their community of origin.

While it is difficult for the educated class to contemplate violence, I encountered several ex-insurgents in the communities who had indicated interest in foreign education but denied the opportunity to fulfil their passion due to the nepotistic tendencies in the award of foreign scholarships and the political connections required to access such opportunities. Thus, exclusion has fostered a feeling of hopelessness among ex-insurgents who feel that the peacebuilding program did not transform their lives and may be tempted to resume violence should their suffering continue. The outcome would be the remilitarization of demilitarized citizens.

The Emergence of a Peace Economy

In conventional DDR operations, the ex-insurgents are expected to undergo a period of reinsertion which usually occurs during demobilization and before the reintegration process. Reinsertion is the temporary financial assistance to disarmed insurgents to help cover their immediate needs and include remedial education, training, shelter and transitional safety allowances. Based on this requirement, the federal government offered ex-insurgents a housing allowance of N150,000 (US\$430) and a monthly stipend of N65,000 (\$200). Under conventional DDR best practices, the housing allowance is usually a one-time payment while the monthly stipend is meant to provide temporary assistance to the insurgents. While the reinsertion was designed to facilitate their reintegration, it was necessary given that ex-insurgents were previously engaged in oil bunkering that gave them access to enormous material wealth. I recall one ex-

insurgent who told me, “We have given up our livelihood. We were making money from oil bunkering, but presently we have nothing.”

A significant number of ex-insurgents indicated that the monthly stipend has helped them to support their families. My field research shows that the payment of housing allowance and monthly stipend has enabled many ex-militants to become responsible citizens by getting married, supporting families, and owning homes. Jeff shared his experience concerning the monthly allowances as follows:

The N65,000 has been very helpful. It has changed the lives of many people in the Niger Delta. As of 2016, I used this money to marry my wife. I saved the money to get married and take care of my children. I also use the money to pay for my son's school fees.

Jeff's narrative suggests that he was a single young man at the time he joined the insurgency. He probably had no sense of responsibility to anyone beyond himself. The decision to surrender his arms and participate in peacebuilding enabled him to earn a monthly stipend to facilitate his reinsertion. Jeff had saved up his stipend to get married and support a family. His experience illustrates the positive impact of the peacebuilding program in helping ex-insurgents to start families. It is obvious that Jeff couldn't have thought of starting a family without a source of income. Although many analysts have condemned the payment of monthly stipend to ex-insurgents on the basis that it promotes laziness, my findings show that the stipend has been instrumental to the stability in the oil communities by helping to transform the lives of many ex-insurgents, especially those like Jeff who invest on their families and property.

Jeff's experience resonates with another ex-insurgents I met in Rivers, Nwoke, who stated that: “Some youth have benefitted from the amnesty. Some of us who were living in family homes have built our own homes using the amnesty stipend.” The transition from living in a family home to becoming a homeowner cannot be under-estimated in the rural communities given that many ex-insurgents were living in abject poverty with limited financial resources to eke out a

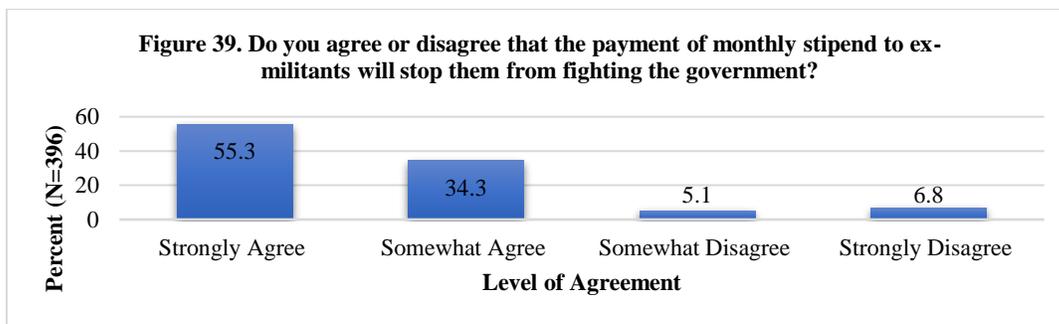
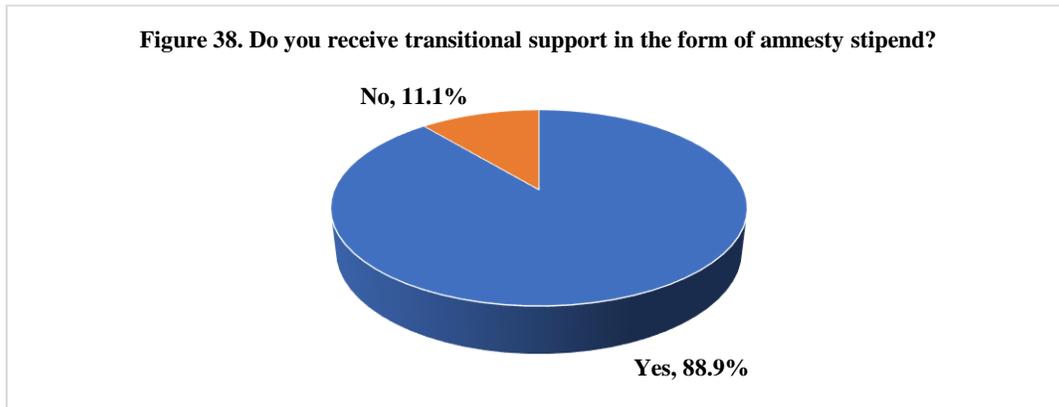
living, much less owning a home. I recall my experience with some ex-insurgents who will not engage in criminal activities that may take them to jail for fear of being separated from their families. It does not seem that these young men are afraid of death or jail; they have experienced the beauty of family and unwilling to engage in behaviours that will confine them behind prison walls and separate them from their loved ones. According to Benson, “I don’t want to go back to violence as I now have a family.” I feel, therefore, that starting a family has given many youths in the communities a sense of responsibility, who now see themselves as dedicated family men, unwilling to engage in illegal activities that will confine them in jail or separate them from their wives and children.

The peace economy in the Niger Delta revives interest in my interview with Bridget, a single mother who trained in catering services and had been investing her monthly stipend in a restaurant to support her daughter through medical school. When asked to reflect on her experience, she stated as follows:

The amnesty program has contributed very well in reducing violence and insecurity because many of the ex-militants who participated in amnesty have changed. They are now married and have families. So, when they receive their stipend, they use the money to cater to the needs of their children. Because if their families are living well, there will be no incentive to participate in violence and crime. Kidnapping has reduced because of the amnesty stipend. Personally, as a woman, the reason I joined militancy is that I was in the village and looking for an opportunity to grow. Look at me now. I am 35 years and have a daughter am training in university. So, I was fighting for the future of my daughter. At least in three years from now, my daughter will be graduating as a medical doctor. At least I have something to prove the effectiveness of the amnesty.

The transitional support seems to have transformed Bridget’s life by providing her with the financial resources to support her daughter’s medical degree, which would be impossible without the stipend. Like Bridget, many ex-insurgents who previously could not afford the cost of educating their children in the city can do that through financial benefits from the peace program. As Figure 38 shows, 88.9% of the ex-insurgents surveyed agreed that they are receiving a monthly allowance from the government. Also, 55.3% of the respondents strongly agree that the payment

of a monthly stipend to ex-insurgents has been successful in preventing a relapse into violence, compared to the 34.3% who somewhat agree (see Figure 39).



Despite the positive impact of these payments in the lives of many ex-insurgents and their communities in the short-term, the reinsertion has revealed the shortcoming of using DDR to facilitate peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. I argue that the federal government's inability to sustain these payments in the long-run may constitute a strategic danger. Underlying this argument is the realization that what was initially intended as transitional support has continued indefinitely, to the extent that these ex-insurgents now see the payments as an entitlement. This development may set the stage for the regeneration of future insurgency if the government is unable to sustain these financial gratifications over the life cycle of the peace process. Already, many ex-insurgents I met

in the field indicated that conflict would regenerate should the federal government ever decide to terminate the monthly payments as that would mean cutting their lifeline. As Jeff stated:

The federal government asked us to stop fighting and promised to give us an alternative life. All our focus is on this money, and once they withdraw this money, all ex-agitators will go back to the creeks to start bursting pipes, kidnap and do illegal things. The federal government will not be happy, but everything will be disorganized, and there will be a war between the ex-agitators and the security forces. While this is going on people will be dying. I will advise the federal government to continue paying the agitators, so they can use this money to cater to the needs of their families. Alternatively, if they want to stop the amnesty, they should employ all those who participated in the amnesty in the oil companies and violence will be over.

Jeff seems to be speaking the minds of many ex-insurgents who perceive their financial benefits as the fulfilment of the federal government's promise to them in return for surrendering their arms and undertaking to renounce insurgency. His opinion, in a way, suggests that the condition for peace is contingent on the continuous flow of monetary resources to the ex-insurgents and for the government to continue its support to the peacebuilding program which seems to provide a lifeline for many ex-insurgents. Some ex-insurgents have threatened to resume violence in the future should the federal government decide to terminate the program without fulfilling its promises to them including those promises made to Niger Delta people—to remediate endangered environments in the oil communities. According to Eze:

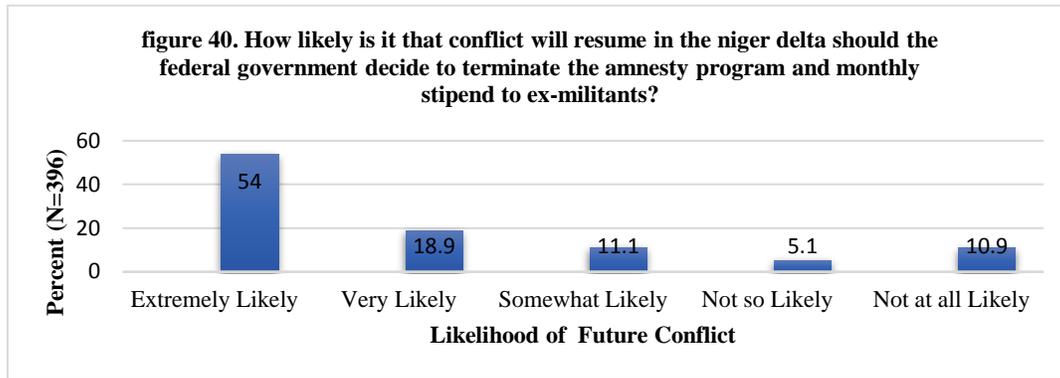
Should the government decide to terminate the program, boys will pick up arms. If the program fails to meet our expectations according to what the government had promised; for instance, if they promised to set up a business for you but fail to fulfil that promise, you will be frustrated and decide to pick up arms and do what you did not intend to do again. So, people are likely to be peaceful. But if the government refuses to fulfil its promises, there will be conflict.

Eze seems optimistic about the possibility of peace in the Niger Delta. As such, he was explicit that former insurgents would likely return to the creeks in the future due to broken promises. For Eze, the condition for peace rests on the government's ability to live up to its promises. Therefore, the non-fulfilment of promises made to the ex-insurgents may be the driver of future insurgency.

The government's inability to live up to its promises may endanger the peace process as former insurgents like Darigo who perceive discriminatory practices in the peace process have vowed to resume violence should the government decide to terminate the program or discontinue the payment of their stipend—what most of them consider as their only lifeline. As Darigo notes: “Change comes whenever we receive our stipend, that’s when our minds are at rest. When money enters our hands, we get excited. But when there is no money we think of nonsense. So, if they terminate this program there will be a problem in this country.” Darigo’s sentiments serve to forewarn the government that those ex-insurgents who feel marginalized from the program yet chose to remain peaceful are not peaceful at heart. One needs to engage them on a personal level to discover their hopelessness, frustration, and resentment.

One of the oil workers I interviewed in Port-Harcourt, Chinedu, expressed a similar opinion while narrating his experience working in the high seas amid threats of insurgent activities. Chinedu believes the region may relapse into conflict in the future due to the government’s inability to address the root causes of insurgency as sustainably as possible. To him, the peacebuilding program needs continuity if the government must address the multifaceted development challenges in the oil region. Chinedu stated unequivocally: “I foresee people rising again with arms because the government is yet to address the issues.” Although Chinedu believes the government has tried to tackle the problem partially, more effort is needed to tackle the causes of insurgency at the root. Otherwise, the insurgency will likely regenerate in the delta to threaten the peace. As Figure 40 shows, more than half (54.0%) of the respondents indicated that it is extremely likely that conflict will regenerate in the Niger Delta should the government decide to shut down the peacebuilding program or terminate the monthly stipend to ex-militants. It is evident

from this result that insurgency will likely resume in the Niger Delta should the government ever attempt to end the program without fulfilling the promises made to the former insurgents.

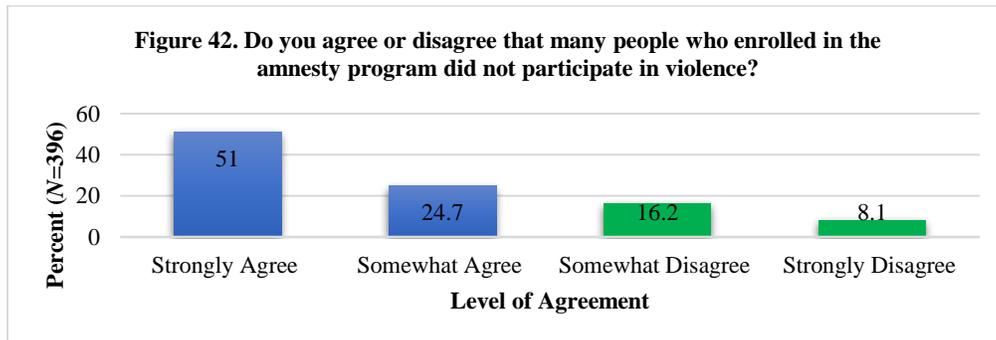
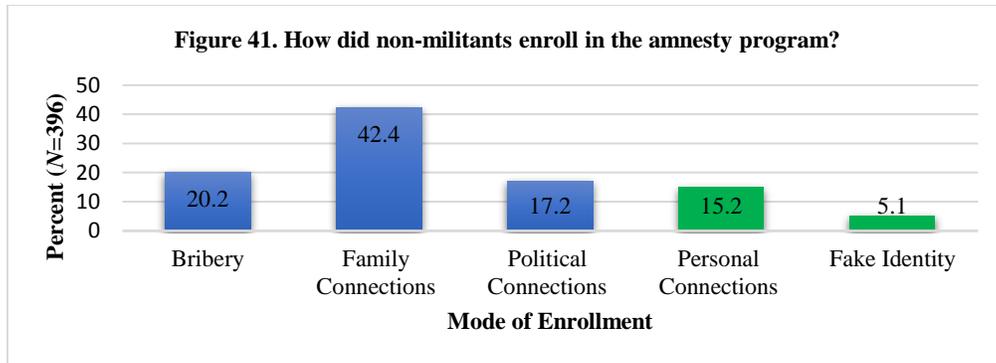


The Manifestation of Corruption in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes

Travelling across several research sites and talking to ex-insurgents and students including observing several amnesty entrepreneurship training programs, one could easily discern the manifestation of corruption—from the ways the peacebuilders define empowerment to how they conduct empowerment programs to the conflicts that break out during training sessions due to ineffective program management.

I used the interview process to probe into the subject of corruption and its impact on peacebuilding processes and outcomes by asking participants whether there are elements of corruption in the implementation of the DDR program. Participants drew attention to the manifestation of corruption in the selection of delegates for overseas scholarships and make the case that some individuals did not participate in the struggle but leveraged their family connections to enroll in prominent universities in the UK, U.S.A, Canada and Germany while they deployed delegates who have no connections to local universities or poor countries in eastern Europe.

The statistical result in Figure 41 shows that 42.4% of the respondents believe amnesty participants leveraged their family connections to enrol in the program, while 20.2% indicated bribery as the means of enrollment and 17.2% believe they used their political connections. Also, 51% of the participants strongly agree that some individuals enrolled in the program despite not participating in the insurgency (see Figure 42). One amnesty student, Aniefiok, told me “the high cost of training so-called illegal beneficiaries has denied the genuine ex-militants of opportunities that were initially designed for them.”



Corruption also manifests in the relationship between the ex-insurgents and their former leaders. These dynamics attests to the experiences of many ex-insurgents who are deeply resentful about their unfair treatment by former warlords who shortchange them by withholding their

allowances or paying them less of what they deserve. One ex-insurgent, Solomon narrated his experience as follows:

The corruption is that some people in this amnesty program call themselves leaders. The confirmed ex-militant leaders fight to benefit themselves alone as if they are the only persons who fought in the creeks. Some of the amnesty leaders didn't shoot a gun, but we that handled the firearms are not benefiting from the amnesty. Our leaders, therefore, are part of the corruption in the amnesty program. They are selfish. When the N65,000 comes they will divide it; some people are not even receiving it. The leaders take all the money.

Corruption in the context of Solomon's experience is structural and manifest in the exploitative relationship between ex-insurgents and their leaders who played the role of warlords in the wake of the insurgency and eventually emerged as powerful government contractors during the peace process, coordinating the monthly payments for those insurgents who fought in their various camps. My field research shows that corrupt practices manifest through the methods of rewarding the insurgents, which seems to benefit some actors while marginalizing others. Solomon's experience thus underlines the role that warlords play in shortchanging their followers whom they had enlisted in their payrolls, and how corrupt practices and injustice in the appropriation of monetary benefits reinforce a feeling of alienation among many ex-insurgents. Those who feel shortchanged by their leaders have expressed deep resentment about their marginalization in the program.

Corrupt practices associated with the incomplete payment of amnesty stipend resonates with the experiences of several other participants I interviewed in Rivers and Bayelsa. One particular experience was that of Benson from Rivers, who told me, "The monthly stipend is not reaching us.... I collect N40,000 and is paid through my leader, Ateke Tom." These power relations exemplify the influence of former warlords in the Niger Delta peace process. What is unique about these former warlords is the enormous power and control they wield to destabilize the oil region should the government renege on its contractual obligations.

Another manifestation of corrupt practices includes the role that vendors play in diverting the training and post-training empowerment benefits of the ex-insurgents. While these practices are prevalent especially in Rivers and Bayelsa, the victims are not just the ex-insurgents only but also the amnesty students in Akwa Ibom whose allowances are frequently withheld for several months and mostly forfeiting these benefits. I recall my interview with Bridget who narrated her experience as follows:

By corruption I mean some boys went to the training camp but have not been receiving their stipend. Sometimes they will remove your identification from the database and replace it with someone who didn't participate in the struggle or the training camp. That person will be collecting the benefits meant for you while you receive nothing.

The emphasis in Bridget's narrative is the reason some ex-insurgents have been excluded from the material benefits of peacebuilding while their friends are receiving their full benefits packages. Bridget believes there had been attempts by the peacebuilders to manipulate the amnesty database by altering the identity of legitimate beneficiaries and replacing them with family members who did not participate in the insurgency. The legitimate beneficiaries will be wondering why they have not been receiving communication or payment from the Amnesty Office. Many peacebuilders invent corrupt methods to shortlist family members for foreign scholarships or training opportunities while excluding the ex-insurgents. There are instances where vendors will divert the resources meant to empower the ex-insurgents or deliver less of the resources. What these dynamics reveal is that corruption in the peacebuilding program manifest as *systematic dishonesty*.

Contrary to the views expressed by the ex-insurgents and validated by the amnesty students, I discovered that some ex-insurgents reached agreements with the former warlords to settle for a certain amount of payment. The logic is that the warlords recruited several community youths who died in the insurgency. Realizing the monetary benefits accruing to ex-insurgents, the

deceased families decided to mount pressure on the warlords to seek compensation them for their losses. The warlords, in their kindness, were compelled to deduct a percentage of the monthly stipends due to other ex-insurgents to compensate the deceased families. One peacebuilder contends that, “.....Some of the boys have agreements with their leaders to pay them a certain percentage of their allowance and the amnesty office is not involved in these agreements.”

Some ex-militants argue, however, that deducting their entitlements to compensate the deceased families meant that they are forced to settle for less of what the federal government had earmarked for their monthly stipend. Some ex-insurgents argue that these deductions perpetuate the cycle of corruption. What these narratives and counternarratives reveal is a conception of corruption as a *moral imperative*—the idea that corruption is legitimate if it serves a moral cause. Given these contrasting narratives, the onus falls on the government to ensure direct accountability to the ex-insurgents and avoid contracting payments to former warlords as this process only threatens the integrity of the peacebuilding program.

Therefore, a critical challenge confronting the peace process has been the manifestation of corrupt practices in peacebuilding processes. Corruption is defined as the act of “abusing public office for private gain” (World Bank n.d.) or the practice of “abusing entrusted power for private gain” (Transparency International n.d.). These definitions imply that corruption manifests in different ways including through the misuse of entrusted funds and power, fraudulent and nepotistic practices. Corruption is, therefore, a form of moral depravity (Akinlabi, Hamed and Awoniyi 2011; Aluko 2002) which manifest not just in public and private domains but also the institutional settings of society (Saleim and Bontis 2009). The preamble to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption indicates that corruption represents actions that threaten the stability of societies, undermines the functioning of democratic institutions, the rule of law and

ethical values and justice, and jeopardizes sustainable development (United Nations 2003). That this statement, emphasizing a causal link between corruption and insecurity comes from the United Nations indicates that a renewed critical focus on the relationship between corruption and peacebuilding is necessary. While the causal factors are multifaceted and contextual, they are deeply embedded in the country's bureaucratic culture, policy machinery and educational system, and tend to flourish under weak governance institutions. This is evident in the Niger Delta context where corrupt practices manifest in every facet of the peacebuilding system.

Programmatic Challenges Confronting DDR Implementation in the Niger Delta

Throughout this study, I evaluated the impact of the peacebuilding program against the effectiveness and limitations of DDR practices. In my observation, the DDR program suffers two fundamental programmatic challenges which arise from ineffective project management and change management processes throughout the life cycle of the peace process.

No Clear Exit Strategy

One of the challenges confronting the DDR program has been the lack of a clear exit strategy. The original design of the DDR was such that the insurgents would go through a pipeline process which begins with the disarmament program and proceed to demobilization and then end with reintegration (see Figure 43). The reintegration phase is the final phase of the DDR pipeline. Once a disarmed and demobilized insurgent has gone through the pipeline up to the reintegration phase, they are expected to exit from the system. Because the Niger Delta DDR logic does not conform to the conventional DDR framework, its implementation is mired in a web of complexities. The fact remains that the 30,000 participants enlisted in the various stages of the

DDR process are still in the system even though many insurgents have been reintegrated into civilian society through employment or are operating successful businesses that are generating income for them, while those who choose education have graduated from university or other training programs. Moreover, I discovered that the payment of monthly stipend to the insurgents, designed initially as transitional support that should terminate at the reinsertion stage following their successful demobilization, is still ongoing at the reintegration phase after thousands of the ex-insurgents have been reintegrated and perhaps participating fully in the social and economic life of their communities. What is interesting about this discovery is that the ex-insurgents who have been fully re-integrated and operating successful businesses in their various communities are still receiving the monthly stipend, thereby perpetuating the cycle of dependency rather than transforming it.

Given that the peacebuilders are still maintaining a register of 30,000 participants in the amnesty database, which includes those who have already reintegrated in foreign lands, students who have graduated, and those fully reintegrated into the local communities through entrepreneurship, new concerns have arisen regarding the transparency of the DDR program. Unlike conventional DDR processes, the Niger Delta DDR program has suffered technical flaws due to the lack of a clear exit strategy and timeline. An effort to probe into this observation was fruitless as the peacebuilders were unwilling to provide full disclosure of the number of participants who have been reintegrated economically and academically without exiting the DDR pipeline including those still receiving monthly payments from the government. This discovery raises critical questions concerning transparency and accountability in the governance of the peacebuilding program. The fact is that, under the current peacebuilding architecture, the DDR program remains a palliative measure that only survives on its ability to prevent ex-insurgents from

resuming violence using a range of strategies including Refresher Training Courses without empowerment or job placement, rather than a strategic institutional response to the challenge in the Niger Delta.

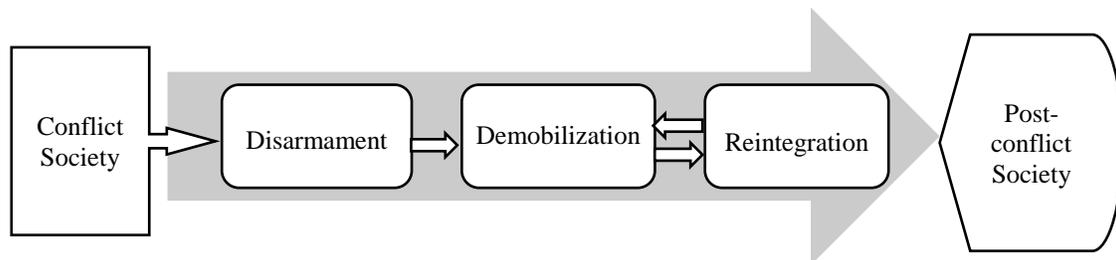


Figure 43. Niger Delta DDR Intervention Logic

Ineffective Coordination of DDR Interventions

I discovered through interviews with the ex-insurgents, including through observations, that the peacebuilders lack the technical capacity to oversee the implementation of the various educational, skills training and post-training reintegration programs undertaken simultaneously in different locations within and beyond Nigeria. For example, I met some ex-insurgents in Rivers who narrated their experience while attending vocational training in the UAE and those deployed to Lagos in Nigeria, for technical training in Heavy Duty Generator Operation and Maintenance. While the Lagos program was designed to last for twelve months and includes practical and in-class modules, the vendor contracted to coordinate the training lodged them in a hotel for nearly one year and paid them monthly allowances of N90,000 (about \$300 US) without giving them any training. The training only took place two weeks to the completion of the twelve months period. It is unimaginable that the Amnesty Office could invest on feeding people and paying their hotel bills for nearly a year without putting them through the training program for which they were deployed to Lagos in the first place.

Similarly, my interview with Darigo, who told me he trained in Marine Technology, traces the failures of the DDR program to the mediocre training given to some ex-insurgents overseas. Some vocational training programs were designed to last for two years following the conventional diploma curriculum. Many ex-insurgents like Darigo, who had indicated an interest in Marine Technology, were eventually deployed to Asia for training. However, they could not complete the two years duration when they brought them back to Nigeria. Darigo believes the nature of the training received in Asia has ill-prepared them to deploy their skills in a challenging job market. Sending the ex-insurgents overseas for marine training and then repatriating them to Nigeria with sub-standard certifications that make them unemployable is a fruitless endeavour that has only produced an army of redundant trainees who feel disempowered and frustrated. Darigo believes many ex-insurgents are roaming the streets as jobless citizens not because they have not received any training, but because the training and certifications they received did not prepare them to compete in the industries of their choice upon their return to Nigeria.

Another experience was that of David, who told me about his dream to pursue university education but was denied the opportunity. Instead, they deployed him to Dubai for training in pipeline welding, which was not his passion. He felt the training he received in Dubai did not prepare him to reintegrate into the economy as he could not secure employment since returning to Nigeria. When asked about the technical challenges in the program, he was frank about his opinion:

People write the exam for you, do everything for you, and then bring you back to Nigeria. Your six months have expired. They would have kept me to complete my six months study. That never happened. These are the illegal things happening in the program. When they bring you for six months they will pay four months for your school, pay four months for your feeding, pay four months for everything that concerns your trip. They will pocket the money for the remaining two months.

David's experience exemplifies the suffering of many ex-insurgents deployed overseas or within Nigeria for various training programs that are often sub-standard and thus fails to prepare them to reintegrate into the local economy.

I recall my interview with some ex-militants who shared similar stories concerning their deployment to Asia for marine training but received sub-standard certifications that prospective employers in Nigeria have refused to recognize. They stated that the vendors contracted by the government to facilitate the training often connive with the trainers abroad to reduce the duration of the training and divert the funds at the expense of the trainees. This discovery is encapsulated in one central theme: ineffective coordination of training and post-training interventions. My study identified this theme as a technical challenge confronting the DDR program that is attributed to some of the failures of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. By corroborating these narratives against several ex-insurgents who have been deployed overseas for training, it was evident that the low-quality training they received did not prepare them to pass the certification exams. Eventually, they were sent back to Nigeria with sub-standard certifications that made them unemployable in the oil industry.

While this study has established that much of the training received by the ex-insurgents was sub-standard, I also discovered that some of the participants did negotiate with the vendors to pay them part of the monies earmarked for their training program and reduce the duration of the training, unknown to them that their decisions will have future consequences. These challenges thrive because the Amnesty Office has a weak administrative capacity to monitor the implementation of its various programs across the world.

The conflict trend in Figure 44 indicates that after a long period of stability the Niger Delta region descended into another cycle of conflict that ended in late 2016 when The Avengers negotiated a ceasefire (point B). Since then, there had been relative stability in the region. However, the unemployment crisis the oil communities, along with some technical challenges arising from ineffective coordination of training and post-training interventions, helps to predict

what might be the drivers of future insurgency in the Niger Delta. That the conflict trend is pointing towards infinity (see point X) is an indication of the possibility of a future insurgency, although we cannot predict when another group of insurgents are likely to strike and how long the future insurgency would last.

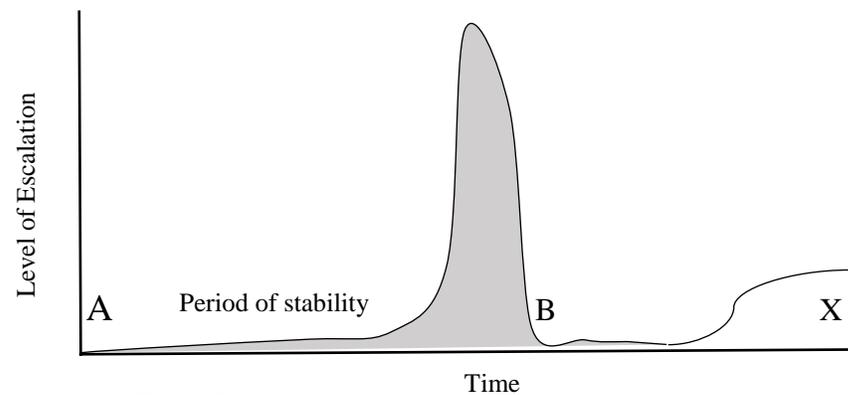


Figure 44. Re-escalation of Future Conflict

Analysis of Conflict Escalation and Re-escalation Dynamics

Armed insurgency in the Niger Delta has generated a plethora of theoretical explanations concerning the underlying motivations of insurgent groups. The dominant theoretical explanation to date is that which attempts to theorize the root of insurgency with regards to ethnic grievances generated by political and economic dynamics which manifest in the marginalization of minority groups in the Niger Delta (e.g. Okonta 2000; Iyayi 2000; Ukeje 2001; Ifeka 2001; Fleshman 2002; Okonta and Douglas 2003; Ikelegbe 2005; Obi 2009; Idemudia 2009; Arowosegbe 2009; Akpan 2014; Folami 2017). While grievance is understood narrowly with regards to socioeconomic dynamics that build up to marginalization, missing in the literature is an analysis that mirrors these grievances against post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta and how past insurgencies connect with recent tensions in the region to inform the likely drivers of future insurgency. This chapter extends the conversation by arguing for the need to place the grievance debate in context.

The context of my argument mirrors post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta against the perceptions of my research participants who identified unemployment as the single most critical motivation behind the escalation and re-escalation of armed insurgency. But this argument is not new. What is new is that the state—traditionally bestowed with the right to create the conditions for stability, peace and development in the Niger Delta—has been reconfigured by Indigenous and multinational forces who position themselves as powerful actors working in tandem with the state to evade accountability for the underdevelopment of the region. Eventually, grievances build up from the limited capacity of the state to respond to regional dynamics and thereby to address the growing needs of Niger Delta people. This argument is consistent with Zartman (2005) who has made a theoretical effort to reconcile the interconnection of “need, greed, and creed.”

While political factors have traditionally dominated the motivations behind armed groups, the entry of economists into the domain of conflict analysis during the 1990s forced theoretical consideration of the economic motives of civil conflict, beginning with the robust theoretical formulations within neoclassical economics, crystallized around the so-called “greed versus grievance” debate. According to Alden, Thakur, and Arnold (2011, 23) the “greed” thesis was postulated by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler but builds implicitly on Ted Gurr’s relative deprivation theory to analyze the ideational motivations that give rise to the economic sources of conflict, both in terms of “relative deprivation and economic predation.” Collier and Hoeffler (2008) identified “greed” and “grievance” as two kinds of motivations. On the contrary, “grievance” theory arose as a critique against the inadequacies of the “greed” thesis which explain civil conflicts in economic terms and attempts to re-establish the role of identity and grievances in creating and sustaining civil conflicts (Cramer 2006). Greed theorists believe that “grievances” are

discontents easily exploited by identity groups and therefore provides insufficient explanations on why conflict occurs in some countries and not in others (Collier and Hoeffler 2008). In the “greed” thesis, the determinants of conflict emphasize factors related to the opportunity for organizing and financing rebellion, such as elite competition over natural resource rents as against factors related to real grievances, such as identity (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2001, 2004).

Following theoretical developments by Arnson and Zartman (2005) the “greed versus grievance” literature evolved to more specific debates and moving beyond “greed” and “grievance” concerns to broaden the analytical framework with renewed focus at the intersection of “need, creed and greed.” This intellectual effort was undertaken to understand why conflicts and civil wars persist in the developing world, and whether these conflicts are the result of need, creed and greed—that is, relative deprivation, identity, or personal gain. The concern for Arnson and Zartman is how these factors interact to create and sustain a civil conflict. The underlying argument is that Collier’s statistical analysis, which shows that armed groups instigate civil wars for personal gain and that natural resource abundance predisposes a country to violence is oversimplified (Arnson and Zartman 2005). Building on in-depth case studies of conflict in Lebanon, Peru, Sierra Leone, Angola, Congo, Colombia, and Afghanistan, Zartman (2005) contend that the drive for personal gain does not necessarily create the condition for war but a combination of need, creed, and greed. This theoretical proposition led to the development of the need, creed and greed model to provide a more refined analysis of the dynamic process that instigates and sustain civil conflicts.

Zartman uses a weak or collapsed state that is incapable of meeting the needs of all, or a segment of its citizens, as the starting point of analysis and shows how grievances build up from perceived injustices, poverty, inequality, and marginalization (see Holmqvist 2012, 16). Thus, my

finding mirrors Zartman's analysis and add to the analysis, the fact that, in the Niger Delta context, my research participants identified unemployment as the single most important cause of grievance. This finding is theoretically consistent with Idemudia and Ite (2006, 391) who traced the conflict drivers to the interaction of social, economic, political and environmental forces at play in the region but contend that political and economic factors are the root causes of conflict, while environmental factors are proximate causes. Unlike Idemudia and Ite who traces armed insurgency to economic factors without necessarily disaggregating these factors using multiple levels of analysis, my study differs substantially in the sense that it identifies unemployment as an independent variable.

Looking at the multiple causal factors identified by my research participants with regards to Zartman's conceptualization of "needs," destructive behaviour can be traced to the repression of the need for security through employment, and the need for development and economic participation. This understanding draws attention to Burton's (1993) human needs theory, which posits that social conflict develops from unmet basic needs. Jeong (2000, 70) notes that basic needs contain more than physiological dimensions but include psychological aspects such as "fear, depression, anger and happiness," which links to sociological wants, desires and preferences. Also, the study by Marker (2003) shows that human needs theorists have added to the menu the need for identity, cultural security, freedom, distributive justice and participation. The theoretical premise of human needs underlies the assumption that people can suffer from psychological damages such as loss of self-esteem when deprived of biological needs (such as food) required for their physical survival. So long as marginalization and fear create conditions for human misery, needs such as "identity, security, and self-esteem" can be satisfied through intellectual achievement, emotional interaction with others, autonomy, and participation in the life of the community (Jeong 2000, 70).

Thus, as Rubenstein (2008, 71) notes, the repression of basic needs and the struggle to satisfy these needs remains a motivational factor behind destructive behaviour.

Theoretical development on the causes of armed rebellion has recently shifted toward structural and systemic issues such as identity, marginalization, and inequality (Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2007; Stewart 2011). This theoretical effort call attention to the work of Nathan (2000, 2) who theorized rebellion as the result of accumulated grievances as opposed to personal gain. My study found that unemployment, when present in any Niger Delta community, create conditions of hopelessness among marginalized youths. Employment remains a critical need in the Niger Delta, which can lead to prosperity and liberate families from miserable living conditions.

My study also identified infrastructure such as roads as a human need in communities that are isolated from the mainstream society, where poverty and suffering are not natural but structural, created by government's inability to direct development attention to the plight of socially and economically isolated constituencies. Idemudia and Ite described needs as the product of "structural and systemic factors" (2016, 315-316). Therefore, destructive behaviour grows from the hopelessness that pervades the experience of initially law-abiding youth who, having appraised their suffering against the limited capacity of the state to meet their need for security and development, resort to armed insurgency as a strategy of transforming their hopelessness or protesting the social conditions prevailing in their communities.

Furthermore, my study traces patterns of conflict re-escalation in the Niger Delta to political retribution, which underlines the complex interplay of elite politics and armed insurgency in societies that derive the bulk of their national wealth from natural resource rents. Based on this discovery, the escalation of conflict in the Niger Delta following the actions of The Avengers who declared war against the state and oil multinationals in 2016, calls attention to the role that political

entrepreneurs play in sustaining the insurgency, what Zartman (2005) described as “creed.” For Zartman, the “creed” phase is one in which political entrepreneurs exploit some pre-existing identity issues, such as ethnic grievances as a convenient tool to mobilize support for the conflict. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, 39) note that there had been more agitation for participation in the amnesty program due largely to the genuine commitment by the state to the peace process and the sincerity of the program, which led to the inclusion of more insurgents between October 2009 and October 2012. The re-escalation of conflict following the emergence of “the Avengers” somewhat transformed the Niger Delta narrative as analysts seemed divided about the nature of aggression and its political implications.

So far, there is limited empirical research on the “Operation Red Economy.” The conversation to date attributes the regeneration of conflict to President Buhari’s May 2015 inauguration speech, which revealed his plans to cut funding for the amnesty program, and to terminate the pipeline security contracts awarded to former warlords, including threats to prosecute a former warlord Tompolo, for corruption (Onuoha 2016, 4; Okoroma 2016, 11; Abidde 2017, x1x) as well as political elites on the opposition. Okoroma (2016, 11) notes that aggrieved insurgents who have been appeased by the amnesty program had embraced peace until January 2016 when President Buhari began implementing policies that were at variance with the interest of the Niger Delta. In theory, conflict re-escalation in Niger Delta is linked to the outcome of the 2015 election, which did not favour the South (Okonofua 2016, 3). These assumptions have theoretical merit, to the extent that the violent campaign orchestrated by The Avengers represents a new set of grievance instigated by political retribution. Ebiede (2017, 1198) contend, however, that the conflict is a contest by local elites over the control of natural resources. What is obvious is the elite propensity to mobilize group identity as a tool for collective action in support of their

political agendas. Missing in the literature, therefore, is an analysis of the nature of grievance and variations in the motivations of armed groups such as The Avengers.

Although D'estree (2008) believes that identity involves a struggle over power, resources and status, she contends that social identity itself does not produce conflict; instead, the interaction between conflict parties is what creates the condition for actual conflict because it builds on pre-existing conditions and transforms them into good or bad. Pre-existing conditions could be differences in identity, such as struggle over power, resources, and perceived injustice (D'Estrea, 2008). Drawing on D'Estree's work, one could map the theoretical consistency between events in the Niger Delta and Zartman's study in Columbia, Angola, and Afghanistan, which shows how political entrepreneurs such as UNITA, FARC, and the Taliban exploited ethnicity, geography and class, and religious identity to wage intergroup conflict (see Holmqvist 2012, 16). My research participants believe that political entrepreneurs played a critical role in sustaining the insurgency in the Niger Delta by mobilizing armed groups against the political regime in Nigeria. They believe The Avengers emerged for retribution against the northern oligarchy whom they blamed for sponsoring terrorism and consequently delegitimizing the government of President Goodluck Jonathan who was a southerner, leading to the loss of the 2015 elections to the North.

By studying the rhetoric of The Avengers, its activities, tactics and destructive capacity, one gets to unravel the power dynamics that underlay the recent wave of insurgency in the Niger Delta beyond the rhetoric of ethnicity. The argument is that without the influence of political elites, the local insurgents will have no capacity to carry out explosions that could shut down an entire oil facility or submerge the national economy. This argument is important because The Avengers appear to be more sophisticated in their targets and destructive capacity within the short time of their existence compared to the previous insurgent groups who equally committed atrocities of

varying proportions over a long period. By examining the “Operation Red Economy” discourse against the conditions given to the Nigerian state and oil corporations, it became evident that the operations of The Avengers were politically motivated. The fact remains that, because of the conflict, some warlords transformed into government contractors providing security along the coastal region (Ushie 2013, 33). Thus, political transformations following President Buhari's victory in the 2015 elections, gave impetus to conflict re-escalation, instigated by political elites whose interests were threatened by the new government. It is through these dynamic processes of conflict escalation and re-escalation that demilitarization of the Niger Delta leads to the experience of remilitarization.

The concept of remilitarization refers to the patterns of conflict escalation and re-escalation over the life the lifecycle of the Niger Delta conflict. These dynamics lead to a situation whereby the demilitarized region over time relapses into violence as conflict spoilers mobilize to challenge the legitimacy of state power by targeting the petroleum industry. To fully conceptualize the instigating factors in renewed militancy in the post-amnesty period and the motivations of Niger Delta militants, theoretical attention is focussed on the pattern of conflict escalation and what might be the likely causes of future conflict. My research participants identified *Devaluation-Alienation* and corruption as programmatic outcomes that may lead to the experience of remilitarization.

Devaluation-Alienation refers to a process that strips a group of disarmed citizens of their entitlements to the benefits of peacemaking or rewards them disproportionately compared to what other members have achieved, which then arouses a feeling of intense anger that creates the condition for remilitarization. Many insurgents perceive themselves as victims of alienation and indignity inflicted on them by the peacebuilders and the warlords, usually through the processes

of training, empowerment and payment of transitional support. However, alienation, regardless of the degree of indignity it inflicts on the victims, is not a cause of conflict unless it provokes a feeling of resentment in them, which then manifest in the experience of remilitarization. In other words, demilitarized citizens can experience alienation without resuming insurgency. But once the victims of alienation begin to perceive their situation relatively, it generates a need which, when unmet, can lead to devaluation—that is, an intense feeling of oppression, indignity and injustice.

Hardy and Laszloffy (2005, 1), in their clinical intervention on violent youth, observed that “devaluation” occurs as “a process that strips an individual or a group of dignity, their sense of worth, and self-esteem” and is both “situational”—derived from events, or “societal”—derived from threats to the victims’ identity. This study has shown that the emotions released by the experience of devaluation are a powerful force, such that could re-escalate the insurgency by negating the attitudes of disarmed insurgents. It is the dynamic processes of exclusion, anger and injustice that build up into resentment, which then transforms negative emotions into hostile behaviour that manifest in patterns of conflict escalation. This observation is consistent with conflict transformation theory, particularly the theoretical proposition of Galtung (1969) who sees conflict as an ever-changing process in which attitudes, behaviours and structures are continually evolving and affecting one another. It is the changing relationships between actors that compel them to pursue their interests by developing hostile attitudes and destructive actions.

It is important to note that the culture of corruption and nepotism within the institutional structure of the peace process, the programmatic challenges arising from ineffective coordination of the transitional support to ex-insurgents as well as the training and empowerment programs, have sustained a feeling of resentment among the ex-insurgents. Many youths enlisted in the amnesty scholarship and deployed to good universities in the U.K, U.S.A, Canada, and Germany

for academic training did not participate in the struggle but enrolled through family connections, political connection, or bribery. Most of these beneficiaries are from affluent families with political connections to influence their enrollment in the program with ease, while others enrolled in the program based on communal or family ties with the peacebuilders. However, the peacebuilders also have their perspective on how and why many youths in the communities were awarded amnesty scholarships to study overseas even though they did not participate in the insurgency.

A potential determinant of remilitarization in the Niger Delta is the emergence of a peace economy driven by the processes of reintegration. The monetary incentives attached to the peace process has sustained an industry racket which has fostered a sense of entitlement among the ex-insurgents who now exploit these financial incentives as an attractive means of making easy money. Thus, one issue that has attracted academic attention has been the use of monetary incentives to sustain peace. Some scholars have observed that the use of financial incentives to influence the peace process has enabled the state to create a conducive environment for oil and gas production in the Niger Delta (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Ajayi and Adesote 2013; Ushie 2013; Obi 2014; Eke 2015; Agbiboa 2015; Okonofua 2016; Schultze-Kraft, 2017).

Underlying the peace economy is the argument that future conflict will arise from the growing awareness among ex-insurgents that discontent can be easily exploited by anyone seeking to use violence as an attractive means of making easy money. As Ushie (2013, 33) points out, “the state’s monetization of community grievances is unsustainable because it implies that the state is simply paying militants to be peaceful based on oil revenues which are finite and volatile.” For Eke (2015, 756), the peacebuilding program represents a monetary transfer policy that appears attractive to “criminals” who use violence to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the instrumentality of peace is what determines the magnitude and direction of future conflicts in the Niger Delta.

To support this proposition, Obi (2014) raised critical questions concerning the politics of amnesty and whose interest it serves, including questions about the sustainability of the peacebuilding initiative. By using a political economy analysis to uncover the power relations that underlay the amnesty politics, Obi argued that amnesty represents less of a peacebuilding program and more of a political project undertaken by Nigeria's elites to maintain their preponderance over natural resource rents. For Ajayi and Adesote (2013), amnesty is less of a humanitarian initiative and more of a reactionary intervention deployed by the government to buy peace from insurgents to restore security in the oil region with the aim to eliminate hindrances to oil production. While this strategy has been successful in re-establishing oil and gas production, it fails to address the root of insurgency in the oil region (Agbibo 2015). It follows that the resumption of peace in the Niger Delta and the subsequent boost in oil output only establishes the success of the peacebuilding program in achieving the government's political objective.

One challenge confronting the program is its presentation as the government's gift to disarmed insurgents, thereby sidestepping their main grievances (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011). This strategy is problematic because it suggests that the state has ignored the grievances of the local communities (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011, 45). Thus, Ushie contends that the "monetization of community grievances" has enabled the transfer of wealth to ex-insurgents while it fails to mobilize the peacebuilding program to facilitate sustainable peace in the oil region (2013, 33). The peace process thus ignores the root causes of the insurgency, while genuine reconciliation between the conflicting parties remains a far cry (Eke 2015, 756; Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011, 53). While the program was intended to restore security and stability in the oil region, it has so far been unsuccessful in achieving sustainable peace but only created an opportunity for the government to re-engage with the insurgents in the post-amnesty period to ensure continuous oil

production rather than facilitate genuine reconciliation (Eke 2015). As Okonofua put it, “militants and their organizations continue to exist as artifacts in the structure of economic violence created by power brokers to advantage a small network of the political elite” (2013, 10). Thus, failure to resolve the proliferation of arms in the region has further revived criminal activities such as oil bunkering to the extent that crime became a survival strategy among militants (Eke 2015). As Schultze-Kraft (2017) argues, elites could use organized crime as a powerful tool to negotiate a political solution and gain access to resource rents as well as contribute to the mitigation of violence in resource-rich societies. Because the Nigerian government was under pressure to increase oil production, it presented the amnesty as a “renegotiation of the existing political settlement designed to protect the economic and political interests of national and regional elites, who include former militant leaders, rather than a peacebuilding intervention” (2017, 621).

My research adds to this knowledge base and makes the case that the current state of the peacebuilding program merely exists as an infrastructure for sustaining the peace economy in the Niger Delta. The emergence of a peace economy poses a significant challenge to the legitimacy of the peacebuilding program because it left many youths in possession of weapons easily mobilized for material ends. Peacebuilding was, in this case, a means of buying off peace from militants without addressing the root of violence and criminality. On these and other grounds, the effectiveness of DDR as an instrument of sustainable peacebuilding is called to question so long as it enthrones a peace economy exploited by ex-insurgents to sustain their survival.

Although the peace economy is a manifestation of the shortcomings of peacebuilding, my analysis does not suggest that self-serving motives overshadowed the violent activities of groups such as The Avengers, or that the recent phase of insurgency was driven predominantly by greed for personal gains. What is evident throughout the data is that a combination of factors, including

greed, need, creed and political retribution, motivated the recent phase of armed insurgency. The fact remains that an insurgent movement initially motivated by concerns for social justice may choose to introduce greed-based motives into their struggle as time stretches on. This does not, however, imply that greed for personal gain is the driving motive behind the insurgency. Instead, greed can manifest as an unintended consequence of armed insurrection, especially for insurgent groups that require significant resources to mobilize effective violence targeting a nation's economic infrastructure. It is the dynamic processes of conflict escalation that create the condition for greed as armed groups often disguise criminal activities with political grievances as a strategy to mobilize the resources required to sustain their warfare.

It is at this juncture that conflict transformation theory intersects with the need, creed, and greed theory, especially their contribution to the nature of violence. For example, Galtung (1996, 197, 200) uses the term violence with reference to “needs-deprivation” or “avoidable insults to basic human needs” and argues that violence occurs when every effort to act with restraint in dealing with a conflict situation fails. It is the failure to transform conflict is what leads to violence (Galtung 2000, 16). For Galtung, structural violence embodies a structure and is characterized by economic exploitation (1996, 197-200). Galtung argues, however, that even though “political repression” and “exploitation” are necessary conditions for violence to occur, they do not necessarily produce structural violence (93). The concern for Galtung is the societal structures such as inequality and economic exploitation which create conditions that deprive subordinate groups of their needs compared to the dominant groups. Galtung's concept of structural violence, defined as a process of needs deprivation, has implications for the nature of armed insurgency in the Niger Delta.

Nigeria's ethnic tensions and its impact on the armed insurgency in the Niger Delta call attention to such an analysis that unite conflict transformation theory with the needs, creed, and greed theory as unique analytical frameworks for better conceptualizing the conflict problem. At the same time, we cannot underestimate the impact of greed and creed variables in driving structural violence because even though these variables are accorded less priority when conceptualizing structural violence, they do indeed create conditions that lead to oppression, discrimination and needs deprivation through corrupt practices and elite competition as demonstrated in this chapter. This perspective suggests that structural contradictions which manifest in unemployment and those which foster devaluation-alienation including those that sustain the peace economy, have theoretical implications that cut across the need, creed, and greed theory and conflict transformation theory. This analysis has yielded unique theoretical insights that add substantially to the theoretical debate on the Niger Delta conflict as well as empirical research on DDR and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Conclusion

The implementation of DDR is generally assumed to be a reasonable and necessary intervention in post-conflict societies. In the Niger Delta, the transformation of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents into skilled, highly educated and entrepreneurial citizens has produced positive results that attest to the impact of post-conflict peacebuilding. But when these interventions are politicized, poorly coordinated and rife with corruption and nepotistic practices—as they do in the context of the Niger Delta peace process—they nonetheless produce a host of unintended consequences, including the translation of the political realities of poverty, unemployment, and hopelessness into a peace economy that create the conditions for future insurgencies.

As this chapter has shown, exposure to the risks of unemployment has been a cause of grievance. While the peacebuilders' effort to facilitate reintegration through skills training and entrepreneurship is praiseworthy, it remains to be seen whether these programs have delivered the impact needed to transform the conflict or sustain the peace. The inclusion of non-insurgents in DDR interventions has undoubtedly altered the conventional DDR process. This development raises concerns about the nature of DDR including its theoretical and practical implications. The high cost of training illegal beneficiaries enrolled in the peacebuilding program has also denied training opportunities to many ex-insurgents for whom the peacebuilding program was initiated. It is evident that young people from conflict-affected communities who had initially declined amnesty for fear of being incarcerated and those who did not participate in the insurgency but saw the peacebuilding program as an attractive means of making money without working, have used the threat of violence to protest their exclusion, and many might do so in the future.

This chapter has shown that although DDR practices have faced tremendous challenges, they nonetheless provide a framework to evaluate the process and outcome of post-conflict peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta. The problem, however, lies in the general dissatisfaction with the government's strategy of using a monetary approach to negotiating peace with insurgents, thereby raising the prospects of insurgency and violence. The starting point of peacebuilding is the understanding that the causes of insurgency are mutually reinforcing and multifaceted, which means the peace process cannot overlook the multidimensional context of conflict. This chapter has shown that it is easy to mobilize identity groups in the Niger Delta for collective action because ethnic identity itself serves as a powerful force for group formation. According to Akerlof and Kranton (2000), identity is a powerful tool which can influence an individual's behaviour and the relative position of their identity group. Therefore, identity remains

a critical unit of analysis in the spatial politics of insurgent groups and a powerful political tool in conflict re-escalation, one that is easily exploited by elites to facilitate their political interests. The example of The Avengers suggests that despite the successful demilitarization of insurgent groups, the Niger Delta may see further re-escalation of conflict in the future if the goal is to use violence as a strategy for political negotiation with the state.

It is reasonable to conclude that the implementation of the peacebuilding program addresses part of the problems of the Niger Delta. Peacebuilding interventions need to embrace a broader vision that addresses the structural causes of violence, while also engaging in more profound social transformation at all levels of society. The government can change how it engages with insurgents by exploring practical ways that identity groups can work to prevent violence and achieve the vision of sustainable peace. Understanding the motivations behind the violent campaigns of armed groups in the Niger Delta, therefore, require analysis that takes into consideration the perspectives of both ex-insurgents and those who did not engage in conflict yet have experienced violence in different ways. The next chapter will examine the nature and typologies of peace in the Niger Delta.

Chapter Eight

THE NATURE AND TYPOLOGIES OF PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA

Introduction

My journey through the Niger Delta conducting fieldwork in conflict-affected communities was an extremely thought-provoking experience. During my interview with some youth leaders, I had the opportunity to probe into the relationship between ExxonMobil and their community. I also inquired about the nature of violence in these communities. One of the youth leaders expressed concerns about the difficulty of sleeping at night because of seismic vibrations from ExxonMobil drilling operations. Such experiences are not peculiar to one individual only; other participants I interviewed expressed similar concerns about the effect of seismic vibrations and the danger it portends to inhabitants of the Ibeno community. Participants from Rivers and Bayelsa raised critical concerns regarding insecurities that arose in the coastal communities in the wake of the insurgency. While there was no evidence of armed conflict at the time of this study, the human security threats in the oil communities—from the level of poverty and unemployment to the level of environmental pollution—tell the story of the Niger Delta.

Despite the contradiction of human insecurities that stand in sharp contrast to the oil wealth extracted from the region, the shared opinion among the research participants is that their communities are “peaceful.” Their perceptions of peace raise a fascinating puzzle, which left me with questions concerning the nature of peace in the oil communities. As I began to explore a more in-depth understanding of peace, a general theme surfaced that weaves together the varying opinions that participants hold concerning the nature of peace currently prevailing in their communities.

In this chapter, I explore how the research participants perceive peace and how these perceptions shape which strategies and actions they consider appropriate for bringing about lasting peace in conflict-affected communities. This chapter contributes to peace and conflict studies in two ways. First, it identifies four central typologies of peace representing the dominant perceptions of the research participants concerning post-conflict transformations in the oil communities in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers: the stability typology; the absence of violence typology; the development typology; and the freedom typology. It then locates the sources of these typologies in the peacebuilding field and shows how this understanding provides the intellectual toolkit for theorizing the nature of peace in the Niger Delta.

Typologies of Peace in the Niger Delta

Achieving the broader objective of this research requires an exploration of the common perceptions of peace by asking the research participants to reflect on what peace in the Niger Delta means to them. The responses led to the discovery of four typologies of peace that reflect the dominant perceptions of the ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. Underlying these dominant perceptions of peace is the insensitivity of the peacebuilders to the critical tensions in the oil communities and the challenges which manifest in the complex processes of peacebuilding.

Peace as Freedom

Protracted insecurity in the Niger Delta has over the years sustained an atmosphere of fear among the civilian population before The Presidential Declaration of Amnesty. Travelling across the various communities and conducting interviews with ex-insurgents and non-insurgents, the word freedom was used repeatedly by many participants to describe their understanding of peace.

Participants expressed various understandings of including freedom of movement, freedom from kidnapping, hostage taking and robbery, and freedom from the threats of explosives and air strikes.

Freedom in this context refers to threats that sustained an atmosphere of fear among the civilian population in the wake of the armed insurgency. Some ex-insurgents who have lived through the experiences of violence and have contributed to terrorizing their communities believe their decision to surrender their arms to the state and forgo violence has freed their communities from fear. I realized through speaking with the ex-insurgents that the choices we make to liberate ourselves from the bondage of violence and to avoid engaging in activities that serve to threaten other people's freedoms are what creates the experience of peace. In other words, freedom is not just for those who feel threatened by our actions but also the perpetrators of violence. Once the perpetrators take decisions to liberate themselves from their violent ways, their transformation then leads to the creation of peaceful societies where individuals interact freely and conduct their business without fear of harassment, kidnapping, robbery, rape, and death. Williams stated that:

Peace exists where a people are free to go about their daily activities without fear of molestation by anybody, where people can fully engage in whatever legitimate activity they have to without fear of any persons, and where developmental activities can go on unfettered by the destructive activities of saboteurs. Peace is where people with clearly opposing tendencies and views can interact freely without fear of harm to one another, where people of different political stripes can interact without fear of oppression or harm to one another.

Williams is essentially saying that peace and freedom are mutually inclusive experiences. The achievement of peace will be difficult in a society where individuals are living in fear and cannot move freely. Freedom is perceived as vital in communities once dominated by miscreants whose criminal undertakings imposed an atmosphere of fear that constrained movement and business activities along the waterways. To emerge from such an environment so dominated by insecurity to inhabit a society where individuals now conduct their business without fear of being

attacked, raped or robbed by militants is a liberating experience that attests to the value of freedom in the Niger Delta. The context of freedom refers primarily to freedom from physical violence.

While the threat of violence is not new in the Niger Delta, historically, the nature of fear has mostly been associated with conditions that give rise to conflict, such as economic and political marginalization and exclusion (Idemudia 2009, 315; Ikelegbe 2006, 104; UNDP 2006, 12) rather than behaviours that needs to be eliminated or transformed to enable individuals and communities to live in relative safety. While not undermining the economic context in which insecurity manifest in Niger Delta communities to produce fear, the research participants did not perceive their fears as produced by economic deprivation or exclusion; instead, new perceptions of fear seems connected with behaviours that pose significant threats to personal and community security. Thus, people perceive peace from living or working in communities where they feel liberated from threats to their security and safety compared to the period in which these insecurities were not only prevalent but curtailed their freedom of movement.

Viewed from this standpoint, the relationship between freedom and peace derives from the fact that freedom is both a fundamental constituent of peace and a liberating experience. What this means is that freedom is both constitutive of peace and instrumental to it. In other words, freedom originate from perceptions of personal liberty with regards to people's safety from physical threats. Freedom also originates from perceptions of political safety—that is, a state in which the military is not spreading fear through airstrikes that often threatens the security and psychological wellbeing of non-combatant civilians. Establishing the theoretical link between peace and freedom requires careful attention to people's freedom from personal security.

Peace as Development

Throughout the fieldwork, the term “development” repeatedly featured in my interviews and informal conversations with the research participants. When asked about their perception of peace, many participants indicated that peace is development. However, development means different things to different people, depending on whom I was talking to, their lived experiences, how they see the world, how they interpret their wellbeing or suffering, and the values they embody.

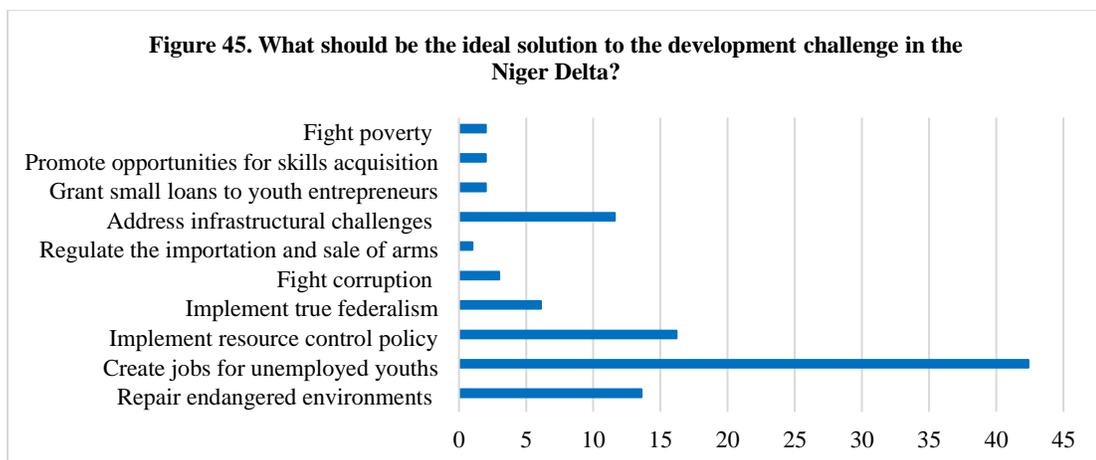
Some participants perceived development as the satisfaction of their basic needs and see opportunities that put money in their pockets as a vehicle to peace. As Benson stated, “without money we cannot meet basic needs like food and clothing. Nobody wants to make trouble when he or she has the guarantee of an income.” Benson sees income is a determinant of peace because it enables people to meet their basic needs. It means when insurgents have some income stream that enable them to meet their basic needs, the effect of that experience automatically becomes an incentive to be peaceful. Thus, former insurgents who have some income stream would have no incentives to participate in criminality. Rather, they would be encouraged to report criminal activities to law enforcement agencies.

Other participants perceived development as the infrastructure required for the social and economic transformation of their communities, what a youth leader Aniefiok, refer to as “visible infrastructure for the benefit of all.” The context of development is limited to physical infrastructure and could mean anything from building roads and bridges to integrate rural people into mainstream society to building hospitals and schools to facilitate healthcare and education. According to Dike, “peace is development, infrastructural development, social amenities.” So long as the infrastructure enables the improvement of socioeconomic conditions in marginalized

communities, it can create the condition for peace. This conception of peace resonates with Nwandu who stated that:

People like us that are opportune to travel and see what is happening in other places often find it heartbreaking when we go into the Niger Delta. Its one thing to win the war and it is another thing to win the peace. Peace in the sense of employment, peace in the sense of development. So, what's the way forward for the Niger Delta with regards to employment? How do we turn the Niger Delta region into a Dubai, a Kuwait...because the resources are there? These are the challenges, and this is my understanding of peace.

Nwandu believes that peace has been difficult to win in the Niger Delta because winning peace involves promoting economic development by building social infrastructure to support job creation. He perceives peace as any form of intervention that mobilizes the natural resources in the region to build infrastructure that will support economic activities and job creation. Once people have the means to earn a decent living through the resources in their region, improvements in their wellbeing will create the condition for peace. Therefore, development through job creation remains a precondition for long-term peace in the Niger Delta. The statistical results in Figure 45 reveal the importance of job creation in peacemaking as 42.4% of the participants indicated job creation as the ideal solution to the development challenges in the oil communities compared to the implementation of resources control policy (16.2%), environmental remediation (13.6%) or infrastructural development (11.6 %).



Although scholars have discussed the role that underdevelopment plays in conflict formation in the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe 2006; Idemudia 2009) the scholarly discussion on the peace process to date has focussed on the impact of the amnesty program in sustaining the peace (Ajibola 2015) and the institutional policies, interventions and strategies that have emerged to address underdevelopment (Ushie 2013; Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016). Missing in the literature are empirical studies that move beyond underdevelopment and conflict to explore precisely the relationship between peace and economic development. In this study, both the ex-insurgents and non-insurgents communicated a common understanding that peace is development, where development means improvements in the wellbeing of individuals and their communities.

One of the scholarly attempts to establish the connection between peace and development came from the work of Azar (1985). Azar argued for a more comprehensive conception of security by linking human needs to a broader understanding of “development” and “political access,” where conflict resolution is measured against the removal of underdevelopment, while the state of peace equates with the level of development (1985, 69). Following Azar, peace could mean development interventions that address unemployment and the infrastructural decay in the Niger Delta. This conception of peace revives interest in a Premium Times interview with an American scholar and development expert Deidre Lapin, concerning what the federal government could do to develop the Niger Delta. Lapin, who had studied Nigeria for 45 years described the amnesty program as a development action plan that should be reviewed to support infrastructural investment focused on better housing, transport networks, restoration of schools and health centres, and resource management (see Olorunyomi 2017). It is assumed that these development alternatives will serve to support social transformation and thereby create the condition for lasting peace.

Development remains an essential vehicle for peace in the Niger Delta because it directs peacebuilding efforts creatively by raising the opportunity cost of insurgency through reintegration programs that address the causes of underdevelopment. As this study has shown, ex-insurgents whose lives have been transformed through education, skill training and entrepreneurship are unwilling to participate in violence due to improvements in their socioeconomic status.

Peace as Nonviolence

Rarely did I encounter an ex-insurgent who is averse to nonviolence. Despite the gross discontent expressed by ex-insurgents who feel alienated from the benefits of peacebuilding, their experience fighting in the creeks and their participation in nonviolence training have altogether given them a completely new orientation to peace. Thus, the common perception among the participants is that peace is the absence of violence. The context of violence refers primarily to physical assault, such as a violent attack or criminal activity that inflicts harm or threatens to inflict, harm or death upon an individual or community. For example, one female ex-insurgent expressed her perception of peace as follows: “peace means no violence, no fighting, no shooting, and no killing.” Therefore, peace implies living in a community freed from overt behaviours that threaten to inflict physical harm or death on individuals, including attacks on critical infrastructure.

This understanding resonates with the perspective shared by Stella, who perceives peace as “the absence of war” and believes peace prevails in an atmosphere of “nonviolence.” Since war connotes a state of armed conflict, the absence of war invariably refers to a state in which the differences between groups do not escalate into physical combat or hostilities that may inflict, or threaten to inflict, bodily harm or death. Therefore, peace in the Niger Delta implies the avoidance of war or the elimination of violence, the threat of violence, or the means of violence. Eliminating

the means of violence means destroying small arms while promoting nonviolent behaviour through peace education.

The idea that peace is synonymous with nonviolence makes a unique contribution to the Niger Delta peacebuilding literature because it resonates with the lived experiences of individuals in conflict-affected communities where violence is an everyday reality, and where fighting, shooting, and killing are commonplace. Tilly (1969, 17) describe this form of violence as “overt behaviour” because it provokes fear in people. As Tilly pointed out, such behaviours include armed “insurgency, street protest, muscle flexing, coercion and destruction” (1969, 17). These behavioural patterns manifest in Niger Delta communities where local populations routinely experience explosions by insurgents or airstrikes from military forces fighting the insurgents. Most of these encounters end in people getting killed and sustaining grievous bodily harm. While this mode of warfare has transformed the Niger Delta into a hostile environment, the suspension of overt behaviours provides a unique perspective on how individuals perceive peace and the determinants of a peaceful society.

Peace as Stability

The volatility of the oil communities is presumably a significant determinant of how the inhabitants perceive the nature of peace. Participants reflected on the impact of the peacebuilding program, particularly those interventions designed to address insecurities arising from kidnapping, hostage taking and bombing. These perceptions suggest that disarming the insurgents of small arms and ammunition has helped to create stability in the oil communities. The reality is that people evaluate peace against the stability of their communities. Peace, therefore, is a measure of community stability. As Jeff points out:

Amnesty has brought peace to the Niger Delta area because security has stabilized. Boys are no longer going to the creeks to participate in kidnapping and bombing, and the military is doing their job very well. People now walk freely and travel to their regular businesses.

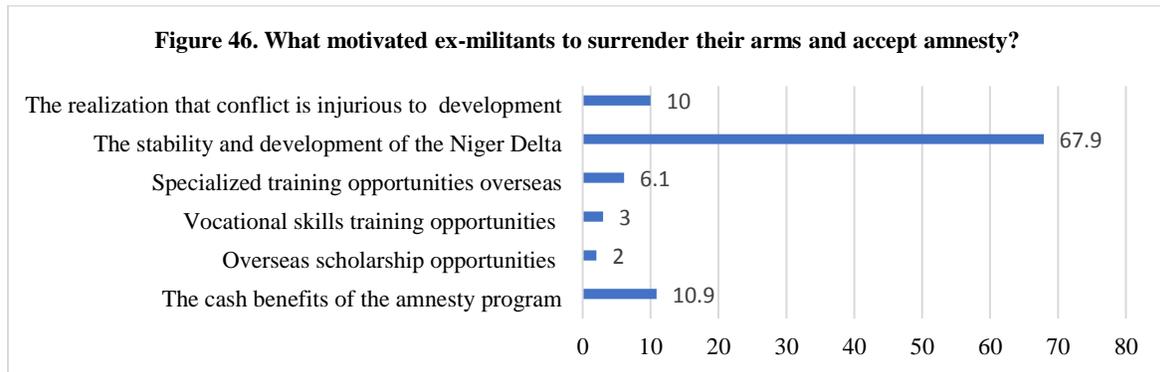
Jeff defines peace as stability. The context of stability refers primarily to improvements in the level of security and safety in conflict-affected communities where the threat of insurgency and criminality have reduced drastically. The stability of oil communities is a confidence-building measure that has resulted in the revival of business confidence in the Niger Delta. Consequently, oil multinationals have resumed business operations in many communities where their operations were initially shut down due to insecurity while individuals now walk freely and conducting their businesses in an atmosphere of relative security and calmness.

The stability of Niger Delta communities underscores the importance of oil multinationals in economic transformation in the oil communities, specifically through the employment of community youths. This observation resonates with some participants who believe the stability of the oil region has enabled individuals from conflict-affected communities to benefit from employment opportunities created by oil multinationals operating in their land. For example, Finima stated that:

The amnesty helps us to gain much from the oil companies and the federal government. It helps in creating employment very well. Without amnesty, most of our communities cannot have companies operating in their land. Because of the amnesty many companies now operate in our land.

To Finima, stability in the oil communities is fundamental to the presence of oil multinationals who contribute to job creation. These companies are valuable to indigenes from these communities because they constitute the only means of employment. Those who perceive peace through the lens of stability have expressed an ideological rejection of violence by acknowledging the impact of the peacebuilding program in creating a repentant army who place a high premium on the importance of oil corporations in job creation in their communities. This

observation is consistent with the result of the statistical analysis which shows that 67.9% of the respondents decided to surrender their arms to accept amnesty due to concerns about the stability and development of the Niger Delta (see Figure 46).



This analysis is consistent with the study by Ushie (2013, 32) who argued that “the implementation of the amnesty program” has brought some semblance of stability in the Niger Delta region. In theory, the oil communities are perceived as stable because the peacebuilding program has created conditions whereby former insurgents have no recourse to violence. While this perspective mostly suggests that stability is an outcome of DDR, it ignores an analysis that connects stability with the actual perception of peace by those who perpetrated atrocities of varying proportions and those who experienced the violence as victims.

The result also shows some consistency with a publication by the United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre (UNIDDRRC) which suggest that the “objective of DDR is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments” which is necessary to create the condition for development (UNIDDRRC 2010). According to Berdal and Ucko (2009, 2), demilitarizing ex-combatants and re-integrating them into the political, social and economic life of post-conflict society is an integral step in preventing a relapse into

violence or attempt to disrupt the peace process. Thus, DDR remains a principal tool for the transformation from war to peace (Massimo 2016). That some participants define peace with regards to the relative stability of Niger Delta communities is a clear indication that DDR interventions which focussed on disarming the ex-insurgents have been successful in stabilizing the region, thereby enhancing the level of confidence in the peace process. What is paramount to this discussion is that how individuals perceive the level of security or insecurity in their communities is a determinant of the success or failure of DDR interventions.

The Anti-Peace Machine

The concept of the anti-peace machine was inspired by Fergusson's (1990) *The Anti-Politics Machine*, written as a critique of "development" with reference to the consistent failure of development agencies to bring about economic stability in Lesotho due to the depoliticization of development. The DDR framework in the Niger Delta represents such a machine that seeks to depoliticize peace in pursuit of stability by framing peacebuilding as an economic problem requiring technical solutions. For example, the goal of the Presidential Amnesty Program at its inauguration by President Yar'Adua was to stabilize security in the oil region as a precondition for economic development. Achieving this goal required the implementation of a DDR program against the backdrop of the federal government's intent to transform the Niger Delta insurgents into responsible and law-abiding citizens with the capacity to contribute to national development.

DDR is generally assumed to be a reasonable and necessary intervention in post-conflict societies. But when these interventions become politicized, as they do in the context of the Niger Delta, they nonetheless produce a host of unintended consequences, such as the translation of the political realities of illiteracy, poverty, pollution and unemployment into technical problems that

create the opportunity for the enthronement of a peace economy which sustains the political economy of corruption. Arguably, the peacebuilding machinery in the Niger Delta depoliticizes peace by focussing conflict resolution interventions mainly on sustaining the peace economy with technical solutions while ignoring the underlying social inequities in the oil communities. This line of thinking is significant because the oil communities contribute more than 90 percent of Nigeria's export revenue (Otuene 2006; Adeola 2009; Etekpe 2009; Chukwuemeka, Anazodo and Nzewi 2011; Okorobia and Olali 2013; Nwankwo 2015) and therefore deserve interventions that move beyond palliative measures focused on stabilizing the security situation without addressing the underlying inequities. The UNDP Human Development Report has further confirmed the appalling contradiction between opulence and inequality in the Niger Delta (UNDP 2006). Nowhere is this contradiction more visible than in Bayelsa state where the ratio of physicians to the population is 1:150,000 (Watts 2007, 1).

Social inequality also manifests in the level of illiteracy in rural communities in the Niger Delta where many youths cannot read, write or communicate in English, and poses severe threats to employment prospects among the ex-insurgents. I discovered that the high level of illiteracy is an underlying factor in much of the resistance to the entrepreneurship training as many participants seemed unfamiliar with the technical concepts and could barely comprehend the training. I also discovered that most ex-insurgents who have difficulty with written or verbal communication only attend the training to benefit from the allowances, not the actual technical knowledge being transmitted to them by the expert trainers.

The fact remains that while the peacebuilding program has been successful in building the technical capacity of many ex-insurgents through a range of training programs, it nonetheless ignores fundamental insecurities that aggravate inequities in the rural communities. Arguably, the

program ignores thousands of illiterate youths in the oil communities who depend on the environment for their daily survival, yet do not benefit from the peace program because they did not participate in the insurgency. The peacebuilding program constitutes an anti-peace machine because the peacebuilders chose to depoliticize peace by limiting their interventions to technical solutions that have been successful in elevating the status of some ex-insurgents and a few privileged non-insurgents while ignoring the insecurities of marginalized constituencies in the rural communities who are equally capable of picking of arms to resume insurgency at the slightest discontent.

Theorizing the Nature of Peace

The literature on peacebuilding has shown that societies emerging from armed conflicts are at severe risk of relapsing into war because ex-combatants often re-arm to take advantage of expanding political opportunities due mainly to weak state capacity and social fragmentations within affected societies (Alden 2002; Spear 2002; Gamba 2003). One of the responses to the post-Cold War political environment was Boutros-Ghali's (1995) Agenda for Peace, which identified post-conflict peacebuilding as an emerging category under UN peace operations. Boutros-Ghali defined post-conflict "peacebuilding as actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid the regeneration of conflict" (1995, 46). The growing challenge in post-conflict societies prompted the UN Security Council to release a statement in February 2001, recognizing peace-building as "a mechanism aimed at preventing the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict through a wide range of programs including political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights" (UN Security Council 2001).

The demobilization of ex-insurgents and their re-integration into the social, political and

economic life of post-conflict society is undoubtedly a critical step in preventing a relapse into violence or attempt to disrupt the peace process (Berdal and Ucko 2009, 2). While DDR has gained increasing relevance as a principal tool for the transformation from war to peace (Massimo 2016), a significant component of the DDR framework is the focus on highlighting the threats to civilians in post-conflict environments. What this means is that while confrontational struggles between adversaries have ended, post-conflict societies always experience challenges that threaten the security of civilians and, in many cases, create the condition for the regeneration of armed conflict. In responding to these challenges, peacebuilding efforts have focused on addressing the social conditions prevailing in post-conflict societies or putting in place measures to prevent these societies from sliding into conflict. Such efforts are undertaken to ensure that political, developmental or humanitarian actions focus on promoting institutional structures to facilitate poverty and inequality eradication, transparency and accountability in governance, sustainable development, including the promotion of democratic norms, human rights, the rule of law, and a culture of non-violence and peace (UN Security Council 2001).

In examining the successes and challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding, theoretical attention has focussed on identifying political factors which are critical to the success of peacebuilding programs. Cousens and Kumar (2001) have examined peacebuilding programs in Cambodia, El Salvador, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti and Somalia to determine their successes and failures. The theoretical tension lies in the realization that international peacebuilding often focuses on external solutions that are insistent upon elections monitoring and human rights that appease special interest groups outside the country or region in conflict and may be irrelevant in societies where war has damaged infrastructure, such that providing clean water is of much greater importance to local constituents.

Stedman and Rothchild (1996) identified a multiplicity of security concerns ranging from political to the military to economic and cultural security as vital to peacebuilding, along with confidence-building measures built into the peace process and the role of the international community. The concern for international peacebuilding is an internal political approach that focuses the attention of international actors on the unique dynamics of each post-conflict society and on those factors, which enable post-conflict stability (Cousens, Kumar, and Wermester 2001, 183). While these discussions mostly focus on the international context, they provide the framework for analyzing post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta.

A fundamental concern that this chapter raises is whether the changes in the security situation in the Niger Delta correlate with the experience of peace, and how to conceptualize the nature of peace. Aghedo (2012) argue that sustainable peace in the region would require effort to identify the incentives for violence and the longstanding grievances of the oil region. Such an endeavour would require bringing to justice conflict entrepreneurs who stand in the way of peace and those who perpetrate human rights atrocities, while also compensating victims of violence. Aghedo notes that despite the apparent benefits of the peacebuilding to the stability of post-conflict communities, “the program has been characterized by complexities which have threatened its success, thereby prolonging the conflict (2012, 268). However, Aghedo’s effort to shine a light on the challenges to post-conflict peacebuilding suffers some limitation due primarily to the lack of analytical clarity concerning the nature of peace currently prevailing in the Niger Delta.

Several studies have raised concerns about the sustainability of the peacebuilding initiative which calls to question the efficacy of the program (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Aghedo 2012; Ushie 2013; Obi 2014; Eke 2015; Iwilade 2017). Underlying these concerns is the argument that Niger Delta youths have manipulated the amnesty program as a means of transforming the neo-

patrimonial system in the region (Iwilade 2017), or that amnesty was a reactive intervention designed to restore security rather than a humanitarian endeavour (Ajayi and Adesote 2013). Some, like Schultze-Kraft (2017), see the amnesty program as a means to an end. In summary, these perspectives only attest to the instrumentality of peacebuilding while ignoring a discussion on the nature of peace.

A consensus is emerging that although the peacebuilding program has been a successful nonviolent mechanism for stabilizing the oil region, which has led to victory over the insurgency, it remains an ineffective strategy for reducing armed insurgency in the long-term (Aghedo 2012; Agbibo 2015). While the central thread in these arguments attributes the successes of the program to changes in the security situation in the Niger Delta, we know relatively little about the nature of peace in the oil region. The philosophical concern, then, is to conceptualize the nature of peace in post-conflict communities and how this helps us to better appraise the impact of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding. This study discovered *punctuated peace* as the nature of peace currently prevailing in the oil region. The vocabulary of punctuated peace represents both a theoretical model and an analytical concept that make an original contribution to the literature on peace and conflict studies.

Punctuated Peace Theory

Studies on the Northern Ireland peace process have shown that “cross-community” interactions following the implementation of peacebuilding initiatives created the conditions for breaking pre-existing stereotypes, while also encouraging reconciliation, interpersonal relationships, and peacebuilding (Byrne 2008, 2009). The premise of the Presidential Proclamation of Amnesty in 2009 was that granting amnesty to armed insurgents could serve as a precondition

for peace and development. Freeman (2010, 3) has argued that granting amnesty to militants could be the most viable option likely to bring an end to the conflict. However, Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi (2010) contend that, in the Niger Delta context, amnesty exists in a “vacuum.” The idea of “amnesty in a vacuum” suggests that the Presidential Proclamation of Amnesty followed neither the principles of a “negotiated settlement” or “victor’s justice” considered to be the most common scenarios for the application of amnesty. A negotiated settlement is necessary where the conflict parties have fought until there is nothing to fight about and decide to explore peaceful options.

In his study of the Civil War in Dafur, Johnson (2007) examined how governments can use the negotiated settlement as a peace strategy to co-opt rebel factions and thereby to project their political agendas and improve their prospects for counterinsurgency operations. Unlike negotiated settlement, “Victor’s justice” applies to a situation whereby one of the conflict parties decides to claim victory and grants amnesty as an exception to its rights to punish the other party. The fact remains that in the context of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process, there was neither a need for “negotiated settlement” nor “victor’s justice.” This is because the absence of a peace truce between the state and insurgent groups means that the state could claim victory over the insurgents. While the argument that amnesty exists in a “vacuum” (Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi 2010) has theoretical merit, the authors ignored the principle of sovereignty which confers on the State the power to use force in combating threats to national security. They also ignored the fact that only the state reserves the right to determine whether attacks from non-state actors targeting critical infrastructure at the heart of the nation’s economy fall within the realm of a legitimate insurgency or a criminal transgression tantamount to prosecution according to state laws.

This study contends that the nature of peace currently prevailing in the Niger Delta has been theoretically confusing due to the lack of an appropriate theoretical analysis beyond what

Akinwale (2010, 205) describes as “amnesty peace.” Akinwale coined the term “amnesty peace” with regards to the cessation of direct violence through DDR interventions that focus exclusively on addressing the needs of ex-insurgents while neglecting other forms of violence that affect the entire Niger Delta population. Theorizing the nature of peace in the Niger Delta requires effort to study the conflict trend over the lifecycle of the peace process taking into consideration post-conflict transformations following the Presidential Proclamation of Amnesty and the subsequent implementation of DDR interventions. The discovery that follows supports the conclusion that the declaration of amnesty and the subsequent implementation of DDR interventions have produced a new understanding of peace that I refer to as punctuated peace.

Punctuated peace is the periodic interruption of the peace process by armed groups so that the regeneration of insurgency following shortcomings in the implementation of DDR mutates progress towards sustainable peace. Following this, punctuated peace theory proposes that once disarmed insurgents could realize their dreams and aspirations through a range of transformative peacebuilding opportunities that support fundamental changes in their attitudes, behaviours, self-awareness, value re-orientation and the development of human capital, society will be stable, showing little incentive for insurgency and more potential to transform the conflict actors into peaceful citizens. However, the peace process may experience punctuations at periodic intervals under four conditions.

The first condition is where structural issues arising from exclusion and hopelessness revive the option of violence among aggrieved citizens, or when disarmed insurgents are denied economically beneficial opportunities due to their involvements in previous insurgencies. Under this condition, the post-conflict environment may become polarized by short term periods of instability arising from grievances generated by the need for economic participation. The current

situation in the oil region is such that gross discontent arising from unemployment and hopelessness may regenerate insurgency in the future as shown in the model in Figure 47.

The second condition is where a post-conflict society descends into cycles of recurrent instability due to technical challenges in the implementation of peace processes—what I refer to as *technical rationality*. By *technical rationality*, I mean the over-reliance on expert processes to drive peacebuilding interventions, often at odds with local realities, along with poor program coordination and the breakdown in communication between the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents. While these technical processes have produced long and short periods of stability over time, they serve to strengthen palliative measures that have only been successful in stabilizing the region without necessarily transforming the complex realities of inequality in the oil communities. Periodic instability in the post-conflict society is arguably the result of the failure of the peacebuilders to direct attention to the critical needs of the ex-insurgents and other community members who feel excluded from the peace process.

The third condition is where political elites and conflict entrepreneurs mobilize insurgency to undermine the power of the state for their political interests. While insurgent groups often disguise their political agenda under ethnic grievances, underlying their actions are the political undertakings of elites whose interests seem threatened by the regime and chose to mobilize an armed insurgency to protect their interests. The emergence of The Avengers, its philosophy, and its impact on the nation's economy gives empirical justification to this theoretical position.

The fourth condition likely to punctuate progress towards durable peace is the severity of corruption within the structure of the peacebuilding program. Corruption manifests in many ways, including through the diversion of peacebuilding funds. For example, alarmed by the suspicion of corruption following invoices received by the Amnesty Office from local academic institutions

requesting payments for tuition and allowances for amnesty students purportedly deployed to these institutions for various educational programs during the 2017/2018 academic session, the new amnesty boss, Charles Dokubo, decided to launch an investigative committee to ascertain these transactions. The committee investigated the process by which 1,061 amnesty students enrolled in the respective educational institutions in March 2018, whether these students were legitimate amnesty delegates, and if their deployment followed due process. The committee’s findings revealed that only 314 of the 1,061 delegates were amnesty delegates. The remaining 747 delegates could not be accounted for—a clear indication of the severity of corruption in the peacebuilding program. How long such practices have prevailed unnoticed determines how much of the peacebuilding funds they have mismanaged since the inception of the peace process. Arguably, the severity of corruption has denied oil communities of life-changing development interventions.

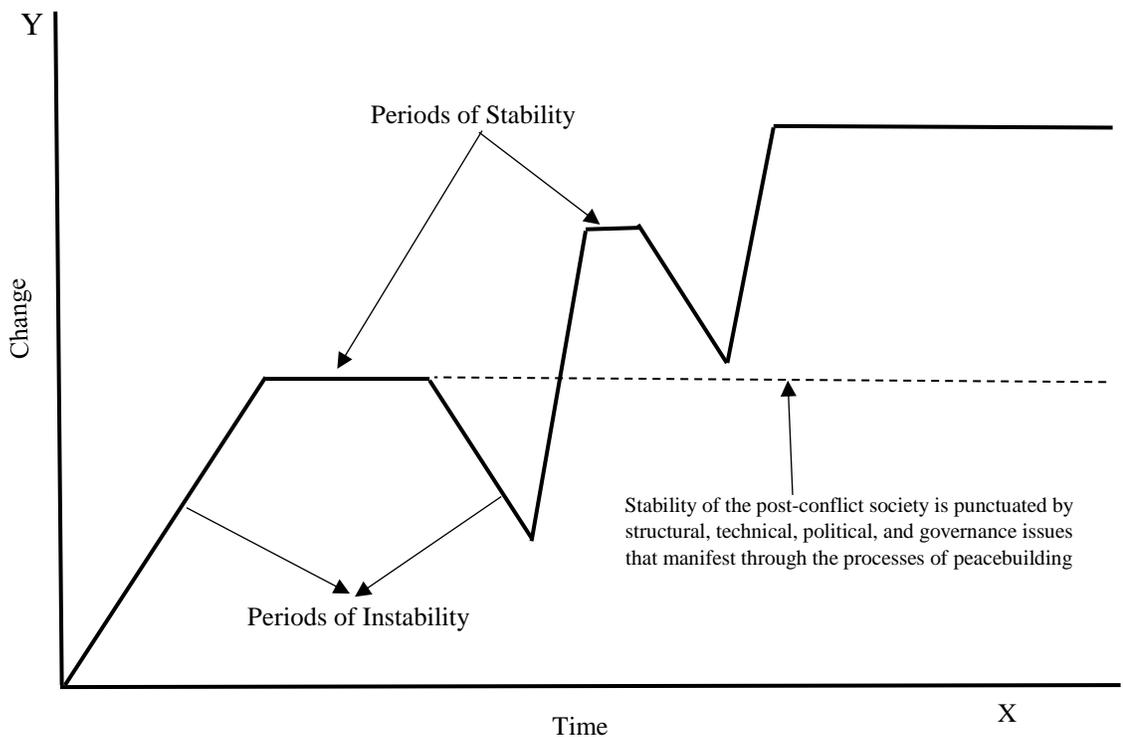


Figure 47. *A Model of Punctuated Peace*

The Punctuated Peace Model shows change on the Y-axis plotted against time on the X-axis corresponding to the patterns of conflict escalation, de-escalation and re-escalation and how the progression of peace has been punctuated repeatedly over the life cycle of the peace process. The model shows conflict escalation in the pre-amnesty phase from the colonial period in the late 1950s to the proliferation of armed insurgency in 2008. Conflict de-escalation occurred in 2009, following the Presidential Declaration of Amnesty in June 2009 and the subsequent implementation of DDR interventions. Thus, since 2009, the region has experienced short-term periods of violence and long-term period of stability for seven years before the emergence of The Avengers in 2016. The emergence of The Avengers and the sophistication of its attacks which target oil and gas infrastructure dealt a devastating blow on the nation's economy, cutting national oil output by half.

Following the demilitarization of the Niger Delta in 2009 and the subsequent ceasefire by The Avengers in 2016, the general impression was that peace has returned to the Niger Delta. However, the attitude of many ex-insurgents suggests that even though the region has been stable due to the suspension of physical violence, the government has yet to create the conditions for lasting peace. Environmental degradation arising from oil extraction and its impact on infectious diseases and air, water and land pollution in the oil communities continues to threaten the prospects of lasting peace. These challenges give expression to what Jeong (2000, 201) describe as violent structures that infringe on the rights of vulnerable populations. It seems plausible that the violence in the Niger Delta is not only physically occurring, but also structural and institutional. While the physical manifestation of violence has been suspended, the structural and institutional manifestations are ongoing. So long as the resentment generated by the magnitude of suffering in the Niger Delta continues to retain significant weight within the minds of ex-insurgents, it will

legitimize violence as the only means of alleviating their hopelessness. Under this condition, any peace process in place will be punctuated by the regeneration of insurgency.

According to Meyer (2000) conflict consists of perception, feeling, and action. For Meyer, perception is the belief that an individual's "needs, interests, wants and values are incompatible" with those of others (2000, 4). How individuals or groups perceive their incompatibilities can lead to objective and subjective judgments especially where such perceptions are reflective of their experiences. Therefore, people engage in conflict with others due to perceptions of conflicting interests. Meyer believes that conflict also develops from emotions such as "fear, sadness and anger" produced by undesired situations. Thus, conflict may occur when individuals act to express their feelings, articulate their "perceptions," and meet their needs (5).

This study has provided empirical evidence in support of the fact that what we currently have in the Niger Delta is *punctuated peace*, which links closely with what Idemudia (2014) described as "rentier peace," corresponding to Galtung's concept of negative peace in which the absence of direct violence does not necessarily resolve the conflict. Galtung defines "negative peace as the absence of violence or the absence of war" (1964, 2, 1969a, 167). However, this conception of peace radically changed in the 1980s and shifted towards a positive conception of peace (positive peace) which Galtung (1996) described as the absence of all forms of injustices and social inequities. Galtung refers to these social inequities as structural violence. Since peacebuilding generally implies the promotion of positive peace, analysis of peace ought to focus on addressing more broadly developments within the Niger Delta that impede progress towards positive peace. Drawing on Galtung's concept of negative peace, this study places the nature of peace in the Niger Delta within the context of *punctuated peace*. Punctuated peace theory places structural challenges in context to help us understand how the main impediments to positive peace

are not just structural but a combination of structural, institutional and political factors. In the context of the Niger Delta peace process, *punctuated peace* emerges from the programmatic and political challenges originating from DDR design and implementation and how these dynamics manifest in structural conditions that sustain instability.

Arguably, the situation in the Niger Delta exemplifies Galtung's idea of structural violence because inequality and social injustice have made it almost impossible for inhabitants of the oil communities to actualize their full potentials. While there is currently no evidence of armed confrontations, poverty and exclusion have continued to punctuate progress towards sustainable peace, and these challenges may continue if not addressed as sustainably as possible.

Because conflict often arise from poverty, inequality, and marginalization which, as Holmqvist (2012, 16) notes, are the result of needs deprivation, insights from the “need, greed, and creed” theory and conflict transformation thinking, particularly the concept of structural violence, provides a sound conceptual footing for the development of punctuated peace theory. In order words, punctuated peace theory underlies the intersection of structural and system factors in sustaining instability. Idemudia and Ite (2006) notes that structural and systemic factors are linked to the “need” mechanism. The “greed” mechanism also finds expression in punctuated peace theory in the sense that periods of instability following the emergence of groups such as “Third Phase Militants” and The Avengers, are marked by dissatisfaction with the outcome of the peace process and its contribution to win-lose situations that became necessary to challenge by means of violence. Because the “creed” mechanism underlies the interconnection of elite politics and insurgency, it gives validity to punctuated peace theory. As this research has shown, political elites play a prominent role in creating instability in the Niger Delta in instances where state actors undertake to threaten their power base. Thus, the strengths of punctuated peace theory lie in its

ability to unite insights from conflict transformation theory with the “need, greed and creed” framework to understand the conditions for stability and instability in post-conflict societies.

Even though the peacebuilders framed the Niger Delta peace process as a peacebuilding project, what seems to be occurring is conflict management. According to Miall (2004, 69), conflict management involves interventions to achieve a political settlement, particularly by “those actors having the power and resources to bring pressure on the conflict parties in order to settle their differences.” By working through this framework, the peacebuilders have focused on implementing their DDR vision without getting the beneficiaries of this vision to evaluate its outcome on their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities including whether these interventions address the causes of violence and, most importantly, the issue of social justice. By studying the programmatic challenges emerging from the Niger Delta DDR processes, I saw what Goetschel and Hagmann (2009) describe as “peace by bureaucratic means,” which underlies the lack of conflict transformation-oriented methods for official agencies at the program level. Eventually, the post-conflict society slumps into a state of punctuated peace, where the threats of conflict or the regeneration of insurgency stalls conflict management efforts. According to Galtung (1976, peacebuilding structures needs to focus on transforming the root causes of violent conflicts while also supporting the capacity of local actors to resolve conflict. Lederach (1997, ix) describe these peacebuilding structures as “sustainable peace, which includes mechanisms that promote justice and address the underlying tensions” that create the condition for conflict in the entire society.

Further evidence of punctuated peace derives from the multiplier effects of the peacebuilding program on security stabilization in the oil communities, which has enabled the revival of business confidence in the Niger Delta. While the security situation has been stable, the

posture of major oil multinationals such as Shell and Chevron who have moved their operations upstream to avoid the frequent attacks by insurgent groups, suggests that businesses have yet to revive full confidence in the peace process. This observation is essential to the extent that the decision by oil multinationals to move their operations to low conflict havens is due to the threat of future insecurity. In the long term, these decisions may have severe consequences for the loss of employment opportunities in local communities, which may further exacerbate structural violence. Under this condition, the region may be stable in the absence of armed confrontations but structurally unstable due to the level of unemployment and suffering in the oil communities. The nature of stability, therefore, raises new questions as to why major oil multinationals are moving their operations downstream. While this question is beyond the scope of this study, it helps to deepen our analytical lenses as we reflect critically on the nature of stability and to ask whether post-conflict stability as currently experienced, is a temporary condition likely to change over time or not.

Evidence of Punctuated Peace in Post-Conflict Societies Across Africa

The African continent is replete with examples of post-conflict societies where DDR interventions failed to prevent the resurgence of rebel forces. Like many African countries, the DRC has been an unstable society, and its problems date back to its colonial history when the Belgians established a political system that focussed on natural resource extraction rather than addressing the needs of the locals (Kisangani 2012). The conflicts in eastern DRC mostly emerged from struggles over natural resources and land rights, the politics of exclusion, economic motives for violence, limited state sovereignty in some areas, the absence of the rule of law, gross violation of human rights, and external interference (Autesserre 2010; Mutisi 2016). Despite significant

efforts towards securing peace in the DRC, the eastern region remains the site of persistent communal conflicts and local insurgencies that often merge with cross-border insurgencies and regional conflicts which left mass civilian populations at the receiving end of these unremitting clashes, including displacements, massacres, widespread sexual violence, and human rights violations (Autesserre 2010; Mutisi 2016).

Although the international community has undertaken several peacebuilding interventions in the DRC, including helping the conflict parties to negotiate a peace accord, the DRC has since its independence been the site of continuous attempts to address the nation's protracted conflict. The instability in the DRC is due to the tragic consequence of failing to address the local causes of violence while relying on international expert mediation efforts that had altogether proven ineffective and unsustainable. As Autesserre (2010, 11-12) notes, the international peacebuilding culture imposed on the DRC exacerbated the violence and atrocities and made it possible for the local actors to view the top-down intervention as a success until war regenerated in late 2008.

Despite the increasing need for DDR interventions, previous DDR campaigns in Africa have produced mixed results as demilitarized societies frequently experience armed conflict. A publication by Zena (2013, 2) shows that the DDR program in the Great Lakes region in Africa cost nearly \$500 million to disarm and demobilize 300,000 combatants in seven countries. Despite this effort, the region regularly experiences a resurgence of armed rebellion driven by former rebel forces in eastern DRC, resulting in death tolls, population displacement, and the recruitment of militias (2). In the Central African Republic, nearly 20,000 militias waiting for the implementation of the country's DDR program since 2009 got frustrated by the delays, resulting in the regeneration of war and the heightening of instability as some of the militias decided to take up arms (1-2). Zena further revealed that in South Sudan, the fledgling government had made coordinated effort

to launch a disarmament program with the aim to downsize its security forces by 150,000 personnel and had mounted a similar effort to disarm the local militias and prevent the recurrence of intercommunal violence.

In *Local and Global Dynamics of Peacebuilding*, Cubitt (2011) examined the complexity of civil war and state failure, and the challenge of peacebuilding and state-building interventions following the end of the Sierra Leonean civil war that devastated the entire nation. Her study uncovered the challenges confronting post-conflict reconstruction processes in the Sierra Leonean context, particularly how international peacebuilding interventions, driven by liberal peacebuilding values and policies, undermined local priorities, including the limited understanding of local and national capabilities. Based on these discoveries, Cubitt proposed the need to incorporate national priorities in international peacebuilding frameworks. A significant lesson that permeates Cubitt's work is the need for post-conflict reconstruction intervention to focus on institutional reform, particularly the judicial system in post-conflict societies often undermined by the liberal peacebuilding project. What these examples reveal is that demilitarized regions are at risk of descending into repeated cycles of armed conflict due to the inadequacies of top-down DDR interventions in resolving local tensions in these regions.

Although the Niger Delta DDR program represents a national level intervention, institutional reform remains fundamental to sustainable peace. This is especially because local insurgents often construct their struggle around questions of resource ownership and land rights. Unlike the Nigerian peacebuilding structure that is nationally-oriented but builds implicitly on the prescriptions of the liberal DDR framework, post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Angola, which occurred as a response to the aftermath of the civil war that ended in 2002, represents a departure from the international liberal peacebuilding framework. Oliveira (2011) described the Angolan

model as “illiberal peacebuilding” because it represents a post-war reconstruction process driven specifically by local elites in resistance to the dominant liberal peacebuilding principles. The resistance to liberal peace is because it promotes the expansion of the free market economies and poverty alleviation ideas perceived as enthroning a hegemonic order and the preponderance of political and economic elites over the local political economy. The Angolan peacebuilding model shares a striking similarity to that of Rwanda.

I argue, therefore, that the concept of punctuated peace has theoretical implications for explaining the nature of peace in post-conflict societies where sustainable peace has acquired a new sense of urgency. Sustainable peace remains imperative because the repercussion of natural resource abundance and social inequality often create the condition for the regeneration of armed groups who increasingly recruit disaffected youths by providing those opportunities deprived of them by their governments. Punctuated peace is what defines the nature of peace in societies like the DRC, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, and the Niger Delta, where peace processes often do not address the underlying local tensions, creating the conditions for the regeneration of conflicts.

Conclusion

Events leading up to the Presidential Proclamation of Amnesty portrayed the Niger Delta as a dangerous and unstable territory to live or do business. Activities such as kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery and bombing not only threatened the security of individuals and entire communities but also, they had a substantial impact on the petroleum industry that supports the nation’s economy. While hostilities may have ended in the oil region, the lived realities in the local

communities raise critical questions concerning the nature of peace. This chapter underlies the central question concerning the nature of peace currently prevailing in the Niger Delta.

This chapter identifies four typologies of peace. The freedom typology attests to transformations in the post-conflict environment as reflected in the changing attitudes and behaviours among ex-insurgents whose decisions to forgo violence has created a stable and secure environment where individuals walk freely and conduct their business without fear. The development typology defines peace with reference to the implementation of economic interventions that aim to enhance the status of the ex-insurgents and some non-insurgents through job creation and infrastructural development. The nonviolence typology defines peace with reference to the reduction of hostilities and all forms of coercive mechanisms and structures. As Cerretti (2009) notes, a post-conflict society needs to take steps towards preventing a relapse into violent conflict by disarming people of small arms. The stability typology stems directly from the stability of the oil communities, which does not, however, imply that demilitarized communities in the Niger Delta have achieved a state of sustainable peace. What is obvious is that the implementation of the peacebuilding program has managed to suspend the violence in the oil communities by disarming the insurgents and giving them opportunities to denounce insurgency and criminality, contingent on the government's effort to rehabilitate and reintegrate disarmed insurgents.

Beyond the decision by the ex-insurgents to make peace with the government by willingly surrendering their arms, the DDR intervention has so far been successful in demilitarizing the thinking of the ex-insurgents so that returning to violence is no longer an alternative for many. The central tenet of this analysis is that it develops punctuated peace as a conceptual vocabulary that adds new theoretical insight to the literature beyond "amnesty peace" (Akinwale 2010) or "rentier

peace” (Idemudia 2014). This understanding provides the conceptual toolkit for theorizing the nature of peace in the Niger Delta.

Thus, the nature of peace in the Niger Delta is consistent with Muggah’s (2007) idea that the end of armed conflict is not a guarantee of security and stability in post-conflict societies while ceasefire, peace agreements and other forms of interventions do not also guarantee the security and safety of civilians and ex-combatants. Most often, the traditional responses to a conflict have encouraged militarism, which creates the motivation to resort to violence in resolving conflict (Cerretti 2009). Therefore, an effort to evaluate the success of DDR interventions in the Niger Delta must begin with an understanding of how civilians perceive the post-conflict environment. The analysis that follows leads to the discovery of punctuated peace as a theoretical concept that defines the nature of peace with regards to post-conflict transformation arising from the collapse and revival of the peace process over its life cycle. This theoretical conclusion shows that the ex-insurgents share similar beliefs concerning the nature and typologies of peace.

As this study has shown, the relative stability in the Niger Delta is a measure of the capacity of the demobilization program to de-program the minds of the ex-insurgents. Enloe (2007, 4) believes that beyond taking arms out of the hands of ex-combatants, efforts should be made to transform the ideology of militarism, “the use of force, and worldview that sees military solutions as particularly effective and the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes.” According to Cerretti (2009), “demilitarization involves disarming not just ex-combatants but an entire society, demobilizing as many armed individuals as possible, removing conventional military personnel from all domains of political power. The next chapter synthesizes insights from the various findings into a comprehensive summary reflecting some concluding thoughts concerning this dissertation.

Chapter Nine

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter presents an appraisal of the findings discussed in the various chapters. It synthesizes the arguments presented in these chapters and their connection to the research questions and objectives. It then presents the theoretical contribution of this study in connection with a new explanation of peacebuilding successes and failures and the dynamics which help illuminate these transformations to enhance our understanding of the nature of peace in Nigeria's oil region. In pointing out these conclusions, this chapter will be presenting the implications of this study and how it contributes significant new knowledge to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, and to the PACS discipline in general. It also presents recommendations for building sustainable peace and preventing a relapse into armed insurgency, including some recommendations for future research.

The study was designed to examine the experiences and perceptions of DDR and post-conflict peacebuilding processes in Nigeria's oil region by surveying a sample of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents and then following-up with in-depth interviews with purposefully selected informants. The study addressed three central questions: How does the perception of the amnesty program implementation enhance our understanding of the impact of DDR interventions on the state of peace in the Niger Delta? What are the perceived successes and challenges associated with the adoption of DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta? What are the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program with regards to the nature of peace in the Niger Delta?

My thesis is that by promoting peacebuilding primarily through a mainstream DDR logic which elevates expert practices to achieve short-term stability, the peacebuilders fundamentally depoliticizes peace for the sake of technical rationality, resulting in the restructuring of inequality, while creating a peace economy that diminishes the transformative potential of the peace program. Although the DDR program has been successful in ending hostilities, its implementation follows expert-driven processes that ignored communitarian visions of conflict transformation. While the politics of post-conflict peacebuilding is a central element of this study, also, underlying this thesis is an understanding of the Niger Delta as a region where progress towards sustainable peace is punctuated by the tension between the peacebuilders' worldview and those whom the peacebuilding program is meant to impact. As this study has shown, post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta mirrors fundamental changes in the conflict trend over time.

Moreover, the study was designed to fulfil three sets of objectives. The first objective was to evaluate post-conflict transformations in the oil region following the material investment in DDR and peacebuilding processes. The second objective was to explore the state of peace in the Niger Delta by identifying significant relationships between DDR interventions and changes in the attitudes and behaviours of conflict actors as well as changes in conflict trends in the Niger Delta. The third objective was to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program with regards to the nature of peace in the Niger Delta.

To gain insight into the perceptions of the peace process, I conducted 396 surveys in the first phase, followed by 45 key-informant interviews in the second phase. I recruited two categories of participants for the in-depth interviews. The first category of participants is the primary informants. They include knowledgeable informants representing ex-insurgents from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers who participated in the insurgency and have benefitted from the peace

program. Included in this category are aggrieved ex-insurgents who feel alienated from the benefits of peacemaking. Others include amnesty students, consultants and vendors. The primary informants make up 87% of the total participants interviewed. The second category of participants is the secondary informants. They comprise of youth leaders, community leaders, and oil workers whose perceptions were eminently valuable in enriching my understanding of the research phenomena. These informants were chosen based on their experiences through the various phases of the DDR program, and their experiences working or living in the oil region.

I also reviewed secondary interviews conducted by journalists with individuals from the region who contributed to the design and implementation of the peacebuilding program as well as from publications of the Presidential Amnesty Office. I obtained the transcripts from secondary interviews from local online newspapers and TV programs published on YouTube channels and coded along with the original interviews to generate themes. These interviews, along with field notes from non-participant observation, provided a detailed account reflecting the participants' experiences and perceptions of the DDR and peacebuilding program. I read the interview transcripts line-by-line, making notations concerning the central themes that capture each participant's experience and perceptions while reflecting on ideas and theories from the literature that offer similar meaning and a more elaborate explanation of concepts and events. The data also provided a rich context through which to interpret the findings regarding the successes and failures of DDR interventions and to analyze the theoretical implication of the peacebuilding program.

Summary of Key Research Findings

The most significant findings in my field research have been laid out systematically in chapters five to eight of this dissertation. These chapters are organized according to the research

questions and study objectives and laid out the conceptual and theoretical contributions of this study and their connection to the central thesis as well as to conflict transformation theory and the need, greed, and creed theory. In seeking to answer my first research question concerning the relationship between DDR interventions and the state of peace in the Niger Delta, and to achieve the second objective of this research, I had to connect with the participants at a deeper level. Understanding participants' experiences in the pre-amnesty and post-amnesty environments assisted in evaluating post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta and provide a context for explaining the impact of the peacebuilding interventions with regards to the changes that have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents and their communities.

The first finding of this study is that transformational change occurred as an *intrapersonal* experience engineered by the level of self-awareness among the ex-insurgents. This finding is exemplified by the growing consciousness of the Kingian nonviolence philosophy, particularly the principle that “nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.” Intrapersonal transformation develops from the quality of transformational education and training given to the insurgents as part of demobilization activities designed to deprogram their minds against violent behaviour and to help them adopt a culture of nonviolence. The research participants indicated that the consciousness awakened by the transformational education and training has been instrumental in changing their identities and their decisions to live as peaceful and law-abiding citizens. Underlying this finding is the idea that the courage to pursue peace is less about the expression of the human will for violent behaviour but the demonstration of nonviolent behaviour. Those former insurgents whose minds have been reprogrammed have experienced an expansion in their consciousness, enabling them to aspire towards a higher level of self-development where nonviolence becomes a way of life.

At the core of *intrapersonal transformation* is the idea that peace develops from the place of consciousness. By changing how ex-insurgents think about violence and the consequences of violent behaviour, the peacebuilding program has successfully transformed negative attitudes among ex-insurgents, which easily manifest in physical violence. The peacebuilding interventions are successful to the extent that they are instrumental in transforming the consciousness of the ex-insurgents while also promoting positive change by encouraging a culture of nonviolence among the ex-insurgents. Post-conflict stability in the oil region is not necessarily the absence of hostilities but a condition of peace, sustained by transformations in the consciousness of ex-insurgents and their disposition to a culture of nonviolence. One may argue that post-conflict stabilization in the oil region is a manifestation of intrapersonal transformation.

The second finding of this study is that post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta occurred as an *interpersonal* experience, measured against the changing relationship between conflict actors. Such transformations are evident in the positive relationships between ex-insurgents and the state that culminated in the suspension of armed hostilities in 2009 and subsequently in 2016. The degree of relationship transformation reveals the effectiveness of trust-building mechanisms built into DDR operations as a confidence-building measure to help the conflict parties communicate and reach a compromise on incompatible issues. Compared to the pre-amnesty period where insecurities that arose from the activities of insurgents threatened not only critical infrastructure but also oil workers and ordinary citizens in the communities, post-conflict transformations reflected significant improvement in the security situation. The evidence points to the positive changes in the level of individual and community safety with a corresponding decrease in the scale and intensity of attacks on critical infrastructure as well as kidnapping

activities. The decreasing number of military posts in the oil communities is a clear indication of improvements in the security situation and the justification that the region has been demilitarized.

Although studies have shown that attacks on critical infrastructure have reduced drastically in the Niger Delta (e.g. Newsom 2011, 2) these studies mostly generalize the level of insecurity by failing to contextualize what is changing and whether the perceived changes reflect the individual or shared experiences of both ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. Available studies fail to demonstrate empirically whether and how changes in security conditions and the level of safety manifest as intended or unintended consequences of DDR interventions. What is significant about these changes is that they are captured in both the quantitative and qualitative results so that the analysis reflects an accurate picture of participants' perceptions of what has changed in their lives and communities because of the peacebuilding program.

The third finding of this study is that structural transformation is a determinant of transformational change. The peacebuilding program offers bold incentives to insurgents willing to transform their hopelessness and shame by exchanging their arms with opportunities to acquire higher education or enrol in technical or entrepreneurial training locally and overseas. Throughout my time in the research field, I made observations of some entrepreneurial ventures undertaken by the federal government under the Presidential Amnesty Program to validate the authenticity of governments reports concerning these projects while also assessing their successes and failures. Some of the entrepreneurial initiatives are remarkable success stories, while others are abysmal failures. However, the program's outcome takes into consideration what the program is designed to achieve, its implementation strategy, and how the beneficiaries perceive it.

Several amnesty students I interviewed did not participate in the insurgency but lived in conflict-affected communities, which enabled them to make meaningful reflections on post-

conflict transformations in their communities based on personal experiences. I met amnesty students from poverty-stricken families who could not afford the cost of a private university in Nigeria. I discovered that many students invest their scholarship savings to support siblings and parents. The peacebuilding program has allowed such students to not only gain intellectual freedom but also to break the transgenerational cycle of poverty in their families.

A testament to the impact of the peacebuilding program on structural transformation points to the thousands of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents who have undergone skills acquisition training locally and overseas in such vocations as pilot training, aviation technology, welding and fabrication, marine technology, automobile technology, agriculture, fashion designing, and hairdressing, hotel management etcetera. These opportunities have liberated many Niger Delta youths from the trappings of poverty. For such individuals, structural transformation represents the ways that the peacebuilding program has enabled them to optimize their human capital potential through education and vocational skills training that can be used to create economic value for themselves. For others, it is the recycling of poverty and hopelessness through interventions that redirect their energies from violence and crime towards life-transforming enterprises.

These opportunities also produce down-side effects for many ex-insurgents who have been trained and certified overseas but facing employment discrimination upon their return to Nigeria since the oil multinationals are unwilling to hire them because of their identity as ex-insurgents or that they acquired sub-standard training and certifications. It seems that the peacebuilders did not foresee some of these challenges when designing the program as there are currently no solutions in place to deal with these issues as they arise.

While the peacebuilding program is intended to transform ex-insurgents into self-sufficient contributing members of society, in most cases, those participants deployed overseas for education

and skills training did not return to Nigeria but chose to deploy their knowledge and skills to benefit the foreign economies. On the contrary, those participants who return to Nigeria after completing their education or training programs often settle in the cities. They visit the local communities only to flaunt their wealth, further widening the inequality. Often, the youths in the communities who did not participate in armed insurgency but are vulnerable to the same level of suffering become envious of the sudden transformation of their friends and decide to blow up pipelines to enable them to negotiate their inclusion in the peace economy. These dynamics have defined the patterns of conflict escalation in the post-amnesty period that create punctuations in the peace process.

The fourth finding that emerged from this study is that cultural transformation is a product of transformational changes in the cultural identity of the ex-insurgents and non-insurgents. This study has shown that profound changes have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents through opportunities that enable them to build cultural capital to enhance their social mobility. In other words, the processes of peacebuilding create a pull factor by removing many ex-insurgents from the trappings of village life and integrating them into urban life. Those participants deployed overseas for education and training eventually immersed in other cultures and returned to Nigeria as refined citizens with new perspectives to life. Such individuals have been elevated to a new social class and economic status and are unlikely to return to the creeks to blow up pipelines.

This study discovered also that the peacebuilding program enabled many ex-insurgents to operate bank accounts for the first time. Most of the ex-insurgents from the rural communities were in their early to mid-thirties when they joined the insurgency but didn't have bank accounts. The program exposed them to the urban economy, and some later decided to settle in the city, which provided better employment opportunities and business networks. However, the cultural transformation of ex-insurgents also produces unintended consequences, such as the widening of

inequality in rural communities due to the disproportionate distribution of peacebuilding opportunities which elevated the status of some ex-insurgents and non-insurgents and in the process created a new social class that left many youths feeling marginalized.

The second unintended consequence of cultural transformation is the emergence of an illegal economy in the Niger Delta creeks through artisanal mining activities. Initially, the insurgents fighting in the creeks and blowing up pipelines were uneducated, untrained and unexposed. Many ex-insurgents who have mastered the technologies and skills in crude oil refining through participating in various training programs but could not find employment in the oil industry have deployed these skills negatively by engaging in the illegal refining of crude oil (artisanal mining) which provides an attractive means of making money in the Niger Delta creeks. Therefore, post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta manifest in multiple levels of transformational change, each attesting to the impact of the DDR interventions.

Answering my second research question was a complex undertaking. It required careful attention to what my research participants perceived as important in determining the impacts of the DDR interventions and how their perceptions assisted my understanding of post-conflict transformations in the oil region, which is the second objective laid out in this study. Thus, the fifth finding of this study calls attention to the programmatic challenges associated with the reintegration and rehabilitation of the ex-insurgents with regards to notions of empowerment. From the peacebuilders' perspective, empowerment means setting up small-scale businesses for ex-insurgents who have undergone entrepreneurship training. This conception of empowerment has been instrumental to the growth of entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta selling electronics, construction materials, clothing and consumer products or operating small-scale fish farms, poultry farms, restaurants, block moulding factories, cassava factories and fruit processing factories.

This study discovered that peacebuilders also perceive empowerment in terms of *capacity development*, which involves helping ex-insurgents to develop their human capital through education and vocational skills training. Both the literature review and field data show that the peacebuilding program has made a significant impact on human capital development. So far, the Presidential Amnesty Office has deployed over 14,029 participants for skill training and various educational programs locally and internationally (Amnesty News vol. 1, no. 3, 9) and thousands have been awarded the Amnesty Scholarship to study law, business administration, political science, mass communication, medicine, engineering, information technology and applied sciences in both local and foreign universities. Currently, there are hundreds of Niger Delta youths studying at Ritman University in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom, on amnesty scholarship. I interviewed several students from Rivers and Bayelsa whose testimonies bore witness to the impact of the Amnesty Scholarship in facilitating access to quality education which their families could not afford. They believe the Amnesty Scholarship has enabled them to gain knowledge and skills for their personal development and the liberation of their communities.

While the peacebuilders perceive *empowerment* as a means to an end, in contrast, the ex-insurgents perceive it as an end. For example, several ex-insurgents expressed their perception of empowerment as an entitlement and use such phrases as “my empowerment” to express their entitlement to the material benefits of peacebuilding. Such individuals may have undergone training in marine welding but became redundant due to employment discrimination in the oil industry and the cost of setting up small-scale enterprises for them. Such individuals expressed discontent with the peacebuilders for denying them their entitlement. The sense of entitlement reveals one of the dangers of the peacebuilding program, particularly for ex-insurgents who perceive their wellbeing relative to their friends who are doing better from participating in the

program. Even though the Presidential Amnesty Office has redeployed many aggrieved ex-militants for Refresher Training Courses in agri-business, the delay in setting up their businesses has continued to reinforce negative attitudes towards the peacebuilders, and many do not consider the training they received as empowerment.

The research participants also perceive empowerment as *Startup capital*. The context of capital refers to financial assistance to ex-insurgents to create businesses—as part of the post-training entrepreneurship and empowerment initiative—and includes money, skills, land and machinery. This conception of empowerment applies explicitly to those ex-insurgents who have expressed their interest in agri-business and small-scale manufacturing requiring land and machinery to set up their farms or small factories.

Finally, ex-insurgents perceive empowerment as employment opportunities. This study has shown that many participants got direct employment following the completion of their training, demonstrating the positive impact of the peacebuilding program in facilitating post-training employment, particularly for those participants deployed overseas. However, many ex-insurgents who have received training in various skills both locally and overseas are unemployed and feel disempowered. This category of ex-insurgents believes the peacebuilding program is raising false hopes.

Moreover, several ex-insurgents felt disempowered because either the training they received was sub-standard and did not equip them with the practical skills to function in the oil industry or that their certifications did not meet the standard in the oil sector in Nigeria. While the statistical data show some improvements in company-community relations, in practice, this relationship is defined mainly by the cessation of hostilities while the attitudes of the companies towards the ex-insurgents remain negative and continue to reinforce discrimination. For this

category of trained ex-insurgents, empowerment remains a façade. They believe giving them skills without job opportunities has only produced an army of skilled, yet hopeless citizens who pose a strategic danger to the peace process due. It is through these dynamic processes of power and empowerment that peacebuilding generates conflicting views between the peacebuilders and the ex-insurgents.

A critical challenge that emerged from this finding is the disproportionate impact of the DDR interventions on women and girls. I discovered that of the 30,000 registered participants in the peacebuilding program, only 822 are women and represent 2.74% of the total number of participants. The Aviation training programs, for example, have very few women graduating as pilots. While this observation is worrisome, I realized there are fewer women in the program because of the general impression among the peacebuilders that women did not engage in physical combat but conscripted into the insurgency as girlfriends, cooks and intelligence agents. This patriarchal approach to peacebuilding perpetuates inequality because it suggests that the peacebuilders may have deliberately marginalized women in training opportunities such as marine welding and heavy-duty mechanic considered to be “high risk” which fall within the traditional domain of men and, therefore, unfit for women. Through these dynamics, the institutionalization of patriarchal values into peacebuilding interventions has denied women of their agency both as warmakers and equal participants in peacebuilding. This study has shown, however, that the few women who have taken advantage of the training opportunities to develop themselves have demonstrated capacity through their ability to compete with men and gain success in a variety of professions including graduating as commercial pilots.

The sixth significant finding of this study is that the way in which the peacebuilding program is designed manifested in unintended consequences (programmatically, politically and

structurally) which created new conditions for the regeneration of insurgency. This finding answers the question concerning the challenges of using DDR as a vehicle for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and fulfils the second objective of this study. This finding is unique because it develops from an effort to study the conflict trend in the Niger Delta by seeking to understand the motivations behind the proliferation of armed insurgency in the pre-amnesty and post-amnesty periods and the likely drivers of conflict in the future. The study identified youth unemployment as the most significant driver of the armed insurgency as many participants indicated joblessness as the primary motivation behind their decision to join the insurgency. I discovered that some people joined the insurgency not out of a desire to fight but because they were jobless and saw fighting as a lucrative opportunity to join the criminal enterprise where they can earn a living through oil bunkering.

The research participants identified exclusion as one of the motivating factors behind the regeneration of insurgency. Some insurgents who were initially oblivious of the reward system built into the peacebuilding program later deployed violence against the state and oil corporations as a strategy of negotiating their inclusion in the program. Violence also regenerated from the activities of law-abiding youths who decided to pick up arms when it was apparent that the peacebuilding program rewarded law-breakers only.

This study also discovered *political retribution* as the motivation behind the activities of groups such as The Avengers. Arguably, The Avengers has had the most destructive impact on the Niger Delta compared to the previous insurgent groups. The difference, however, is that unlike the previous insurgent groups that committed sea piracy and kidnapping, The Avengers did not engage in activities that threatened individual security. Instead, its attacks were strategic to its goal of destabilizing Nigeria's economy by targeting critical oil and gas infrastructure and causing a

massive decline in oil output amid declining oil prices that further deepened Nigeria's recession. The regeneration of insurgency represents a situation whereby a demilitarized territory relapses into violence as insurgents mobilize to disrupt the peace process, what I refer to as *remilitarization*. This finding implies that winning the war in the Niger Delta is a complex undertaking that moves beyond efforts to transform pre-existing tensions but also to understand how the processes of peacebuilding create new sites of power and contestation in post-conflict societies.

A significant contribution of this finding, which also defines one of the major contributions of this study with regards to the challenges that arose from the current peace process, is the discovery of the three conditions that may lead to the regeneration of future insurgencies in the oil region. The first condition is traced to *Devaluation-Alienation*—the feeling of worthlessness generated by the denial of job opportunities to ex-insurgents. Underlying this challenge is the inability of the peacebuilding program to facilitate reconciliation by strengthening company-community relations in a way that will discourage the stigmatization of ex-insurgents and their discrimination by employers.

Secondly, the research participants identified the economic expediency of peacebuilding as the likely driver of future insurgency, what I refer to as the *peace economy*. The *peace economy* underlies the growing awareness that anyone with a grievance can pick up arms and deploy hostilities against oil infrastructure as an attractive means of making easy money should the government decide to negotiate a ceasefire. The implication is that those who have denounced violence have threatened to resume hostilities in the future should the federal government ever decide to terminate the program. Instead of seeking legitimate employment, many ex-insurgents are dependent on the monthly allowances from the government as a means of livelihood. Arguably,

the continuous payment of monetary benefits to ex-insurgents is not only unsustainable but a set up for future conflict.

Additionally, the research participants identified the institutionalization of corrupt practices in DDR processes as one of the determinants of future insurgencies in the Niger Delta. This study has shown that corruption manifests in the peacebuilding program through the process of disarming insurgents to their demobilization and reinsertion and subsequently, their training and post-training empowerment. Both the warlords and the peacebuilders are accomplices in the corruption enterprise.

The seventh significant finding of this study is that the nature of peace in the Niger Delta reflects the lived experiences, fears and hopes of the perpetrators and victims. This finding resonates with the third objective of this study: to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the peacebuilding program and thereby to develop a typology of peace that reflects the perceptions of the research participants. This finding adds new knowledge to the existing literature by suggesting that those who lived through the conflict and violence—whether as perpetrators or victims—have a deeper understanding of peace that derives from their lived experiences, fears and hopes that yielded significant insights into the nature of peace in the Niger Delta. These perceptions are encapsulated in four typologies of peace.

First, the research participants perceived peace as *freedom* from the threat of insecurity, inspired by their lived experiences in communities where insecurities arising from kidnapping, armed robbery, rape, and bomb explosions have sustained an atmosphere of fear. Some participants expressed their understanding of peace as the freedom derived from living in a community where bombs are not detonating in their neighbourhoods, where criminals are not knocking on doors to rob people at gunpoint, and where women can walk freely without fear of

being kidnapped or raped by insurgents. Underlying the *freedom* typology is the idea that these insecurities are either non-existent or reduced to the barest minimum.

Second, the research participants perceived peace as *development*. The development typology has far-reaching theoretical implications that range from the presence of infrastructure for improving socio-economic conditions to the remediation of endangered environments to the creation of income-generating opportunities in the local communities. Participants noted that peace could not exist where food insecurity results from declining agricultural productivity due to pollution, where communities have limited income-generating opportunities, and where the inhabitants of communities that produce the nation's wealth are isolated from the mainstream of national life due to illiteracy and lack of social and physical infrastructure.

Third, the research participants perceived peace as *nonviolence*, corresponding to the absence of all forms of physical violence or the elimination of behaviours that inflicts, or threatens to inflict, harm or death upon individuals and communities. In other words, to experience peace means to live in an environment devoid of hostilities, gun violence, and the arbitrary use of weapons by armed groups to perpetrate illegal activities that threaten individual and community security.

Finally, the participants perceived peace as *stability*, corresponding to the relative stability of the oil communities. The context of stability refers to the temporary suspension of hostilities between adversaries and is an indicator of successful disarmament. Post-conflict stability also refers to the safety of the post-conflict environment in the Niger Delta where insurgents are no longer engaging in behaviours which threaten the security of individuals and communities, and where the military is not carrying out air raids which often provoke fear among the civilian populations.

These typologies provide a clear example of how the perceptions of peace resonate with the ex-insurgents and non-insurgents across Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Bayelsa. They also provide the local terminologies that people use to describe their understanding of peace, depending on whether they perceive peace as stability, development, freedom, or the absence of violence. The various conceptions of peace give validity to conflict transformation theory.

Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on post-conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta by contrasting the practices of peacebuilding with the actual perception of these practices by individuals (perpetrators or victims) who lived through various experiences of violence in conflict-affected communities in the Niger Delta. More broadly, this study contributes to peace and conflict studies in several ways. In achieving the first objective of this study, I aimed to evaluate the changes that have occurred in the lives of ex-insurgents and non-insurgents that are traceable to the impact of specific peacebuilding interventions and how these provide a new understanding of post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta.

First, this study contributes to post-conflict peacebuilding by not merely attributing the success of the peacebuilding program to the stability of the post-conflict environment in the Niger Delta but by conceptualizing post-conflict transformations against the profound changes in the lives of those who lived through various experiences of violence in the wake of the insurgency and how they perceive change. In doing so, this study makes the first empirical attempt to conceptualize the various perceptions of change in the post-conflict environment in the oil region, culminating in the CISI model of conflict transformation as one of the contributions of this study that adds substantial new knowledge to conflict transformation theory. The CISI model shows how

conflict transformation proceeds through four levers of change. First, transformation occurs through cultural exposure. Second, the model shows that change in the intrapersonal realm is the product of self-awareness. In the third element, transformation occurs at the structural level through improvement in socioeconomic conditions. Finally, transformation occurs at the relational level. A combination of these four elements is what defines the context of transformational change in the Niger Delta. This novel approach to conflict transformation makes an original contribution to the PACS field.

Secondly, this study makes the first empirical attempt to establish the connection between empowerment—as currently used in the Niger Delta peace process and peacebuilding—and brings to the center of the peacebuilding literature the tension between the peacebuilders’ conception of empowerment and that of the beneficiaries. It then shows how the DDR processes generate a *mechanistic* understanding of empowerment—the idea that peacebuilding interventions favour top-down processes designed to exit the ex-insurgents from the DDR process. Arguably, this approach produces unintended consequences that negative the impression of the beneficiaries concerning the program’s positive impact.

This study shows that DDR processes also produce an *ecological* understanding of empowerment. In this context, empowerment is perceived not through the peacebuilders’ vision but what the beneficiaries think is suitable for them and would help them to maximize their potential through interaction with their immediate environments. The concept of *ecological empowerment* suggests transforming local resources—such as rivers and land—into opportunities for enhancing socioeconomic well-being in Niger Delta communities. Progress towards sustainable peace should accord primacy to interventions that support *ecological empowerment* without undermining the importance of *mechanistic empowerment* in peacebuilding.

Thirdly, this research links theory and praxis in the field of conflict transformation and post-conflict peacebuilding. Thus, the study contributes to the conceptualization of the various typologies of peace in the Niger Delta as derived from the perspectives of the perpetrators and victims. These typologies add new knowledge to the literature on conflict transformation because they proceed from the view that modifications in the structural dimensions of the Niger Delta conflict are required to prevent the regeneration of insurgency or reduce its intensity while working towards achieving sustainable peace. This perspective is consistent with Fischer and Ropers (2014,13) who sees conflict transformation in the light of both the conflict structure and the process of moving the conflict towards “just peace.” This example suggests that ex-insurgents should not necessarily reap the benefits of peace based on their status as perpetrators, but they can also be instigators of peace if the peacebuilders recognize their agency and take into consideration their perceptions of peace as vital to the peacebuilding process. The four typologies of peace thus constitute a framework for conflict transformation.

In achieving the broader objective of this study, I aimed to develop a theoretical model to assist in my effort to conceptualize post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta and the nature of peace currently prevailing in the local communities. By studying the periods of stability and instability over the life cycle of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process, I traced the nature of peace to *punctuated peace*. Perhaps, one of the most insightful contributions of this study is the development of punctuated peace theory as a novel theoretical concept against the backdrop of some empirical consistency in the literature. Such an effort begins by acknowledging the impact of the peacebuilding program in ending armed confrontations between ex-insurgents and state actors, which has led to profound transformations in the oil region. My argument is that progress towards sustainable peace remains a daunting challenge due to punctuations in the peace process

generated by changes in political conditions at the macro and micro levels as well as programmatic challenges associated with DDR interventions. These challenges manifest through the culture of corruption that defines the structure of the peacebuilding program. I develop *punctuated peace* as a theoretical model with far-reaching implications for conflict transformation theory.

Punctuated peace theory has implications for conflict transformation theory because it builds on the assumption that the management of the Niger Delta conflict has both peace-affirming and peace-threatening aspects that brings to light the positive and negative consequences of peacebuilding. Peace-affirming aspects are those interventions that not only demilitarize the region by taking arms from insurgents but also have focused on the personal and social transformation of disarmed insurgents and helping them to explore nonviolent means of expressing their grievances or engaging with the state. Likewise, peace-threatening aspects are those interventions that foster a sense of entitlement among ex-insurgents who now see violence as an attractive means of making easy money. An example is how the processes of empowerment have changed the attitudes of many ex-insurgents who feel that the benefits of peacemaking are awarded disproportionately, thereby empowering some while alienating others. Perceptions of alienation combine with deep-seated feelings of worthlessness—what I call *Devaluation-Alienation*—to magnify the inequities in the peace process and consequently steer negative attitudes among ex-insurgents. The fact remains that peace cannot be sustained in a post-conflict society where ex-insurgents feel alienated from the benefits of peacebuilding. As time passes the need for economic participation would revive negative attitudes among disarmed insurgents. The idea of *punctuated peace*, therefore, is consistent with conflict transformation theory and makes an original contribution to the field of peace and conflict studies.

Finally, this study raises new critical issues concerning the nature of DDR interventions in the Niger Delta. So far, it is unclear whether the Niger Delta DDR framework corresponds to the mainstream *maximalist* (broad) or *minimalist* (narrow) approach or whether it represents a nationally-driven intervention. The *maximalist* approach often involves an ambitious and transformative agenda based on a long-term goal, where reintegration activities focus on helping ex-combatants to become productive members of society with special attention accorded to reconciliation and reconstruction. In this case, the DDR program does not end in disarming combatants but includes efforts to address the broader development challenges in the post-conflict society (Kingma and Muggah 2009). Besides setting ambitious agendas that are often unrealistic and difficult to attain (Willems 2015), the *maximalist* approach suffers implementation challenges as it depends mostly on voluntary donations to fund reintegration programs so that access to funding becomes a critical consideration in post-conflict peacebuilding. However, resource constraints did not arise in the Nigerian case because the program is nationally funded with a substantial flow of resources from the national budget to cover all DDR and peacebuilding activities. The challenge lies in the peacebuilders' reductionist understanding of peace as the end of hostilities, measured against the stability of the post-conflict environment, corresponding to a conflict management logic as opposed to a transformational philosophy that seeks to eliminate the political and structural challenges that punctuate progress towards sustainable peace.

Recommendations

The fundamental question confronting Nigerian policymakers is no longer whether Nigeria is trapped by the resource curse syndrome or not but what to do about it (Idemudia 2012). At the end of each interview I conducted, I asked the participants about their suggestions for bringing

about lasting peace in the Niger Delta. This question generated four proposals as pathways to sustainable peace. The first proposal includes recommendations for the technical restructuring of the peacebuilding intervention model. The second proposal includes recommendations for social development in the Niger Delta. The third proposal includes recommendations to strengthen peace education across the oil communities in the Niger Delta. The last proposal includes recommendations to strengthen public health interventions in the local communities.

Technical Restructuring of the Peacebuilding Architecture

Technical restructuring underlines the re-organization of the Niger Delta peacebuilding architecture to achieve greater efficiency in the implementation of peacebuilding interventions that will move the post-conflict society towards sustainable peace. Such a proposal requires technical restructuring, particularly in peacebuilding operations regarding training and post-training reintegration.

The first proposal for the technical restructuring of the peacebuilding program is the decentralization of peacebuilding operations from the metropole to the peripheries, particularly those activities intended to facilitate reintegration. The decentralization of reintegration activities is a fundamental step in attempting to level the vertical relationship between the peacebuilders and program beneficiaries because it would enable the deployment of the peacebuilders from the city to the local communities to ensure proximity with the realities they are seeking to transform. It also provides time-sensitive responses to the urgent needs of participants in local communities who mostly face difficulties communicating with the peacebuilders in the city. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the peacebuilders do not conduct follow-up visits to monitor or evaluate their empowerment projects. Some attribute the failure of their empowerment

projects to the lack of monitoring and evaluation as well as ineffective communication with the peacebuilders to resolve conflict with the vendors.

While there are mechanisms for complaints built into the peacebuilding process, they remain ineffective and, in most cases, complaints from the beneficiaries do not receive immediate attention at the Presidential Amnesty Office in Abuja. There are instances where amnesty delegates within and outside Nigeria take to the social media account of the Presidential Amnesty Program to express their grievances instead of directing such concerns internally through the conflict resolution department. Participants believe decentralizing the peacebuilding programs will eliminate the communication barriers between the peacebuilders and the beneficiaries and ensure direct accountability to the participants as a means of strengthening stakeholder confidence in the peace process.

To address this shortcoming, the participants proposed the decentralization of amnesty offices in the capital city of each Niger Delta state. This would ensure that administrative problems that require immediate communication with the peacebuilders, such as complaints arising from the implementation of empowerment programs, are resolved locally and timely. The decentralization of amnesty offices has the advantage of ensuring effective monitoring of reintegration activities, the verification of conflicting claims concerning empowerment, and conflict resolution. This recommendation is unique because the centralization of the program does not create room for accountability since decisions about whom to empower are made by the peacebuilders who are distant from the everyday realities in the local communities.

The second technical proposal is to remove the peacebuilding program from the federal government bureaucratic structure. This proposal seeks to eliminate the budgetary constraints of implementing peacebuilding activities strictly as a program that follows a fiscal year instead of a

project that operates within an independent budgetary window. The Amnesty Office faces frequent challenges in program delivery because of the time required for the National Assembly to approve its budget. As at February 2018, both the ex-insurgents and amnesty students had not received their monthly allowances because the Presidential Amnesty Office had to wait for the National Assembly to defend the national budget before its implementation. Also, the Amnesty Office had to wait for the approval of the national budget before mobilizing its peacebuilding vendors. The National Assembly can eliminate this bureaucratic structure by approving a grant for the Presidential Amnesty Program to run its projects based on stringent accountability measures.

The third technical proposal for restructuring of the program is for the Presidential Amnesty Office to work collaboratively with the ex-insurgents in developing an exit strategy and timeline for the DDR program. This strategy will enable the participants to exit the DDR system at the reintegration stage rather than continue to remain in the system after their reintegration. This proposal will save the federal government billions of naira by exiting from the DDR system participants who have been reintegrated into civilian society through graduation from academic and vocational training programs, and those who have been empowered with small businesses yet are receiving a monthly stipend from the government. Exiting reintegrated participants from the DDR system will reduce the number of participants from the current 30,000 to the barest minimum and reinvest their monthly allowances in job creation rather than paying people for doing nothing.

The fourth technical proposal for restructuring of the program is to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure reintegration activities reflect transparency and accountability. This proposal will enhance the capacity of the Presidential Amnesty Office to hold vendors accountable for poor implementation of their contractual obligations concerning training and post-training empowerment. Where there are inefficiencies in service delivery, the monitoring and

evaluation team should be able to identify these challenges and recommend appropriate sanctions. One ex-insurgent, Princewill suggested that “they should remove the corrupt contractors and replace them with contractors who have sympathy and conscience and would deliver whatever they are asked to do.” It is evident that the ex-insurgents have lost confidence in the vendors who often shortchange them.

The fifth technical proposal for restructuring the peace program is to ensure that payments accruing to ex-insurgents are made directly to them rather than using former warlords (now acting as vendors) to facilitate these payments. This proposal will eliminate the middleman and resolve conflicts arising from the marginalization of many ex-insurgents who often receive less of what the government has agreed to pay them. By dealing directly with the ex-insurgents rather than the warlord, the federal government might be able to weaken the dependency ties that bind the ex-insurgents to their former leaders who continue to wield enormous influence over their subjects.

Building Sustainable Peace Through Social Development

The severity of unemployment in the Niger Delta underscores the importance of job creation as a peacebuilding strategy. Employment is a dominant theme that resonates with all participants regardless of their location. Rewarding the ex-militants with a monthly stipend of N60,000 (US\$200 equivalent) that is twice the federal minimum wage of N30,000 (US\$80 equivalent) without engaging them in economically productive activities is not only a waste of resources but an inhuman treatment better interpreted as a set-up for failure and, arguably, a potential cause of future insurgency. Given that the Presidential Amnesty Office invests the bulk of its peacebuilding budget in the payment of monthly stipend to ex-insurgents, the federal government has, through such vertical peacebuilding structure, encouraged a culture of laziness

(mentally and physically) and dependency amongst Niger Delta youths who survive on the amnesty stipend.

The first practical proposal for social development is to transform the army of redundant ex-insurgents into an active labour force earning legitimate wages for their contribution to nation-building instead of receiving free payments. The research participants proposed the establishment of a regional Coast Guard in the Niger Delta to provide the institutional framework for deploying redundant ex-insurgents as Coast Guards. This proposal will enable the redundant ex-insurgents to contribute to national development as a justification for their monthly payments. The Nigerian Navy will continue to guard the territorial waters as it is in North America where Coast Guards operate independently of the Naval Force. Implementing this proposal would require months of technical training and the procurement of locally-made vessels for Coast Guard operations. Political will is needed to commit the funding required to implement this intervention. The policy implication of this proposal is that it will eliminate oil bunkering and piracy and, consequently, reduce threats to personal and community security in the Niger Delta. This strategy will also create employment opportunities for many ex-insurgents who have received marine training overseas but jobless due to a combination of factors, including employment discrimination in the oil and gas sector.

The second practical proposal is to leverage the federal government's policy thrust on agriculture to maximize the economic potential of the maritime communities through investment in the fisheries industry and create opportunities for Niger Delta youths. This proposal would require the procurement of trawlers for commercial production of fish and then train and employ the ex-insurgents in the fisheries industry. This proposal has several policy implications.

First, Nigeria imports fish worth billions of naira, which could provide a diversification

scheme away from the dependence on oil. For example, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) ranks Nigeria among the net importers of fishery products, with an import value of US\$1.2 billion in 2013 and an export value of US\$284,390 million. A BBC Africa Report by Dale and Uwonkunda (2017) shows that in 2014, Nigeria received about 9,000 tonnes of stockfish imports from Norway. While the coastal ecosystem in the Niger Delta has enormous potential to boost the fishing economy, the government can take advantage of this opportunity to diversify the national economy. It is important to note that Norway built its wealth on fisheries before the discovery of oil and fish exports to date constitute its second-largest export revenue earner, with stockfish exports to Nigeria contributing a significant element of its economy. Peacebuilding interventions should focus on promoting sustainable solutions capable of driving local economic development by tapping the resources in the oil communities to create new industrial clusters that have the potential to boost employment in the youth sector and break the dependency on the petroleum industry.

The third practical proposal for social development in the Niger Delta is to build infrastructure for tourism development as a means of facilitating employment and integrating redundant youths into the tourism sector. Participants proposed a Regional Marshal Plan that would unlock the tourism potential of the oil region, promote economic diversification and sustainable peace in the oil communities. This proposal is necessary because tourism is a neglected sector in the Niger Delta even though geopolitical and geo-economic conditions remain favourable for a thriving tourism economy with the potential to create massive employment. While this proposal does not undermine the role of oil, it suggests that compared to tourism, the dependence on oil generates negative externalities while the oil corporations have no incentives to discontinue gas flaring. Tourism, therefore, remains a sustainable alternative for job creation in the Niger Delta.

The fourth proposal for social development in the Niger Delta is the promotion of innovation-driven youth enterprise development initiatives that have potential to harness the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of Niger Delta youths. This proposal involves creating a regional innovation fund to provide Start-up capital for innovation-minded youths willing to develop new and appropriate technologies for tackling the development challenges in the oil communities. This proposal would ensure that the youths are not only contributing to tackling the problems but also are invested in their communities.

Peace Education as a Pathway to Sustainable Peace in the Local Communities

This study has demonstrated the impact of nonviolence training in promoting transformational change at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. These mechanisms, in a way, have contributed to sustaining the stability of the Niger Delta community as many ex-insurgents are increasingly aware of the negative consequences of violence. The research participants recommended peace education as a pathway to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

UNICEF (2009, as cited in Fountain 1999, 1) defines “peace Education as the promotion of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values needed to inspire behaviour change that will enable individuals to prevent the occurrence of conflict and violence; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace.” At the core of the UNICEF definition is the importance attached to creative activities that promote the skills, knowledge and attitudes which in turn facilitate conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflict or create conditions conducive to sustainable peace. This understanding resonates with Galtung (2008) who sees peace education as the pedagogical efforts to create a world at peace, where peace moves beyond the mere absence of violence (negative peace).

The central tenet of peace education is the transformation of not just the student but the expert trainers, which could lead to the transformation of the entire society. Turay and English (2008) believe that because our current social and economic order is rife with physical and structural violence, the transformation of society and the social and economic order is integral to peace. Creating a culture of peace in the Niger Delta thus requires a fundamental change in knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, and worldview. This will enable the learners to act as peace ambassadors working towards creating a more peaceful society. Because peace education hopes to instil in the human consciousness a commitment to a culture of peace, it plays a fundamental role in the creative processes of societal transformation across the Niger Delta. As Mezirow (1997) notes, transformative learning occurs when people change how they see and interpret the world by critically reflecting on their belief systems and taking conscious steps to bring about new ways of interpreting their worlds.

Central to the achievement of sustainable peace in the Niger Delta is the promotion of the core values of peace education such as a culture of nonviolence and the principles of social justice. The culture of nonviolence underscores the level of freedom, trust and respect for human rights, while social justice principles underscore values such as equality, responsibility, and solidarity. For peacebuilding initiatives in the Niger Delta to remain sustainable, the peacebuilders must incorporate in their interventions peace education initiatives designed to transform negative attitudes and behaviours while encouraging peaceful processes of conflict resolution.

Building Company-Community Relations Through Public Health Interventions

The factors that influence health and ill health, or the determinants of health and ill-health, are prevalent across Niger Delta communities. They cut across poverty, education, housing

conditions and environmental degradation in the oil communities. The human condition in Niger Delta communities suggests that public health interventions have become critical to sustainable peace.

In line with corporate citizenship norms, there are rising expectations that oil multinationals operating in the Niger Delta should take responsible actions to ensure higher standards of living and quality of life for their host communities while still maintaining profitability for their stakeholders. Specifically, oil multinationals are expected to undertake socially responsible public health actions that empower communities, such as building health infrastructure and funding innovative research and training programs aimed at strengthening the practice of public health across the rural communities in the Niger Delta. Such interventions should include programs designed to prevent diseases originating from the effects of oil extraction on health systems, including promoting public health information to support decision making across local communities identified as vulnerable to public health threats.

Recommendations for Future Research

The most shocking experience I had in the research field occurred during formal interviews and informal conversations with young men in their 20s, 30, and mid-40s who could barely read and write. A case in point was a young man in his early 30s who dream of becoming a computer engineer but could not read a questionnaire. While I did not doubt his potential and determination to succeed in whatever his mind has set out to accomplish, I felt that he lacks the necessary preparation due to the limited educational opportunities in rural communities across the Niger Delta. The experience reveals how illiteracy negatively affects the severity of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta and why sustainable peace remains a complex undertaking. Yet, research on the

Niger Delta peace process has largely ignored the role that illiteracy plays in conflict formation and transformation.

New research should focus on exploring the role that illiteracy plays in punctuating progress towards sustainable peace. There is a need to investigate how illiteracy affects the outcome of peacebuilding with regards to the quality of training received by ex-insurgents and the ability to apply the knowledge in meaningful ways that would enhance their socioeconomic status. This research paradigm supports Galtung's (1996) conception of structural violence as societal structures (such as inequality) that allow violence to continue even though the conflict has ended. By relating violence to societal structures, Galtung established the empirical connection between conflict, peace and development. For Galtung, structural violence reveals not only the causes and effects of violence but also the conditions for peace. Therefore, future research should focus on the structural conditions that prevent peacebuilding processes from achieving their long-term objectives.

Second, future research dealing with post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta should focus specific attention on the causes of peace. So far, the current peacebuilding program has not been successful in winning the peace in the Niger Delta (Aghedo 2012). This is mainly because peace is defined narrowly as the absence of armed conflict, thereby limiting the scope of peace. While this study has attempted to explore some typologies of peace in high-conflict and low-conflict states, the limited scope of this research does not allow for an exploration of the causes of peace. Therefore, a comparative study of the causes of peace will produce new insights into the Niger Delta peace process.

Third, future research should focus on company-community peace. So far, the debate has focused on company-community conflict (e.g. Ikelegbe 2006; Watts 2007; Obi 2009; Watts 2009;

Idemudia 2009; Obi 2010) and less on company-community peace. This research paradigm should aim to develop models for understanding how oil multinationals and communities can coalesce around a common understanding of peace and building on this develop appropriate measures for preventing future attacks on critical infrastructure. This research paradigm brings concerns about critical infrastructure protection to the center of the peacebuilding debate in the Niger Delta and makes the case that sustainable peace should proceed from the balance between protecting the critical infrastructure that supports national development and protecting the sanctity of life in local communities.

Forth, future research should accord careful attention to the gender sensitivity of the peacebuilding program and how the various DDR interventions impact women specifically. Studies have shown that women's participation in peace processes have positive outcome such as the attainment of peace (Ellerby 2013; Karim and Beardsley 2013; Caprioli 2003). Yet women constitute a marginal percent of the ex-insurgents and are likely to benefit less from the reintegration support (Okonofua 2011, 12-13). My goal, therefore, was to understand whether the peacebuilding program has been an effective vehicle for enhancing women's agency, and the conditions and practices that constrain effective women's participation in training and post-training reintegration. The insights gleaned from participant perceptions helped in generating new knowledge on the development of gender-sensitive provisions that would enhance the capacity of women participants.

Finally, future research should focus on the interplay of peace and health systems. Much has been written on the effects of oil extraction on conflict and discussions about health inequities in the oil region often highlight the negative impact of extractive activities on health systems. What is lacking is research that focuses on the effects of public health interventions in driving

peacebuilding processes and outcomes. Empirical studies should seek to understand whether public health mainstreaming in peacebuilding processes may contribute to sustainable peace across local communities in the oil region. Specifically, new research should explore how improvements in technologies that make clean and safe water accessible to local communities in the oil region can strengthen company-community relations and contribute to lasting peace.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that sustainable peace in the Niger Delta should not be merely another concept to be mainstreamed by the peacebuilding community in Nigeria but a practical effort to promote positive social outcomes that have potential to transform destructive behaviour. The Presidential Amnesty Office that is the coordinating agency of the peace process should not just discuss peacebuilding as a goal; instead, it should ensure its peacebuilding framework adapts to the needs and aspirations of the target populations in conflict-affected communities. As this study has shown, post-conflict transformations in the Niger Delta call attention to a variety of solutions that require multi-stakeholder engagement.

The recommendations presented by the participants are immensely significant as they point out the challenges in the Niger Delta that should be addressed to create the condition for sustainable peace. However, these are recommendations that should be addressed collaboratively by the federal government, sub-national governments, conflict-affected communities in the oil region and multinational corporations. It is not enough to disarm the various insurgent groups threatening the peace of Niger Delta communities and assume that the region has achieved stability. Given the complexity of the Niger Delta conflict and the cost of implementing peacebuilding interventions, programmatic efforts that focus on designing measurable objectives informed by an analysis which

emphasizes the structural causes of insurgency will contribute the knowledge-base for improving the implementation of sustainable pathways to peace. Progress towards lasting peace demands an unflinching determination from the state, corporate and community stakeholders, the mobilization of resources, and a better understanding of the underlying needs of the local populations most vulnerable to violence, and for whom the peacebuilding interventions are designed to affect.

I have learned invaluable lessons throughout this research. The first lesson is the danger of generalizing the experiences of Niger Delta people concerning the peace process. Although indigenes of the various local communities face similar environmental and socioeconomic challenges which arise from their relationship with oil multinationals and the state, there are significant variations in their worldviews and approaches to fighting these injustices. While the indigenes of Rivers and Bayelsa seek emancipation through an ideological commitment to an armed insurgency, those from Akwa Ibom tend to deploy passive resistance in their relationship with the oil multinationals. Because Akwa Ibom is known as a low conflict state, the stigmatization of insurgency has meant that there is much to gain in upholding the image of a peaceful society whose indigenes are not involved in violent activities which often define the behaviour of Niger Delta people. Due to the rent-seeking disposition of the indigenous elites, and the need to create an atmosphere of peace to sustain their survival, there is growing advocacy in Akwa Ibom communities that waging violence against ExxonMobil is like throwing stones at a “glass house.” Because the indigenes of Akwa Ibom place a high premium on their reputation as a peaceful society, they deploy nonviolent strategies to commit ExxonMobil to negotiate with them. While this non-confrontational approach has so far been successful in sustaining the friendly image of these communities with regards to their relationship with ExxonMobil, underlying the so-called “peaceful” societies is structural violence as ExxonMobil prefer to create friction among the people

by dealing with the political and traditional elites while marginalizing downtrodden conditions prevailing in the communities.

The second lesson I learned underlines the disproportionate impact of the peacebuilding program. Although the peacebuilding program is intended to affect the entire Niger Delta region, in practice, it mostly benefitted those ex-insurgents and non-insurgents from high conflict states such as Bayelsa and Rivers, while it marginalizes those from low conflict states such as Akwa Ibom. It is imperative, therefore, that peace researchers accord greater attention to the context of peacebuilding to ensure that the voices of the various stakeholders are taken into consideration when designing inquiries that seek to measure the process and outcome of the peace program. Failure to do so may lead to research that reproduces the cycle of marginalization within the Niger Delta.

In concluding this study, it is imperative that I mention two critical challenges I encountered in the research field that I consider invaluable. The first challenge is the arduous task of implementing purposive sampling in the local communities to ensure the investigation generate rich data. This challenge is due to the difficulty of locating participants who are knowledgeable about the research phenomena I was investigating and willing to participate in the study. Since the participants do not reside in one location but scattered across different local communities, I had to travel to these communities to identify them. Researchers should endeavour to build significant time in their study when planning to use a purposive sampling technique to recruit participants from different local communities within the oil region.

The second challenge underlines the cost of implementing a purposive sampling technique in the oil region since the participants reside in different locations requiring a significant amount of travel to administer surveys and interviews. I could not cover some communities in Rivers and

Bayelsa due to limited financial resources to meet travelling and living expenses for myself and my research assistant. Researchers seeking to conduct empirical studies requiring surveys and key-informant interviews with ex-insurgents in the local communities should endeavour to budget significant resources when a purposive sampling design is involved. Otherwise, resource constraint will affect access to quality data.

Although this study focuses specifically on Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers, the results can be generalized across other conflict-affected states within the oil region. Moreover, if this study had taken place in other Niger Delta states (for example, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Ondo, Imo and Abia), the result will be similar and consistent with my findings, although the lessons learned from each state might differ depending on the context. Nevertheless, both the CISI model of conflict transformation and the punctuated peace model can be applied to any post-conflict environment beyond Nigeria's oil region.

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Appendices

A CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE OF KEY INFORMANTS

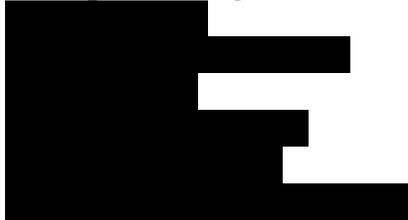
Interviewee	Gender	Description	Date of Interview
Eze	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers whose reintegration settlement (Poultry Farm) failed to materialize into a successful enterprise.	9 January 2018
Benson	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers whose reintegration settlement (electronics merchandise) failed to materialize into a thriving enterprise.	9 January 2018
Princewill	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who is resentful about the peacebuilding program and believes the low-quality training he received did not prepare him for economic reintegration.	9 January 2018
Wami	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who survives on his monthly stipend while awaiting his deployment for training and post-training reintegration.	9 January 2018
George	Male	An ex-insurgent who emerged as a successful entrepreneur in Rivers through participation in the peacebuilding program.	10 January 2018
Jeff	Male	Jeff is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who received a block moulding machine to set up a business but has difficulty managing the business to due technical challenges with the equipment.	10 January 2018
David	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who was deployed to the UAE for training in pipeline welding but felt the training was substandard and didn't equip him for economic reintegration.	10 January 2018
Finima	Male	Finima is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who is optimistic about the positive outcome of the peacebuilding program.	11 January 2018
Darigo	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who had received some training in Asia but felt the training he received did not prepare him for economic reintegration.	11 January 2018
Karimie	Male	Karimie is an ex-militant from Rivers who has received entrepreneurship training in fish farming pending when the Amnesty Office will decide to set-up his enterprise.	11 January 2018
Dariye	Male	Dariye is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who has been disarmed and demobilized since 2011 but not economically reintegrated yet.	11 January 2018
Whyte	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who is resentful about not securing an Amnesty Scholarship to fulfil his dream of pursuing higher education.	11 January 2018
Dagogo	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who survives on his monthly stipend.	11 January 2018
Dike	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who is resentful about his deployment for pipefitting training instead of awarding him a scholarship to pursue higher education.	11 January 2018
Jack	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who is passionate about pipefitting but has not been deployed for the economic reintegration.	11 January 2018
Bridget	Female	A female ex-insurgent who invested her amnesty stipend in a catering business that is helping her to train her daughter in medical school.	12 January 2018
Agnes	Female	A women's leader from rivers and mother to an ex-insurgent who has in-depth knowledge of the insurgency and peacebuilding process.	12 January 2018
Emenike	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who has not been reintegrated but receiving the Amnesty stipend.	12 January 2018

McPepple	Male	An oil worker in Rivers who believes kidnapping of oil workers has ended.	12 January 2018
McPrince	Male	An ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who trained in fish farming and is currently operating a farm courtesy of the peacebuilding program but believes his farm isn't successful due to leakages in his tank.	14 January 2018 (Phone Interview)
Chinedu	Male	An oil worker who believes that the activities of oil multinationals onshore have caused a lot of conflicts, leading them to shift their operations offshore as a conflict resolution measure.	14 January 2018
Ebele	Male	An ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who is neither trained nor economically reintegrated and believes the former warlords are shortchanging them by paying them less of the monthly stipend approved for them.	15 January 2018
Brisibe	Male	An ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who believes elites are an impediment to the peace, that people should be receiving payments without work, and that the peace process should benefit the communities more.	15 January 2018
Bestman	Male	An Ijaw ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who is resentful about his marginalization in the peacebuilding program having surrendered his arms to the government.	15 January 2018
Solomon	Male	An Ijaw ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who is resentful about his marginalization in the peacebuilding.	15 January 2018
Boma	Female	A female ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who trained in entrepreneurship for which she started a small business courtesy of the peacebuilding program but could not manage the business and resorted to seeking re-empowerment in agriculture.	15 January 2018
Jackson	Male	Jackson is an ex-insurgent from Bayelsa who is passionate about selling cars and is resentful about his deployment for entrepreneurship training in Cassava farming.	15 January 2018
Kubis	Male	Kubis is an-insurgent from Rivers who believes the peacebuilders are not meeting the expectations of the delegates.	16 January 2018
Nwoke	Male	Nwoke is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who believes that former warlords are withholding their benefits.	16 January 2018
Anderson	Male	Anderson is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who the program coordinators are not living up to their expectations.	16 January 2018
Chidi	Male	An ex-insurgent from Rivers who believes the peacebuilding program has helped to stabilize the oil region.	16 January 2019
Akpan	Male	A youth leader from Akwa Ibom who believe the peacebuilding program did not impact his community because they do not perceive themselves as militants.	17 January 2018
Victoria	Female	An Amnesty Student from Bayelsa studying in Akwa Ibom.	18 January 2018
Stella	Female	An Amnesty Student from Bayelsa studying in Akwa Ibom.	19 January 2018
Dickson	Male	An Amnesty Student from Bayelsa studying in Akwa Ibom.	20 January 2018
Alex	Male	An Amnesty Student from Bayelsa studying in Akwa Ibom.	20 January 2018
Aniefiok	Male	An Amnesty Student from studying in Akwa Ibom	20 January 2018
Ken	Male	An Amnesty Student from Bayelsa studying in Akwa Ibom.	20 January 2018
Dokubo	Male	An ex-insurgent from Bayelsa currently a student in Akwa Ibom	20 January 2018
Uche	Male	Uche is an ex-insurgent from Rivers who operates a thriving poultry farm courtesy of the peacebuilding program.	22 January 2018
William	Male	A government official who shared an informed perspective on the dynamics of the peacebuilding program.	22 January 2018
Ebi	Male	A peacebuilding consultant working for the government	7 February 2018
Angela	Female	A peacebuilding consultant working for the government	7 February 2018
FrankJoe	Male	A peacebuilding consultant working for the government	7 February 2018
Nwandu	Male	A vendor contracted to facilitate the training of ex-insurgents	12 February 2018

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEY

Research Project Title: “Peacebuilding Through the Eyes of Stakeholders: Exploring the Impact and Challenges of Nigeria’s Amnesty Program”

Principal Investigation and Contact Information:



Research Supervisor:

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This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research project is to examine participant perceptions of the Niger Delta amnesty program, and thereby to survey its effectiveness as a mechanism for peacebuilding, using qualitative and quantitative data. This is a research study being conducted as part of a doctoral project at the University of Manitoba. You are invited to participate in this research project based on your knowledge of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process.

Procedure

The procedure involves filling out a survey that will take approximately 60-90 minutes. Your responses will be confidential, and I will not be revealing identifying information such as your name. The results of this research will be used for scholarly purposes only.

Benefits

This research will be of considerable benefit to you as you will be participating in the creation of knowledge that will enhance scholarly understanding of the positive and negative impacts of the

Niger Delta amnesty program.

Risk

Your participation in this survey will not provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. All efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality.

Anonymity

Any information that is obtained in connection with this questionnaire will remain confidential and will be available only to me (the researcher). You will not be named or identified in any report of this study as pseudonyms will be used to represent participants. Recording devices will not be used for this survey.

Compensation

You will not be awarded any monetary compensation for your participation in this study. At the completion of the survey, you will receive a souvenir (such as pen, jotter, and keyholder) in appreciation of your time and the information you provided.

Withdrawal

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you chose to participate in this study voluntarily, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences to you up until April 30, 2018, when it will no longer be possible to tell which data came from you. Once you have submitted your responses for this survey, they will be entered into a project database. At this time, you will not be able to withdraw your responses because I will not be able to identify which responses are yours. If at any time you chose to withdraw before April 30, 2018, any information you have provided as part of this study will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you decide to withdraw, you can contact me by email on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and I will immediately destroy your recordings and data.

Dissemination

Once all data is collected and analyzed the result of this research will be shared with the research community through seminars, presentations and scholarly conferences. The doctoral dissertation will most likely culminate in a book publication, offering fresh insights into post-conflict peacebuilding processes and will be written in a comprehensive language that will be helpful as a resource for teaching in peace and conflict studies, political science, and development studies.

Feedback/Debriefing

After the completion of the study, a two-page summary of the results will be communicated to you via mail or email (depending on your choice) approximately in January 2019.

Data Management

After the successful defense of my dissertation (approximately December 2018) all research material will be destroyed by deleting and shredding. Anonymous survey data may be kept indefinitely.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the

information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

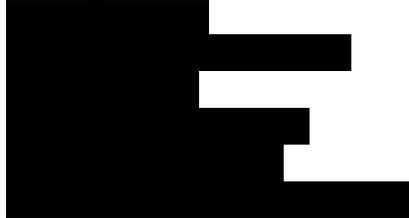
Researcher's Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

Research Project Title: “Peacebuilding Through the Eyes of Stakeholders: Exploring the Impact and Challenges of Nigeria's Amnesty Program”

Principal Investigation and Contact Information:



Research Supervisor:

Prof. Hamdesa Tusso
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Manitoba
70 Dysart Road, Winnipeg, MB, Canada
Phone: 204-474-6492
Email: h.tuso@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research project is to examine stakeholder perceptions of the impact and challenges of Nigeria’s Amnesty Program, and thereby to survey its effectiveness as a mechanism for peacebuilding. This is a research study being conducted as part of a doctoral project at the University of Manitoba. You are invited to participate in this research project based on your knowledge of the Niger Delta conflict and peace process.

Procedure

The procedure involves responding to a set of interview questions that will take approximately 1 hour. The interview will be conducted face-to-face and will be audio recorded. Your responses will be confidential, and I will not be revealing identifying information such as your name. The results of this research will be used for scholarly purposes only.

Benefits

This research will be of considerable benefit to you as you will be participating in the creation of

knowledge that will enhance scholarly understanding of the Niger Delta peace process.

Risk

Participation in this interview will not provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. You may, however, choose to share sensitive and confidential information. All efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality.

Anonymity

Any information that is obtained in connection with this interview will remain confidential and will be available only to me (the researcher). You will not be named or identified in any report of this study. Hand-written notes will be typed and saved in the researcher's password-protected personal computer. Audio tapes will be transferred and saved using digital devices such as smart pen and electronic journal which transfers interactive notes to password-protected laptop by USB cable. Confidentiality will be maintained by using a pseudonym instead of the respondent's name when transcribing interviews. Consent forms, hand-written notes, and audiotapes will be stored in private locked cabinets. Please be reassured that your identity will not be revealed in the dissemination of the study and a pseudonym or a pseudo organization will be used to protect your identity or that of your organization. You will be given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym if you do not agree with my choice of pseudonym. Whichever option you prefer, all effort will be made to ensure anonymity.

Compensation

You will not be awarded any monetary compensation for your participation in this study. At the completion of the interview, you will receive a souvenir (such as pen, jotter, and keyholder) in appreciation of your time and the information you provided.

Withdrawal

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences to you up until approximately January 2019, when I expect to be submitting my thesis to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If at any time you choose to withdraw from this study, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you decide to withdraw, you can contact me by email on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and I will immediately destroy your recordings and transcripts.

Dissemination

Once all data is collected and analyzed the result of this research will be shared with the research community through seminars, presentations and scholarly conferences. The doctoral dissertation will most likely culminate in a book publication, offering fresh insights into the Niger Delta peace process and will be written in a comprehensive language that will be helpful as a resource for teaching in peace and conflict studies, political science, and development studies.

Feedback/Debriefing

After the completion of the study, a 2-page summary of the results will be communicated to you via mail or email (depending on your choice) approximately in January 2019.

Data Management

After the successful defense of my dissertation (approximately December 2018) all research material will be destroyed by deleting and shredding.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant’s Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher’s Signature _____

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is part of a doctoral study conducted in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba, Canada. The objective of this survey is to collect information about 1) the characteristics of conflict and peace actors, 2) the impact of the amnesty program on Niger Delta communities, 3) the impact of the amnesty program on confidence building between the government and ex-militants, 4) the impact of the amnesty program on the economic reintegration of ex-militants, and 5) some demographic information about the research participants. This questionnaire was developed to cover the various disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities subsumed under the Niger Delta peace process. The information you provide will enable the researcher to track changes in the conflict environment in oil communities by studying the conflict trend over time. I appreciate your time for completing this questionnaire. The information you provide as part of this study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

A: PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT AND PEACE ACTORS

A1. Did you participate in the Niger Delta conflict?

1. Yes, I did
2. No, I didn't

A2. In your opinion, what do you think motivated ex-militants to pick up arms to fight in Niger Delta?

1. Personal gain
2. Ethnic domination
3. Economic oppression
4. Political power
5. Environmental pollution
6. Infrastructural deficits
7. Federalism
8. Unemployment
9. Poverty
10. Exploitation by oil companies
11. Control of oil resources
12. Other, please specify

A3. Where do you think the insurgent groups in Niger Delta get most of their guns and ammunitions from?

1. They purchased them from outside the country
2. They purchased them from local dealers

3. They seized them from other groups
4. They got them from the military
5. They got them from politicians with vested interests
6. They got them from international actors with vested interests in the oil economy

A4. Did you participate in the Amnesty Program?

1. Yes, I did
2. No, I didn't

A5. How would you describe those who surrendered their arms to accept amnesty?

1. Peacemakers
2. Agitators
3. Delegates
4. Change agents
5. Ex-militants
6. Community activists
7. Political activists
8. Environmental activists
9. Freedom fighters
10. Other, please specify

A6. What do you think motivated ex-militants to surrender their arms and accept amnesty?

1. The cash benefits of the Amnesty Program
2. Overseas scholarship opportunities
3. Vocational skills training opportunities
4. Specialized training opportunities overseas
5. The stability and development of the Niger Delta
6. The realization that conflict has a harmful affect on national development
7. Other, please specify

A7. Are ex-militants rewarded financially for their participation in the Amnesty program?

1. Yes
2. No

A8. Do you agree or disagree that many people who enrolled in the Amnesty Program did not participate in violence?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

A9. Think about the people who did not participate in the conflict but benefitted from the Amnesty Program through overseas scholarships and training opportunities. How did they do it?

1. They paid bribe
2. They used family connections
3. They used their political connections

4. They used their personal connections
5. They faked their identity
6. Other, please specify

A10. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the leadership of the Amnesty Program?

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

B: IMPACT OF THE AMNESTY PROGRAM ON PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY SECURITY

B1. How safe did you feel living or working in oil communities before the introduction of the Amnesty Program?

1. Extremely safe
2. Very safe
3. Somewhat safe
4. Not so safe
5. Not at all safe

B2. How safe do you feel living or working in oil communities after the introduction of the Amnesty Program?

1. Extremely safe
2. Very safe
3. Somewhat safe
4. Not so safe
5. Not at all safe

B3. Compared to the period before amnesty, have the attacks on oil pipelines increased, decreased, or about the same?

1. Increased significantly
2. Increased moderately
3. Increased slightly
4. About the same
5. Decreased slightly
6. Decreased moderately
7. Decreased significantly

B4. Compared to the period before amnesty, has the kidnapping of oil and non-oil workers increased, decreased, or about the same?

1. Increased significantly
2. Increased moderately
3. Increased slightly
4. About the same
5. Decreased slightly
6. Decreased moderately
7. Decreased significantly

B5. Compared to the period before amnesty, do you think the deployment of soldiers in oil communities has increased, decreased, or about the same?

1. Increased significantly
2. Increased moderately
3. Increased slightly
4. About the same
5. Decreased slightly
6. Decreased moderately
7. Decreased significantly

B6. Do you agree or disagree that ever since amnesty was introduced, oil workers are no longer living in fear of being kidnapped?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

B7. Do you agree or disagree that ever since amnesty was introduced, kidnapping for ransom has ended?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

B8. Do you agree or disagree that stability has returned to oil communities since the introduction of amnesty?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

B9. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program has been successful in reducing violence in oil communities?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

B10. Since the introduction of amnesty, do you think the security situation in oil communities has improved, the same, or worse?

5. Improved a lot
6. Improved slightly
7. About the same
8. A little worse

C: IMPACT OF AMNESTY ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING

C1. How effective is the Amnesty Program in building trust between the federal government and ex-militants?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C2. How effective is the Amnesty Program in building trust between the federal government and oil communities?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C3. How effective is the Amnesty Program in building trust between oil corporations and communities?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C4. How effective is the Amnesty Program in strengthening relations between the federal government and ex-militants?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C5. How effective is the Amnesty Program in strengthening relations between oil companies and communities?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C6. How effective is the Amnesty Program in strengthening communication between the federal government and ex-militants?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C7. How effective is the Amnesty Program in strengthening communication between the federal government and oil communities?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C8. How effective is the Amnesty Program in engaging oil communities to facilitate peace education?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all effective

C9. How transparent is the Amnesty Program in the selection of delegates for various training and empowerment programs within and outside Nigeria?

1. Extremely transparent
2. Very transparent
3. Somewhat transparent
4. Not so transparent
5. Not at all transparent

C10. How transparent is the Amnesty Program in coordinating the various training programs (such as scholarship, entrepreneurship, vocational/ specialized skills training) both locally and overseas?

1. Extremely transparent
2. Very transparent
3. Somewhat transparent
4. Not so transparent

5. Not at all transparent

D: IMPACT OF AMNESTY ON THE DISBANDMENT OF ARMED GROUPS

D1. Do you agree or disagree that since the introduction of amnesty, the notorious militant groups in Niger Delta have seized to function?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

D2. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program has weakened the capacity of militant groups in oil communities?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

D3. Do you agree or disagree that since the introduction of Amnesty peace has returned to oil communities?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

D4. Do you agree or disagree that the payment of monthly stipends to ex-militants will stop them from picking up arms to fight the government?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

D5. Do you agree or disagree that the training received at the rehabilitation camp has helped ex-militants to transform into peaceful, nonviolent citizens?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

D6. How likely is it that conflict will resume in Niger Delta if the federal government decides to shut down the Amnesty Program in the future?

1. Extremely likely
2. Very likely

3. Somewhat likely
4. Not so likely
5. Not at all likely

E: IMPACT OF AMNESTY ON HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

E1. Which of the following amnesty funded program has made the most impact in the local economy?

1. Pilot training
2. Aircraft maintenance
3. Formal education
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Artisanship
6. Oil and gas
7. Agriculture
8. Transportation
9. Technology
10. Maritime technology
11. Culture/tourism/hospitality
12. Hairdressing
13. Fashion design
14. Small scale manufacturing
15. Entertainment
16. Creative arts and theater
17. Building and construction

E2. Do you agree or disagree that the strategy of training ex-militants in highly technical skills to give them greater opportunities in life has been successful in bringing peace to the Niger Delta?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E3. Do you agree or disagree that awarding scholarships to ex-militants to study in local and foreign universities has been successful in bringing peace to the Niger Delta?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E4. Do you agree or disagree that helping ex-militants to become entrepreneurs has been successful in bringing peace to the Niger Delta?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E5. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program have given many ex-militants the opportunities to apply their education/technical/entrepreneurial skills towards the development of their communities?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E6. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program has increased the number of well trained and highly skilled professionals in the Niger Delta?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E7. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program has increased the number of entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

E8. Overall, how responsive is the Amnesty Program to youth unemployment in oil communities?

1. Extremely responsive
2. Very responsive
3. Somewhat responsive
4. Not so responsive
5. Not at all responsive.

E9. Overall, how responsive is the Amnesty Program to poverty reduction in oil communities?

1. Extremely responsive
2. Very responsive
3. Somewhat responsive
4. Not so responsive
5. Not at all responsive

E10. Compared to the period before amnesty, do you think the unemployment crisis in oil communities is better, worse or about the same?

1. Better
2. About the same
3. Worse

E11. Did ex-militants face difficulties gaining employment upon their reintegration into society?

1. Yes
2. No

E12. The federal government has invested over 1 billion US dollars to cover the training and allowances for 30,000 delegates. How would you rate the benefits and costs of the Niger Delta peacebuilding program?

1. The program has produced benefits only
2. The program has produced costs only
3. The costs are more than the benefits
4. The costs and benefits are equal
5. The benefits are more than the costs

F: IMPACT OF AMNESTY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

F1. How effective is the Amnesty Program in ensuring equality between men and women in its various activities and programs?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all affective

F2. How effective is the Amnesty Program in enhancing capacity building for female ex-militants through the various scholarship and skills training opportunities?

1. Extremely effective
2. Very effective
3. Somewhat effective
4. Not so effective
5. Not at all affective

F3. Compared to the period before amnesty, is the infrastructural situation in your community better, worse, or about the same?

1. Better
2. Worse
3. About the same

F4. Compared to the period after amnesty, is the infrastrural situation in your community improved for the better, worse, or about the same?

1. Better
2. Worse
3. About the same

F5. Compared to the period before amnesty, is environmental pollution in your community improved for the better, worse, or about the same?

1. Better
2. Worse
3. About the same

F6. What should be the ideal solution to the development challenge in oil communities?

1. Repair endangered environments
2. Create jobs for unemployed youths
3. Implement resource control policy
4. Implement true federalism
5. Hold corporations accountable for pollution
6. Fight corruption
7. Regulate the importation and sale of arms
8. Address the infrastructural deficiencies in the region
9. Provide small loans to male and female youth entrepreneurs
10. Promote opportunities for skills acquisition
11. Fight poverty
12. Promote grassroots peace initiatives
13. Seek justice in court
14. Other, please specify

F7. Do you agree or disagree that the Amnesty Program has given previously marginalized youths from oil communities the opportunities to improve their lives and contribute positively to society?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

F8. Who do you think has benefitted the most from the federal government amnesty program?

1. Ex-agitators/ex-militants
2. The federal government
3. State governments
4. Multinational oil corporations
5. Oil producing communities
6. Amnesty officials
7. Amnesty contractors

F9. Did ex-militants experience problems with acceptance in their communities?

3. Yes
4. No

F10. How satisfied are you with the impact of the Amnesty program?

1. Extremely satisfied
2. Very satisfied

3. Somewhat satisfied
4. Not so satisfied
5. Not at all satisfied

G: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

G1. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female.

G2. In which state do you live/work?

1. Akwa Ibom
2. Bayelsa
3. Rivers

G3. Which ethnicity best describes you?

1. Ibeno
2. Kalabari
3. Ogoni
4. Eket
5. Ijaw
6. Ikwere
7. Okrika
8. Other, please specify

G4. What is your age?

1. 18 to 24
2. 25 to 34
3. 35 to 44
4. 45 to 54
5. 55 to 64
6. 65 to 74
7. 75 or older

G5. Which of the following categories best describes you?

1. Ex-militant
2. Ex-agitator
3. Community leader
4. Youth leader
5. Women leader
6. Community activist
7. Scholar
8. Consultant

- 9. O Government official
- 10. O Oil worker
- 11. O Public intellectual
- 12. O Journalist
- 13. O Student
- 14. O Other, specify

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. a). My name is Okoi, a doctoral candidate in peace and conflict studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada, working on a dissertation on the Niger Delta peacebuilding program. I recognize many people have studied the Niger Delta conflict and have arrived at different conclusions. But my study is different because I am looking at important issues that have contributed to the success of the program and issues that have been neglected and I recognize the knowledge and wisdom of people who participated in, or understand, the process and outcome of the amnesty program. I hope to use this research for the increased understanding of peacebuilding in Niger Delta.

b). The interview should take at least one hour, and the conversation will be recorded.

c). The information you share during the interview will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purposes outside the intended purpose of this study.

d). Are you available to respond to some questions at this time, and would it be okay to record this interview and to use the information you provide for the intended purpose? Give consent form and ask for signature if quoting is permissible.

Interview Schedule

1. What is your opinion about the Niger Delta amnesty program?
2. How effective is the amnesty program in facilitating developmental processes and outcomes in Niger Delta?
3. How effective is the Amnesty Program in stabilizing security in Niger Delta?
4. Do you think the implementation of the Amnesty Program has had any impact on renewed militancy in Niger Delta?
5. Do you think the Amnesty Program has adequately addressed the development challenges in Niger Delta?
6. What is your opinion about the payment of monthly allowances to ex-militants?
7. Are there elements of corruption in the implementation of the Amnesty Program?
8. Do you think the Amnesty Program was imposed from above or was it inclusive of all stakeholders (example youth, women, community leaders, civil society actors, subnational governments and oil corporations)?
9. In your opinion, do you think that the voices and perspectives of women were taken into

consideration during the design and implementation of the Amnesty Program or did women play a marginal role?

10. Do think that the reintegration program has adequately addressed the social and economic concerns of women?

11. Do you think that the Amnesty Program has addressed the main security threats in the Niger Delta?

12. Do you foresee future conflict emerging in the region? If yes, what do you perceive as a potential source of future conflict?

13. In your opinion, what visible change has occurred in Niger Delta because of the Amnesty Program?

14. What does peace in the oil communities mean to you, and what are your suggestions for bringing about lasting peace?

Closing

1 a). I appreciate your time for this interview. Is there anything else you would like to share so that I can better evaluate your opinion of the Amnesty Program?

b). Would it be alright to contact you over the phone or email you if I have any more questions?

c). Thank you once again for your time.

APPENDIX V: COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH INTENT



27th November 2017

Brig. Gen. Paul Boroh (Rtd)
Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta
Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta/
Coordinator, Presidential Amnesty Programme
No. 37A Nile Street,
Maitama
Abuja, FCT

Dear Sir:

Communication of Research Intent

Study Title: “Peacebuilding Through the Eyes of Stakeholders: Evaluating the Impact of Nigeria’s Amnesty Program”

Principal Investigator: Obasesam Okoi, PhD Candidate, Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Manitoba. Email: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Hamdesa Tusso, Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Manitoba. Email: h.tuso@umanitoba.ca

I am writing to inform you of my intent to involve the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta in my doctoral research on the Amnesty Program for a period of three months, starting on December 7th, 2017 and ending on July 7th, 2018. I am seeking for your gracious kind approval to be given the opportunity and platform to interview your staff and access the amnesty database and archival materials.

This research explores stakeholder perceptions of the impact and challenges of Nigeria’s Amnesty Program, and thereby to survey its effectiveness as a vehicle for peacebuilding in Niger Delta, using qualitative and quantitative data. The objectives of this research are: 1) To critically examine stakeholder perceptions of the impact of the Amnesty Program in terms of the actual changes that have occurred in Niger Delta because of the material investment in the peace process, 2) To

identify significant relationships between the peacebuilding implementation and changes in conflict trends in terms of the actual experience of peace in oil communities, and 3) To explore the theoretical and practical implications of the Amnesty Program as a vehicle for peacebuilding.

I would like you to give me formal permission to contact relevant staff in the amnesty office for interview and survey concerning the outcome of the Amnesty Program as well as access to relevant documents that will assist in my study. If possible, I would like referrals to the following key stakeholders:

1. Delegates/ex-agitators who have benefitted from the amnesty and may be able to validate its impact on their personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities;
2. Consultants/partners who have contributed to various phases of the program implementation and may be able to verify its impact; and
3. Communities in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states where the Amnesty Program has had verifiable impact on peace.

For several reasons, I feel that this research will be of considerable benefit to the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta. This is especially because mixed methods studies on the Amnesty Program is very limited; apart from a few publications on economic reintegration, there is hardly any mixed methods study on the process and outcome of the Amnesty Program in some states. This study will be beneficial in ensuring that the impact and challenges of the Amnesty Program are explored and documented for both policy and academic purposes.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Obasesam Okoi

APPENDIX VI: TCPS 2: CORE

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE



Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Obasesam Okoi

*has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)*

Date of Issue: **14 August, 2017**

APPENDIX VII: PROTOCOL APPROVAL



Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Obasesam Okoi** (Advisor: Hamdesa Tuso)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kevin Russell, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol J2017:101 (HS21234)**
"Peacebuilding Through the Eyes of Stakeholders: Exploring the Impact
and Challenges of Nigeria's Amnesty Program"

Effective: November 24, 2017

Expiry: November 24, 2018

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to JFREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:

- Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.

Research Ethics and Compliance is a part of the Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)
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