Research Paper

Economic Emancipation, Peace Building and Conflict Transformation through Art-Based Approaches in Koko and Opuama Communities in Niger Delta

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Abstract
The Koko and Opuama communities all lay within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The two communities have been at each other's throat under the guise of conflicts. This study is therefore undertaken to x-ray the causes of incessant conflict between the two communities with a view to bringing about peace and conflict transformational resolution, economic emancipations and progress initiative in the entire region. The design of the research was a two dimensional perspective of art-based approach as well as survey. Oral interviews were conducted as well as a questionnaire that was designed to elicit responses. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The data collected was analyzed using mean statistics. The results showed that poverty, religion and cultural conflicts were among the reasons for lack of peace among the two communities. It was recommended among others to provide the two communities with SMEs as well as soft loans and integrating them with inter-communal activities.
Key words: emancipation, peace building, conflict transformation

I. INTRODUCTION

Niger Delta represents one of the most important regions in Nigeria due to its huge natural endowment in crude oil which is the economic backbone of the Nigerian economy. While the region may be buoyant economically, this buoyancy has failed to trickle down to the people at the grass root which have triggered agitations and conflicts in the region. Conflicts in the Niger Delta have been increasingly frequent and intensely violent, leading to incessant loss of lives and property. This is precarious, particularly for Nigeria whose source of foreign exchange earning is based and domiciled in the Niger Delta region. Moreover, conflict management strategies such as the Creation of Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC), Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, creation of local government's areas/councils have all failed to resolve conflicts in the Niger Delta.

The current conflict in the Niger Delta arose in the early 1990's over tensions between foreign oil corporations and the Niger Delta minority ethnic groups who feel they are being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw. Ethnic and political unrest has continued throughout the 1990's despite the return of democracy and the election of the Obasanjo government in 1999. Competition for oil wealth has fueled violence between many ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military and police forces. From 2004, violence hit also oil industry with piracy and kidnapping. In 2009, a presidential amnesty was introduced but to an extent the amnesty haven't succeeded, but rather the Niger Delta only experienced relative peace until the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers.

The ethnic unrest and conflicts of the late 1990s (such as those between the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri) coupled with the proliferation of small arms and other weapons which led to the increased militarization of the Niger delta. The conflict between the Koko and Opuama communities has long existed before independence due to neglects in control of the administration by the Itsekiri people. It is against this backup therefore that this project seeks to explore art-based approach as an alternative conflict management strategy to resolve the conflict

between the communities in Niger Delta. Art-based approach play a number of roles in the promotion of peace in conflict ridden areas.

First, Art act as a catalyst for peace building. This is on its own a powerful bridge builder for peace and communal co-existence among people.

Secondly, as a tool to relativism of armed conflict. Thirdly, it act as a means of building peace in the hearts and minds of local people and last, as a device to empower those in conflict ridden areas.

Art-based activities if promoted can give local people ownership of their endeavors. The Art-based approaches to the transformation of conflict has gained increased attention and there are ever increasing number of individuals and civil society organizations engaging art based approaches for positive transformation of conflicts. These include participatory theatre as well as comic books, radio and television programmes. Artists in every medium-visual arts, theater, music, dance, literary arts, film etc. are supporting communities in campaigns for non-violent resistance to abuses of power and creating opportunities for building bridges across differences and addressing legacies of past violence as well as imagining a new future.

There are fledging evidences of the application of the art-based approaches in peace building which include, Bosnia-Herzegovina as presented by Zelizer [2003 and 2004]. In Jar es Salaam, Tanzania where music is used as a mechanism for discussing social and political issues, the youths use hip-hop song to discuss joblessness, corruption, class differences, AIDs and other social issues[1].In the war torn Batticola District of Sri Lanka, children and adults engage in music, painting, theatre, Yoga and sculpture in the Butterfly peace Garden as a way of recovering from and transcending trauma[2].

Art-based approach will be successful if applied in the Niger Delta conflict because it will offer peace builders unique tools for transforming intractable inter-communal conflicts. In his book Art and upheaval: Artists on the world's frontlines, Cleveland (2008) observes that "in the face of destruction, we are compelled to create". The statement represents a powerful acknowledgement of the role of creativity, imagination and the arts in the process of rising from the shadows of silence oppression and conflict. Inherent in the art making process is the ability to actively engage diverse individuals, facilitate the discovery of new forms of expression and present a platform from which people are able to begin imagining a different future. These innate characteristics allow the arts to influence and inform peace building.

Statement of the Problem

The incessant cases of communal clashes, lack of peace and restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has become a source of worry to not only the inhabitants and various government concerns but also public institutions that prompted the researcher to investigate the various causes and ways and means of resolving such conflicts between Koko and Opuama communities as a case in point.

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the various causes of conflicts among Niger Delta communities as well as ways and means of resolving such conflicts between Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger Delta region.

Research Questions

Two research questions were formulated to guide the study:
I.   What are the causes of conflicts among the Koko and Opuama people in Niger Delta region?
II.   What can be done to bring about peace and conflict resolution and transformation between the Koko and Opuama people in the Niger Delta area?

Scope of the Study

The Niger Delta is the delta of the Niger River sitting directly on the Bright of Biafra side of the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Nigeria[1]It is a very densely populated region sometimes called the oil rivers because it was once major producer of palm oil. The area was the British oil Rives protectorate from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became rich region, and has been the center of international controversy over pollution, corruption and human rights violations.[4]The Niger Delta, now defined officially by the Nigerian government, extends over $70,000km^2$(27,000 sqm) and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria land mass.
Historically and cartographically, it consists of present-day Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers State. In 2000, however, Obasanjo's regime included: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River State, Edo, Imo and Ondo States. Some 31 million people[3] of more than 40 ethnic groups including the Bini, Efik, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, IsokoUrhobo, Ukwuani, Kalabri, Okrika and Ogoni are among the inhabitants of the political Niger Delta, speaking about 250 different dialects

The present study explores art-based approaches and their potentials for peace building in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, using Delta State as a case study Delta is an oil and agricultural producing state of Nigeria, situated in the region known as the south-south geo-political zone with a population of 4,098, 291

(Males 2, 674, 306; females: 2,024,085).[6]the selected communities for this project are Koko and Opuama communities both in Warri North Local Government area of Delta State. I choose the communities because prior to 2003, the epicenter of regional violence was Warri, (Itsekiri) Koko and Opuama community where oil is found in large volume. The language spoken are itsekiri Pidgin and English language. The purpose of the research project is to produce qualitative data that will shed light to all issues pertaining to peace building and conflict transformation through art-based approaches in selected ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. Economic activities in Koko and Opuma are Fishing, Farming, Trading, Brewing of Local Gin (Ogogoro), Weaving of Baskets and Mats, Palm Oil, Transportation (Water and Land) and Timber Business.

They are bordered by communities such as Ureju, Ebrohimi, Ajagbodudu, Ugbokoda, they exert much influence on these communicates. They are predominantly Christians but deeply rooted in their cultures. The town drew global attention after it was discovered that several West African states used its ports to dump toxic waste by waste brokers.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Peace building is an intervention that is designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict by creating sustainable peace, ever since the work of the peace research by Johan Gaifuny, it has become common parlance to distinguish between the so-called negative and positive peace. The logic have it that peace is not just the absence of armed conflict and violence, but it is indeed about the pursuit of social justice through equal opportunity, a fair distribution of power and material, resources and an equal protection by and in the face of rule of raw. Peace then means long term peace. It means creating the conditions under which individuals in the society can benefit from coherent legal frameworks, public order, political, stability and economic opportunities. And peace building refers to all efforts to foster a sustainable peace through the establishment of institutions that promote and enable the non-violent resolution of tensions and disputes

According to Gaifuny, peace building is therefore differentiated from peace keeping (maintaining a balance of power and keeping the warring parties apart) as well as peacemaking/solving the conflict by removing the sources of tension. A distinction that was also echoed in the 1997 report of the United Nations secretary General Boutros-Ghali entitled "an Agenda for peace.

Building peace remains an ambiguous affair and is not in all cases that scholars' analyses agree on what the concept of peace building entail. On the one hand, is the very practical perspective taken by the likes of Paul Lederach for whom peace building involves concrete conciliation efforts in situations of conflicts.[7] On the other hand peace building conceived as a specific operational mandate and Michael Bamet identify a plethora of working definitions employed by various multilateral agencies and government donors in their attempts to institutionalize peace building is somehow at the interface between peacekeeping and peacemaking between a robust third-party response to non violent conflict and the establishment of conditions to be able to tackle the causes of the dispute. This bridge-building function also throws up a whole lot of questions related to which actors and institutions should be involved in the undertaking what kind of mandate and resources ought to be involved and what the time frame for such an operation might be.

Yet repeated attempts to get all multilateral government and non-governmental actors to agree on a precise definition of peace building have not bore fruit and in some respects conceptual ambiguity might be the lesser of two evils, as it allows international decision makers the room to manoeuvre them through potential tricky negotiations. For most purposes a functional differentiation of the specific sectors that make up the building blocks of something called "post-conflict peace building" might well be sufficient along the lines of security social-economic welfare, and justice and the rule of law. What this might entail has been elaborated by Vincent Chetails peace building lexicon. But the question remains as to the compatibility of such an ambitious agenda with some of the United Nations' guiding principles of sovereignty and neutrality. Oliver Ramsbothan points out that there is an inherent change in applying standard operating procedure to a wide range of disparate conflict settings.

The field of peace building is thus potentially vast and academic has not failed to join the conversation with a rapidly growing body of literature whose works are often written by research analyst. The ambiguity of peace building also raises debates about the intervening actors who are (or should be) involved. Conflict mediators are part of these discussions which again demonstrates the practical and analytical zone between peace building and peacemaking. The development communication and the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) has also been busy reflecting on what peace building might mean to them and how the term is part of contemporary concerns to rethink both conceptually and programmatically, the complex images between security and development. The UN guide-lines and principles for civil military coordination that were developed at the humanitarian military interface apply for peace building operations involving a variety of civilian actors. As Jennifer M. Hazen has convincingly argued based on evidence from Sierra Leone.   It is highly questionable whether her peace keepers are equipped to handle peace building task. So what fundamentally is the role of the armed forces in peace -building.

Dimensions of Peace Building

According to the United Nations document an agenda for peace[1,] peace building consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation. Peace building induces a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear, freedom from want, humiliation before, during and after violent conflict.

There are basically three dimensions of peace building. They are:

Structural Dimension

The structural dimension of peace building focuses on the social conclusions that foster conflict, many note that stable peace must be built on social, economic and political foundations that serve the needs of the populace[2] in many cases, crises arise out of systemic roots. These roots causes are typically complex but include skewed and distribution, environmental degradation and unequal political representation.[3] if these social problems are not addressed, there can be no lasting peace.Thus, in order to establish durable peace, parties must analyze the structural causes of the conflict and initiate social structural change. The promotion of substantive and procedural justice through structural means typically involves institution building and the strengthening of civil society.

Relational Dimension

The second integral part of building peace is to limit the effects of war related hostility through the repair and transformation of damaged relationships. The relational dimension of peace building centers on reconciliation, forgiveness, trust building, and future imagining. It seeks to minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize mutual understanding[4]. Many believe that reconciliation is one of the most effective and durable ways to transform relationships and present destructive conflicts[5]. There is a sincere effort to redress past grievances and compensate for the damage done. The process of then relies on interactive negotiation and allows the parties to enter into a new mutually enriching relationship[6]. Having community-based restorative justice processes in place can help to build a sustainable peace.

Personal Dimension

The personal dimension of peace building centers on desired changes at the individual level. If individuals are not able to undergo a process of healing, there will be broader social, political and economic repercussions. Reconstruction and peace building efforts must prioritize treating mental health problems and integrate these efforts into peace plans and rehabilitation efforts.

In traumatic situations, a person is rendered powerless and faces the threat of death and injury. Traumatic events might include friends and a threat to one's family or friends and a threat to one's own physical well being[8]. Building peace requires attention to these psychological and emotion layers of the conflict. If ignored, certain victims of past violence are at risk of becoming perpetrators of future violence[9].

Peace Building Efforts in the Niger Delta

The peace building efforts of the federal, state governments, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations, development agencies and oil companies in the Niger Delta cannot be overestimated. In the Niger Delta, there have been multi-track approaches to building peace and restoring the social fabric. Sometimes intervention has taken the form of partnerships between NGOs and community-based organizations in the area of planning and delivery in order to achieve the desired impact and sustainability.

Nigerian Government Efforts in Peace Building in the Niger Delta

The first major effort by the federal government to address the challenges of ethnic minority group including the Niger Delta people dates back to 1957 when the Henry Willinks commission was set up to find solution to the agitations of ethnic minority groups for greater recognition in national affairs. The commission identified high level of poverty, deprivation and environmental degradation as the drivers of agitations in the region. Consequently, a case was made for special attention to the Niger Delta area because the region was poor, backward and neglected." the Willinks commission report necessitated the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1961. The NDDB was assigned the task of addressing the development needs of the Niger Delta Area. Despite the extensive surveys and other activities of the NDDB, the government failed to implement its recommendations on how to solve the problems of the Niger Delta"

The next peace building effort was the establishment of the Niger Delta Basic and Rural Development Authority following the failure of the NDDB, the Niger Delta Basic and Rural Development Authority was established to prose with a meager allocation of just 1.5% of the federation account for the development of the region[12]. This lack of interest and unwillingness to address the Niger Delta question only helped to increase youth restiveness and growing agitation in the region.

Again in 1992, the Babangida regime set up the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC). The OMPADEC did not achieve its objectives because of poor funding by the federal government and malfeasance by the managers. In spite of the huge economic gains made from oil exploration in the area[13]. Consequently, the call for resource control began to gain greater momentum among the Niger Delta people and their leaders.

In 2000, the government of Olusegun Obasanjo established the Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC). The new commission was tasked with the responsibility of bringing development to the Niger Delta. But the operations of the NDDC are hampered by so many problems including inadequate funding, massive corruption by the commission's staff and board members employment of politicians rather than skilled individuals who are well knowledgeable about problems and challenges of the Niger Delta, poor community participation in the development efforts in the region and conflict of interest among the business class.

In the year 2008, the Yar'adua regime created the Ministry of the Niger Delta. The new ministry of the Niger Delta. The new ministry has continued to suffer similar fate like it is predecessors.

Case Studies of Art-based Approaches in Conflict Transformation

There are fledgling evidences of the application of art-based approaches in peace building globally. One of the evidences was presented by Zelizer in 2003 and 2004, he conducted research in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the practical use of artistic processes in peace building. The underlying idea was that these conflicts can be resolved by broadening or transcending the identity of the participant beyond their separate and conflict imbued group identities. Overall, his work provides an early look at this field with empirical data from the field, Albeit mainly focused on musicians [14].

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where music is a frequent mechanism for discussing social and political issues, youths use hip-hop to teach others about joblessness, corruption, class difference, AIDS and other problems[15]. In the war-torn Batticoloa District of Sri-Lanka, children and adults engage in music, painting, theatre, yoga and sculpture in the butterfly peace garden as a way of recovering from a transcending trauma[16].

In Israel, the Peres center for peace brings together Palestinians and Israelis to create joint theatre projects to foster dialogue[17]. In Venezuela, Jose Antonio Abreu creates orchestras and choirs for Low-income youth, as a means of contributing to social integration and improving self-esteem. In the Philippines, theatre artists tour the Island of Mindanao using performance to induce the concept of a peaceful co-existence between Muslim, Christian and indigenous communities [18].It was reported that the use of reggae, rap and R& B fusion style in Northern Uganda are used in the management of conflict. The music was fused with the local music called Acholi. The combination result is often a high-energy dance hall genre with lyrics discussing social issues such as stigma children's rights, injustice and defilement. During the later years of the war in Uganda this music had the unique opportunity to reach vast audience in Northern Ugandan society though the radio broadcast. Through strategic programming, people in the various camps enjoyed the same music as the rebels in the bush and the government soldiers. This contemporary Acholi music had the effect of creating a common creative referent among groups that were otherwise engaged in conflict with one another. Another hybrid form of expression that gained momentum in recent months is break dancing. A group of men based in central Uganda formed a group called Break dance project.They travel around the country to teach vulnerable youth how to break dance for social change. Like the contemporary Acholi music, break dancing allows people to participate in a western style of expression that is so popular among the youth in Uganda,
while attaching positive messages.

The review so far demonstrated the various applications of art-based approaches in conflict Transformation. While it is obvious that art-based approaches have not received serious consideration in the management of conflict especially in Nigeria, however this research attempts to build the foundation by exploring various art-based approaches at the community level and to examine their potentials for conflict management and transformation in the Niger Delta region.

The Impact of Arts and Cultural Activities in the Peace Building Efforts in Koko and Opuama

There are several art-based and cultural activities at Koko Opuama Communities. These include festivals, annual dances and musical concerts/ drama.

Ikonpini Annual Dance

This festival is a cultural dance festival of the Koko community which is celebrated December 27th of every year. During this period of the festival, people are forbidden from bearing grudges against one another. So people must set their differences aside because every community member is involved in this ikonpinifestival. Also, it was identified that festival brings those abroad home which creates opportunity to settle any lingering family disagreement and it is an avenue also for settling disputes between communities.

It was first celebrated in 1919 and it has greatly improved since then as innovative ideas are introduced each year. The Ikonpini cultural festival is one veritable way to showcase the colorful dance steps from the Delta which include masquerades and dancers from both communities. During this festival, communities with problems are being settled and this is usually done by the traditional rulers of both communities. Through this medium, marriages equally take place to foster closer ties. This helped to revive the peaceful co-existence between Koko and Opuama people.

The Epi Masquerade

The Epi masquerade comes out every Sunday to play the hide and seek game with people. This is usually meant for young people, almost every young person in the community is involved in this Epi Masquerade which takes place on Sundays. The race makes two enemies within or between the communities to put their quarrel aside to enable them get involved in the fun of the day. This event makes humans to team up against spirits in the game of swiftness because masquerades are regarded as spirits.

Conversely, owing to the current shades of evil manifestations in our present day society, it is imperative for the masquerade to replicate the violent spirit of the age to chase the yelling youths. By chasing the fans in playground, the masquerade is rejuvenating the masses to engage in active participation in the political process. Consequently, the Epi masquerade also task the egocentric leaders to solve the myriads of problems confronting the communities, which include the establishment of industries to absolve the idle youth, construction of good roads and infrastructure which are the immense benefit to ordinary Nigerian and oil producing communities like Koko and Opuama.

Christian Musical Concert/Drama

These are periodic church events that bring people together. In such event, moral values are taught to members of Koko and Opuama community and that has helped to change the mind sets of the citizens through musical concert/drama as it brings people from different communities together. During the concert/drama people put away their differences in order to participate in the event.

Folklores/Ballad

There are several folk dances where messages of peace and good intercommunity relations messages are passed across. This message are meant to create peace and resolve the conflicts between the warring communities. Examples are the Ejukeju dance, Omoko, Agunmekpe and Agogo Dance Even individuals have also used music as a tool for conflict resolution such as TsefereOlu by Olugbo

Ori-Omi Worship

The Ori-Omi worship is another major art-based activity in Koko community which is a pagan festival. It attracts several members of the community in the Diaspora and it has been a major tool for conflict management especially intra-communal conflicts. This Ori-Omi worship is the Koko community pagan festival and conflicts can be settled during this festival. Although these festivals have naturally settled several disputes, but many have not come to identify with the fact they can be known as a tool for peace building and conflict transformation. This worship brings the indigenes together in happiness and fun. It brings different live situations to send a message to an earring member of the community or the need to do the right thing. The worship stimulates and increases spiritual powers such as intuition, prophecy, mental capacity and inspired television making. It is an invaluable tool in preventing and treating all forms of addiction, compulsive behavior, deep seated traumas and self-concept issues. The worship is the first level of teaching of ethical behavior and community values. The worshippers evolve spiritually by mandating correct and powerful rituals and enhancing exercise. They invoke the Ori through recitation of Wure and participating in Bori. It is a very simple but powerful ritual that can be done to connect with the Ori while ritually cleansing and feeding it. It is performed by a priest or priestess. The Ori Materials include water, honey, gin, bitter Kola, Kola nut, Sugar cane, red palm oil, chalk, Shea butter as well as coconut milk, meat and assorted light colored fruits. The water is to cool, calm and refresh especially to ease a hot situation, honey to sweeten and bring Joy, Kola to stimulate, give life, avert problems and bring wisdom, bitter Kola for protection and longevity, sugar cane to bring sweetness, palm oil to smooth sustain and also used for abundance, Shea butter to protect, assorted fruits to make ones destiny fruitful and nourished.

Applicability of Arts-Based Approaches as a Peace Building Mechanism

While the availability of art-based activities in a community is vitally necessary, the utilization of same is more critical and this depends on the awareness of the community who are the custodians of the art-based activities. The application of art-based activities in the study area has generally received a low awareness level in peace building among respondents in the area of study. It has been said that these activities come and go every year and they normally look forward to them because it normally brings all the citizens in Diaspora home.

The festivals do not serve any purpose apart from the fact that it help to maintain the tradition of the community. They have been used in resolving quarrels among individuals and between communities.

There are ways of settling disputes and that is why art-based activities are ignored because some of them are sacred. There are some of the masquerades that cannot be seen by a stranger and they cannot be used to settle disputes. Although there are many art-base practices in Opuama and Koko community but the awareness level which is a major tool for peace building and conflict transformation is rather very low. It is the angle of entertainment that has been exploited over the years but not the area of peace building and conflict transformation. Art-based practice in these communities are purely for entertainment and has never really been used as an instrument for conflict management. Art-based practice can be effective if it is developed in accordance with peace-building strategiesand conflict transformation. These can be developed if individuals, groups and institutions establish modules for the application of art-based practice in peace building and conflict management in different ethnic communities in the Niger Delta.

III. METHODOLOGY

The approach adopted for this study is centered on historical descriptive approach and survey. This entails taking a retrospective look at the past to see how art-base approaches have helped to resolve conflict. It also draw ideas from available written literatures, magazines, newspapers maps and website materials. So, secondary sources of data collection will be adopted. The study was carried out in Koko and Opuama in the Niger Delta area in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The study utilized primary data which was collected through focus group Discussions (FGD). The sources and methods of data collection chosen for this project helped to get the best result for the research. The population for the study was 20 students in the Department of International Relations of the University used to elicit responses in the questionnaire that was distributed to answer the research questions for the study. The data collected through the instrument for the research questions was analyzed using mean statistics. Four point Likert scale of strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) was used to collect and analyze the data.

IV. RESULTS

The results of the data collected and analyzed are presented as follows

Research Question I

What are the causes of conflicts among the Koko and Opuama people in Niger Delta region?

Table I shows the causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta region

S/N	Item	SA	A	DA	SD	N	Mean score	Decision
I	Poverty	I0	6	2	2	20	4.0	Accepted
2	Cultural restrictions	6	8	4	2	20	4.0	Accepted
3	Religious differences	8	5	4	3	20	4.0	Accepted

All the items were above the mean of 2.5 and therefore were accepted.

V. DISCUSSIONS

Constraints in the Application of Art-based Approaches in Peace Building in the Niger Delta

Certain factors impede the application of art-based in conflict resolution and peace building in the Niger Delta. Some of these impediments are:

Cultural Restrictions

Most of the Art-based activities are restricted by culture and tradition in many respects. This also extends to conflict resolution and peace building processes. This ensures that the art-based activities in the study area are not utilized in conflict transformation. "Art-based activities are for cultural occasions and there are not allowed to be used for other purposes. Using them for other purposes will be going against the tradition of the land and sometimes the consequences are two much for anybody to face'[1]. In most cases also, women are not allowed to participate in some cultural activities despite the international calls for expansions of the peace process frontier to enable women actively participate in peace processes. Inclusion of the women in cultural activities especially in the Niger Delta region is on a very low scale and this can be a problem to conflict resolution.

Financial Incapacitation

Poverty has been identified as one of the root causes of conflict in the Niger Delta, while on the other hand, conflict resolution and peace building process demand time and finance. The community members are

therefore, constrained from participating even when they are not expressly excluded by cultural factors but due to their financial incapacitation. The following excerpt explains it better

"One of the major challenges militating against the development and survival of these cultural practices is that of money to put the festivals together such festivals are usually expensive and are bedecked with arrays of wrappers and costumes for the masquerades and the dances with drinks and food to accompany the celebration and all these require huge amount of money. The masquerade needs a lot of wood work to be done of which money plays a very big role, although the festivals use to get sponsorship form the Glo network service. To the youth the long and short of all is economic empowerment to them. A hungry man is an angry man. If they enable environment to create wealth is there that this festivals and cultural activities will thrive and no busy person will have the time to be involved in conflict that is prevalent and peculiar to the Niger Delta[2].

Religion

Another major constraint identified by the respondents is the practice of Christianity which has taken grip of both the young and the old in the community. Christianity is spreading rapidly in the Niger Delta and this tends to keep many people away from participating in the art-based activities. The following excerpts help to buttress this;

"The teaching of the Christian faith which regard such festivals not as the peoples culture but paganism activities and celebrations most people in the community have embraced Christianity and because of their belief they no longer want to have anything to do with such festivals. New attractions brought about by the fast development in technology and social lifestyle has created another fancy and pastime for people of Koko community and this has reduced the interest of the younger generation on such festivals and cultural dances[3].

Non-inclusion of Community members in Negotiation Team

Another serious constraints is the fact that when conflict arise in the communities and at the levels of conflict resolution and peace building, the negotiation team is usually drawn from the political class who knows little or nothing about the existence of relevant art-based approaches in the communities. This not only hinder community participation in the peace building effort but ultimately hinders the application of art-based approaches in the management of conflict in the affected communities. The negotiating teams should come from the poor masses who feel the pain of the conflict.

Research Question 2

What can be done to bring about peace and conflict resolution and transformation between the Koko and Opuama people in the Niger Delta area?

TABLE 2: Things meant to bring Peace and Conflict Transformation

S/NO	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean Score	Decision
4	Promoting utilization of art-based activities	7	6	4	3	20	4,0	Accepted
5	Development of SMEs	9	5	4	2	20	4,0	Accepted
6	Provision of soft loan	8	8	2	2	20	4,2	Accepted
7	Inter community activities	9	6	3	2	20	4,0	Accepted

All the items were above the mean of 2.5 and therefore were accepted.

Promoting the Utilization of Art-based Activities in Peace Building in the Niger Delta

Art-based activities as shown in the previous chapter abound in the Niger Delta and in view of its potentials in conflict management. It is important to promote the use of art-based activities in the Niger- Delta this becomes even more important when examined against the background that previous approaches in the management of conflicts in the region have always ended in fiasco. The starting point towards utilization of these approaches is a documentation of these cultural and art-based practices in the conflict prone communities in the Niger Delta. This will ensure that these practices do not go into extinction from the communities. This should be followed by practical demonstration of the application of art-based approaches in the management of conflict. Case studies of successful utilization of art-based approaches in the management of conflict should be identified and explained to the various communities in the conflict prone areas in the Niger Delta region. This should be followed by vigorous enlightenment campaign both at the community level and some agencies interested in peace building in the Niger Delta.

This is important to raise their awareness on the potentials of art-based activities in peace building and the need to incorporate same into the peace building approaches in the Niger- Delta region. At this point, the various agencies charged with the responsibility of peace building in the region should work collaboratively with local communities with a view to identifying relevant art-based approaches with potentials for resolving different kinds of conflict as the need arises.

VI. Summary

Several organizations have employed Art-based approaches in the management of conflict. The organizations include Search for Common Ground and Institute for Media Society (IMSO), West Africa Network of Peace-Nigeria (WANEP) and Women in Peace Building (WIPNET).

Art-based approaches to the Transformation of conflict in recent years have gained increased attention and prominence from a range of disciplines and stakeholders. There are ever increasing number of individuals and civil society organizations engaging the arts for the positive transformation of inter-communal conflict. In the past decades, such art-based approaches have begun to gain critical attention from scholars and policy-makers. In the study area which is the Niger Delta, despite the multitude of strategies adopted by stakeholders to sustain peace in the region, art base approach have received little or no attention. . This approach have been successful in some countries like Bosnia-Herzegovina and Venezuela. However is the argument of this study that if this approach is applied in the Niger Delta crisis, it will make a huge success, for instance in Ghana, cultural drama was used to mediate the inter-ethnic conflict.

VII. Conclusions

Peace is one of the fundamental prerequisite for development. The Niger Delta region has been embroiled with conflicts in recent time and all efforts to tame the trends in the conflicts have not been successful.

Therefore, the need for an alternative strategy is now inevitable. With the emerging understanding of the potentials of art-based approaches in conflict management and the plethora of these activities in the Niger-Delta communities, it is therefore timely to use these approaches in peace building effort in the Niger-Delta region.

VIII. Recommendations

To achieve this fit, the following recommendations are made.

1   The Niger-Delta ministry, the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NNDC), the oil companies operating in the region and other organization interested in the maintenance of peace in the region should embarked on the documentation of cultural and art-based practices in the conflict prone communicates in the Niger-Delta region.

2   Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NN), the oil companies operating in the region and other organization interested in the maintenance of peace in the region should embark on enlightenment campaign at the community level to increase awareness on the importance of art-based approaches in peace-building.

3   There is urgent need for collaboration among all the agencies involved in peace building and local communities where art-based activities are practiced.

4   It is important for government agencies such as the ones mentioned above to integrate local communities in peace building effort in conflict prone communities in the Niger Delta region.

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