

EXPLORING THE NEED FOR PEACEBUILDING PROJECTS IN IKWERRE COMMUNITIES, RIVERS STATE: THE TRACK FIVE OPTION AND PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

CHIBUZOR CHILE NWOBUEZE

Department of History and Diplomatic Studies

Faculty of Humanities

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt

chibuzornwobueze@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Recent developments in Ikwerre communities, Rivers State have shown the need for peacebuilding projects in order to provide the much-needed platforms for peace education and youthful engagement in peaceful living rather than social vices. This is achievable through the multi-track diplomacy, track five. What peacebuilding would do for the Ikwerre people through peace education, research and training is crucial considering how most communities lost the peace that characterised daily living in the past before crime, frustration and aggression became the order of the day. This paper identifies the conflict indicators and the approaches to be adopted to carry out peacebuilding. The paper identifies the conflict drivers and communities in Ikwerre land where peacebuilding is urgently needed. It examines the approaches needed to sustain the peace-focused projects in order to make peace culture permanent. The hope offered in this regard is based on the long-term outcome of the peace-focused uncontrolled education aimed at transforming the mindsets of those who have imbibed knowledge through learning and experiencing, and developing skills and attitudes on ways of living peacefully to avoid clash or conflict with other people in the society. The relevance of track five in promoting peacefulness and people-centred development cannot be downplayed in view of the societal needs in contemporary Nigeria. The modern society needs education in different forms to progress. Peace education is very significant in peacebuilding. When people are empowered through education, they become positioned to contribute their efforts into community development for the betterment of the entire society. This paper adopts the integrative theory of peace (ITP) as a framework of analysis considering the nexus between track five, peace education and peacebuilding in promoting a more peaceful world. Involving the youth in training and peace education would give them a sense of belonging and opportunity to develop their lifestyles. Track five diplomacy will promote the effectiveness and necessity of youth-focused and human development initiatives as the bridge to peace in Ikwerre land.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, education, transforming, community development

INTRODUCTION

1. "A collapsing sky will spare nobody"
2. "Peace of the mind is attained not by ignoring problems, but by solving them" (African proverbs).

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The existence of violent conflicts in different parts of the world as a result of poor attention to peace education explains why peacebuilding is critical to sustainable peace. Training is a component of peacebuilding, which is supposed to discourage disarmed youths from violence in post-conflict environments (Asiedu & Berghs, 2012). In every society, different groups of people need peacebuilding programmes for people to enjoy peace. The Ikwerre society is in need of peacebuilding considering the fact that disintegrating social contract, weak institutional base, omission and neglect of values and character education, greed and grievance are relevant to violent conflict explosions to the largest ethnic group in Rivers State.

In the past few years, Rivers State recorded unusual incidents of violence and armed banditry stemming from availability of arms in the wrong hands, which culminated in cultism, kidnapping, formation of militant groups and other criminal activities, including those of the outlaw security providers that emerged from struggle for resource control, environmental degradation, insecurity, mass poverty, youth unemployment and poor infrastructure to perpetrate crime within Rivers (Nwobueze and Okolie-Osemene, 2017).

Most of these youth-oriented problems were linked to the larger Niger Delta question, which complicated the human development and environmental crisis that escalated the level of insecurity in the region. According to Nwajiaku-Dahou (2010), the associated political grievances were heightened by underdevelopment and the alienation of local people from rights to land and resources in the Niger Delta. Some of these resource-based conflicts occurred within and around the Ikwerre, the largest ethnic group in Rivers State.

Recent developments in Ikwerre communities, Rivers State have shown the need for peacebuilding projects in order to provide the much-needed platforms for peace education and youthful engagement in peaceful living rather than social vices. This is achievable through the multi-track diplomacy, track five. What peacebuilding would do for the Ikwerre people through peace education, research and training is crucial in view of how most communities lost the peace that characterised daily living in the past before crime, frustration and aggression became the order of the day.

Peacebuilding is the solution to the instability occasioned by clashes over the control of scarce resources in Africa where conflict is compounded by several factors. These include legacies of colonialism, dictatorship of the post-independence state apparatus, and enforcement of national unity from the top. All these motivate ethnic, class, religious, citizenship, environmental, inter-communal, intra-communal, political, cultural, social, and economic conflicts (Kah, 2011). Whatever category a conflict belongs to, peace is the only antidote; peace education is the main solution to the problems caused by conflict and addressing such problems from the root requires effective peacebuilding and reconstruction.

The life-transforming value of education cannot be downplayed in view of how the beneficiaries are empowered with the needed skills to make life better for all in society. Peace education is relevant to prevention of conflict, promotion of human and national security as well as actualisation of sustainable development in society. Peace education, whether formal or informal, has stability value. This makes it crucial for policy makers to prioritise it as a reliable antidote to violence and intergroup conflicts that now affect many communities in Africa. It then means that every citizen must be made to appreciate the

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benefits of living peacefully with others rather than seeing confrontations that usually lead to conflicts as solution to the problems inherent in human relations.

In the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, at least 90% of violence is humanly caused, contingent and preventable (Allen, 2007). But the problem is that most groups and states find it difficult to prevent the occurrence of violence as a result of weak peace-oriented strategy, especially when conflicts are at latent states, before escalating. If humans are the chief causal agents whose high probability of involvement is not disputable, it then means that the solution must originate from them. The Global Peace Index's vision for humanity report of March 2019 revealed that fragile and conflict-affected countries achieved significantly less progress than other developing countries in the Millennium Development Goals, as only 10% of them made progress on their Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, while all other countries, on average, achieved over 40%. In some states, millions of youths are affected by armed conflict. This is why some countries spend more on military expenditure, while others spend less. This disparity shows that countries with small economic cost of violence will not spend much on the budgetary allocations on stability operations. Rather than investing in peacebuilding, some of the states now spend on military hardware. The lack of peace and stability in affected areas has been aggravated by the use of security forces to intimidate civilians and also target non-state actors to sustain government control.

The Institute for Economics and Peace notes that building peace is a complex process, and changes in the levels of peacefulness are determined by institutional capacity for conflict prevention, spending of time and resources in peacebuilding, and that countries with high positive peace have recorded improved business environments and increased per capita gross domestic product within the past decade. This means that countries which deteriorated in peacefulness have had negative peace manifesting in governance. The Global Peace Index, which maps the incidents of peace and conflict across the world, to highlight the level of peacefulness and instability of different regions and states across the world, showed how most developing countries in Africa and Asia are categorised as ranking lowest due to their high incidents of violence and armed conflicts.

Multitrack diplomacy has become an integral part of peacebuilding across the world. This initiative considers the interconnection of various interventions by stakeholders in institutions and communities to actualise the goal of peace and security. The actualisation of peace is significant for sustainable development when given adequate priority. So, when different stakeholders come together, their cooperation facilitates the expected outcome for the prevention of intergroup conflict which threatens peace in society.

As established in the global development process, the state is the first track in multitrack diplomacy. In this connection, a people-centred and participatory development approach will promote conflict transformation through youth-focused human development. In other words, good performance is a critical factor in peacebuilding in Rivers state. Youth violence in Niger Delta at the beginning of the 4th Republic and the persistence of the security and development challenges are products of governance issues. Although government alone cannot attend to all the development needs of the state, it is expected that it should set the agenda for development, create an enabling environment for it to flourish and be an active participant in the development project of the state (Ogbogbo, 2018). Therefore, security governance is achievable where all other stakeholders support the state in creating sustainable peace, security and development.

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In this regard, research, training and education are crucial. What scholars refer to as deliberative peacebuilding (Hancock, 2019) requires track five, training, research and education. Research, training and education are activities that every society desirous of sustainable human development must prioritise to achieve the results.

The promotion of social and emotional development as part of peacebuilding endeavour through education offers hope for future generations (Hymel and Darwich, 2018). This hope is based on the long-term outcome of the peace-focused education aimed at transforming the mindsets of those taught ways of living peacefully to avoid clash or uncontrolled conflict with other people in society.

Track five is critical to promoting peacefulness and people-centred development considering the societal needs in contemporary Nigeria. The modern society needs education in different forms to progress. Peace education is very significant to peacebuilding. When people are empowered through education, they become positioned to contribute their efforts into community development for the betterment of the entire society. The central role of Track V diplomacy is to generate knowledge relevant to human development and human security. The noble aim of peacebuilding is the elimination of poverty, inequality, transforming conflicts constructively and creating an environment of sustainable peace, security and development.

This paper examines the need for peacebuilding projects in Ikwerre communities using observation and secondary sources. This paper identifies the conflict drivers/indicators and the approaches to be adopted to carry out peacebuilding. It examines the approaches needed to sustain the peace-focused projects in order to make the peace culture permanent. The hope offered in this regard is based on the long-term outcome of the peace-focused education aimed at transforming the mindsets of those taught ways of living peacefully to avoid clash or uncontrolled conflict with other people in society.

Theoretical framework

Integrative theory of peace (ITP) is the framework of analysis because of the nexus between track five and peacebuilding in promoting a more peaceful society where people learn to live together without hostility perception that promotes intergroup violence. The theory sees all human states of being, including peace, as the outcome of the main human cognitive (knowing), emotive (loving) and conative (choosing) capacities (Danesh, 1997). The interaction all facets of human existence means that any aspect of human need that is affected or disregarded will eventually affect the entire human system. Apart from the political and economic aspects of human society, the most affected are the psychological, ethical and spiritual needs of humans when the value for peace is downplayed. This occurs when people disregard laws and rights of others.

The integrative theory of peace (ITP) projects peace as encapsulating of the interface between all aspects of human life, whether from the psychological, spiritual, ethical, or socio-political paradigm at interpersonal, intergroup, international and global levels (Danesh, 2006). This view is in tandem with the assertion of Harris (2004) about peace education as consisting of different aspects, which are compatible and complimentary to one another, namely human rights education, development education, and conflict resolution education (cited in Agada, 2018). In a situation where peace is shaped by people's view of reality, human nature, purpose of life and human relationships, the society has no other option than to prioritise peace education. Peace-oriented curriculum, peace

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culture and culture of healing are needed for effective peace education (Danesh, 2006). The human rights education component in peace education is effective in preventing the threats to peace and security because when people are not denied their fundamental rights, they are more stable and would be more willing to support efforts aimed at guaranteeing peaceful environment. This would make it difficult for them to accept becoming “spoilers” in society.

This theory is relevant to the study. This is in view of how the interplay between the processes of peace and components of research and training can engender values that enlighten humans to mould pleasant characters to tackle the problem of youth violence and hostility perception in communities.

Conflict, Insecurity and Peacebuilding Needs in Ikwerre land

The youth are critical conflict actors wherever they operate. This is why those involved in security operations are facing the challenge of nipping their activities in the bud. Many of the armed youths in Ikwerre land have become outlaw security providers. The engage in assassination, extortion, violence against women and children, electoral violence, thuggery, kidnapping and attacks on suspected cultists who threaten their existence. Cultism is now the best driver of violent conflict in Ikwerre land.

The availability and easy access to small arms and light weapons and drug abuse exacerbate the activities of cult groups in the area. As at the time of writing this paper, Icelanders, Greenlanders, Deywells and Deygbams were dominant and battled for supremacy to gain patronage from transnational corporations in Rivers State. They harass and intimidate companies, development partners, construction companies as well as the political and business elites. The armed youth are also engaged in all forms of violent crimes, including illegal oil bunkering and disruption of economic life. Therefore, women and their families have experienced food and nutrition insecurity, with increased fear of women to work in fields, gather firewood and fetch water. Girls have not only been victims but they have also played active supporting roles in the crises as combatants or otherwise assisting cult boys. They may have joined voluntarily or by force. For example, women and girls have been abducted by the armed youth, particularly for sexual purposes and myriad of overlapping roles of women in conflicts.

“Capturable” resources, such as refined crude oil products, may be the source of violence between two or more cult groups. The forces of greed and grievance degenerate into violence where processes that weaken subsisting social contracts have been outplayed. In addition, reprisal attacks resulted in indiscriminate killing, rape and burning of houses, gaps between the expectation of the youth and performance of Tracks I and V diplomacy in the context of values education and character development in rural and urban areas. Poor inter-agency collaboration and coordination on peacebuilding issues as well as lack of patriotism on the part of security operatives attest to the level of insecurity and underdevelopment in Ikwerre land. Violence is deployed here as a means of resolving disagreements between two parties, but it has frequently proven to be quite ineffective and detrimental to sustainable development of society.

The main approach of peacebuilding should be focused on the three types of peacebuilding recommended by James Nottter and Loius Diamond, namely: political peacebuilding, structural peacebuilding, and social peacebuilding. Political peacebuilding involves putting in place political and legal systems that support sustainable peace and development (Albert, 2018). Such intervention can only be achieved directly by the state

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with the support of other relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental institutions. With structural peacebuilding, society will be able to address any form of exclusion and ensure that all groups are carried along in development and provision of welfare. Integrating social peacebuilding to peace education requires teaching people to actively engage in intergroup relations for the benefit of all ethnic groups rather than using ethno-religious differences to divide people. This is unity in diversity-oriented peacebuilding for peace and security. Government at all levels, companies, the civil society, religious institutions and security agencies have roles to play in this regard and this must be at latent stage of conflicts, which is less costly. Their roles must consider discouraging proliferation of arms and provision of social amenities. With Track Five, youths and other targets of peace building will comprehend the joint problem-solving aspect of peacebuilding where they get adequate knowledge of collaboration and consensus building.

Nexus of Educational Gaps, Youth and Conflict

An important question is whether political leaders are committed to youth development, education and empowerment or to designing youth-targeted programmes aimed at addressing youth restiveness under poor conditions of social and political exclusion. More generally, are they committed to the philosophy and principles of youth-focused human development? It has been difficult to build infrastructure to combat poverty, to overcome sharp regional disparities, and to build new institutions of accountability, law and order. The failure of the state to respond positively to youth bulge, unemployment, poverty misery and disaffection was discouraging to the youth. This resulted in the emergence of many disenfranchised youth without any economic prospects who are open to recruitment due to poor governance and to depredation carried out against civilians by the Nigerian security forces sent against insurgent citizenship. The consequences include social fractionalisation, political repression, ethnic dominance, and economic dysfunction (slow growth, high inflation, high income or asset inequality). The older generation have impoverished the youth, denied them opportunities and subjected them to all manner of obstacles and burden. The elite have produced a large army of angry, helpless and violent youth. Consequently, the Niger Delta, Nigeria, unlike the peaceful oil-oil producing deltas, such as Mahakan Delta, in Indonesia; Orinico Delta, in Venezuela; and the Mackenzie Delta in Alaska, has high population of uneducated, unemployed and idle youth who are highly volatile and prone to violence. Todaro (1982:14) claims that “development encompasses multidimensional changes involving progress or improvement in structures, institutions, and general aspects of life of a given people that entails the acceleration of economic growth, decline of poverty, and the reduction of inequality”. However, within the logic of the business class, youth-focused human development initiatives that are funded by corporate organisations within the oil industry is usually put in place to protect these companies from external threats or to generate publicity benefits through strategic collaboration with carefully selected stakeholders. Even though they claim that they spent millions of dollars on community development in Nigeria on an annual basis, critics insist that many of the projects were primarily meant to create a favourable image of benevolent organisations. These human development interventions tend to escalate tensions within communities (HRW, 1999). Again, most of the armed youth leaders became as powerful as to exclude the unarmed youth from having access to youth empowerment schemes of multinational oil companies (MNOCs).

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The state initiatives, including the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Amnesty Programme, have failed to address the fundamental problems of exclusion, deprivation and marginalisation, which have produced the crisis of development and youth restiveness in the region. Similarly, oil companies' intervention projects have not been able to meaningfully affect livelihood because they are being implemented without any systematic link to any development plans. For example, oil companies either ignored demands by host communities or they employed divide and rule tactics that set communities and community members and group against one another. At best, they made feeble attempts to respond to demand for intervention, by executing development projects in communities, in most cases without consulting the target communities in the area of youth bulge and unemployment. This has always caused rift within the region. Thus, it could be argued that poor planning, lack of commitment prior to inauguration of development programmes, and little or no support thereafter are responsible for why communities were not enthusiastic. The multi-national joint venture (JV) partners (Shell, Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, Total Fina Elf, Agip, and many others) were not trusted; they were not known to honour obligations and responsibilities. In essence, they supported the operators' intentions. Because of this, nothing concrete came out of the operators' ventures between 1990 and 2012.

Most of the state and non-state interventionist policies, actions and structures were not based on the understanding that the issues at stake in the Niger Delta are interwoven, multi-dimensional and complex. In its desperate move to tackle the problem of insecurity in the region, the Federal Government failed to design its counter-measures on a proper understanding of the causal dynamics of the crisis. The simplistic measure of trying to appease the youth, the most vociferous of the entire social groups, by co-opting and bribing their leaders with millions of naira has only ended up complicating the security situation in the area (Inokoba and Imbua, 2010:114). Education or lack of it is central to the conflict experience of the youth in Ikwerre land. Experts blamed persistent poverty on lack of proper entrepreneurial development in Rivers State. The mess of unemployed graduates is an indication of this. Furthermore, most of the youth lack vocational/life skills and, as such, are not gainfully employed. Expectedly, the potential gross domestic product (GDP) is very low, holding back per capita income which, in most cases, has resulted in falling standard of living and tax evasion.

Ikwerre is an area with a very low functional literacy level. Limited education opportunity, lack of adequate education, gender inequality in education systems at all levels and the falling standards of education have also hindered youth development in Rivers state. The focus of education is to give people common ideals, thoughts and feelings to improve "conspiration, social cohesion and social solidarity". Neglect of functional literacy is bound to lead to crisis of development.

Sustainable development in Rivers State and Nigeria, as a whole, should actually be based on a participatory and people-centred approach to development planning and implementation. Also, character education, which is crucial to sustainable peace and development in the state, has been neglected in many of the development plans of government and other stakeholders.

The level of youth unemployment in Rivers State should shape and influence development initiatives. This will propel inclusive citizenship and the consciousness of the youth of the state towards peace and development and further lay the foundation for

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constructive engagement as instrument of development policy. For sustainable peace and development in Ikwerre to be achieved, adoption of a bottom-up approach is necessary. This could be through the inclusion of elements of democracy, accountability, equity and active public participation of all stakeholders, including the grassroots people (Ako, 2011), militants, youth organisations, women groups and civil society. The exclusion of grassroots organisations and the alienation of local knowledge from the construction of peacebuilding processes in the state weaken the sustainability of the current peace process in the state.

Justifications for Peacebuilding Needs in Ikwerre land

The entire Ikwerre land has witnessed series of youth violence in rural and urban communities as a result of several factors. These include poor awareness of youth-focused human development initiatives, chronic human security deficiencies; omission and neglect of peace-focused education, values and character education; poor performance of government in peacebuilding; and youth unemployment. These conflict drivers are not directly caused by only youths, most of whom are not gainfully employed or with adequate vocational training needed to live without grievances.

Violence occurs in different communities where individuals at all levels have rival interests that generate conflicts as a result of the struggle over values or claims to resources. Such hostility perceptions are anti-peace. This is why peacebuilding is suggested for the entire Ikwerre ethnic nationality with the instrumentality of Track Five, which offers the opportunity for training, peace education and research to be designed and conducted by peace practitioners. This is in tandem with the opinion of Ajieyinka (2019) that research gives clarity, better understanding and leads to the discovery of new ideas and knowledge. This must be extensively collaborative across disciplines and between academic and industry, as many perspectives enables better understanding of any phenomenon and also lead to solution that is more comprehensive. Collaboration among government, academia and industry will be mutually beneficial, since market potential of research will accelerate the speed of sustainable development of society. Ideas, creative and innovative curriculum of education and institutionalisation of peace education studies as a course in Teacher Education will enhance the culture of non-violence for the evolution of a just social system. Government technocrats will have to teach peace and development-oriented policy and politics; industry will teach peace practice; university lecturers will teach fundamental peace and conflict theories and principles; and experts from professional bodies will teach case studies. This model will result in peace outcomes.

The approaches needed to sustain the peace-focused projects in order to make the peace culture permanent are consistent training of the youthful population in peace culture as a way of life and conduct of research in peaceful living as an attitude and intergroup relations element of the peacebuilding. These are paramount to sustainability of mutual trust and understanding across the rural and urban areas, such as some parts of Port Harcourt, Elele, Egbeda, Ibaa, Rumuji, Ndele, Emohua, Omagwa, Isiokpo, Umudioga, Ubima, Ubimini, Omerelu, Akpabu, Ogbakiri, and Ogbogoro. Another approach needed to sustain this initiative is monitoring and evaluation of the projects by practitioners in the field and through feedback from the participant observers.

Actualising more peaceful Ikwerre land will be rewarding to the government of Rivers State, the oil companies, tertiary and secondary institutions, traditional rulers and youth groups. Many communities have witnessed unrest or instability which culminated in

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the deployment of security forces and establishment of checkpoints. All these would have been avoided if peacebuilding had entrenched in Ikwerre land. Integrative theory of peace (ITP), as stated earlier, has the capacity to enhance people's ability to identify the knowledge of peace and adopt the choice of loving neighbours. Viewing this as basic human need that must be met will have appreciable impact on Ikwerre land, especially when inhabitants imbibe the psychological, spiritual, ethical aspects of human society. Thus, it will be possible to change the group behaviour so as to transform the confrontational attitude into a cooperative one.

With the monitoring and evaluation of the peacebuilding projects in Ikwerre land, it would be easier for practitioners to address the human rights education component in peace education and assess its effectiveness in sustaining the goals of peacebuilding with the aim of preventing the threats to peace and security to guarantee peaceful environment, and mitigate the adverse impacts of youth violence as well as prevent a relapse of conflicts.

Ikwerre needs peacebuilding because it has the education component which stimulates attitudinal change, transformational leadership and democratic governance (Uwazie, 2011). Such attitudinal change would transform the thinking of youths from state of confusion to understanding and tolerance. By extension, most communities in the area will witness a change from previously known history of tension, to non-violence, and mutual tolerant groups of dialogue rather than aggressive lifestyles of confrontation and struggle over resources and opportunities.

Making the youths and elders of Ikwerre appreciate peacefulness must begin with enhancing their understanding of how conflict should not be seen as necessary component of society for the peacebuilding projects to have some degree of impact on the target groups (Clarke-Habibi, 2005). Communication in conflict is a content of the peacebuilding initiative that must not be ignored, so as to shape the type of message that is passed from one individual to another through contacts during and after training.

The success of such programme will manifest in the inability of desperate politicians easily recruiting youths into electoral violence and all forms of thuggery to achieve their selfish interests, thereby diffusing tension. This was witnessed in the 2019 general elections when the All-Progressives Congress and Peoples' Democratic Party engaged in struggle over voting and electoral results in many polling units across Ikwerre land with different degrees of injuries and casualties involving youths. The proposed peace education programme will equip the youth with relevant knowledge, stimulate the attitudinal and behavioural change needed for peaceful living, and develop in them economic skills for productive, entrepreneurial and holistic sustainable livelihood, which ultimately will transform the youth from dependency to independency and to interdependency. Therefore, the content of the peace education curriculum should include: human rights education, values and character education, skill or emotional intelligence, handling emotions, joint problem-solving principles, financial education, literacy leadership and followership studies and conflict transformation.

With peace education, Rivers State can easily be viewed as one whole, thereby making it a single community, a fellowship of human beings who have the same instincts of hunger and sex, the same aspirations of generosity and fellow-feeling, and help people to feel more for others, enable them to change the exploitative and oppressive society (Prasad, 2012). It then means that less oppressive society will produce an environment characterised by positive peace and non-violent behaviour amongst the populace. According to Okolie-

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Osemene (2012), peace education stimulates attitudinal and behavioural changes and also promotes transformational leadership, creating the opportunity for people to appreciate peace and get to know that peace is synonymous with development. The awareness of this enhances people's value for conflict management.

The prioritisation of peace education will make Ikwerre the peace centre of Niger Delta, bringing people together, and facilitating a borderless situation to the benefit of all. In this context, more peace will be relevant to Rivers State than the escalation of conflict situation that would have been better managed with intergroup understanding. A society where people are knowledgeable about peace, whether formally or through an informal means, will make them appreciate peacefulness and have a value for conflict management with the win-win outcome of negotiation or conflict bargaining.

There is need for internal consensus building: resolving communal conflicts, uniting the youths, making the youths to respect the elders, as well as the elders conducting themselves properly and not forgetting to carry women along in whatever they do. Within this framework, it is easy to negotiate with the rest of the state. This is our primary peacebuilding responsibility.

Government needs to open more space for dialogue. The capacity of the people to dialogue with governments and oil companies needs to be proactively built. This will reduce agitations. If the people have their opinions fed into the government system, they will have fewer reasons to complain.

The Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), which I am a member of, has a role to play in organising the people of Rivers State for peacebuilding work at the grassroots. The society is already doing an excellent work in getting the voice of the Niger Delta heard at national and international levels. One of the areas in which SPSP supports the building of sustainable peace in Nigeria is in helping governments to design and implement peace education programmes at both non-formal and formal levels.

Peace education contributes to the social growth of children and youths, and others in the area of developing the characteristics relevant in actualising peace, through improved communication skills, ethical awareness, and the practice of empathy for others (Chertok 2007; Okolie-Osemene, 2012). Every intended or programmed peacebuilding initiative must prioritise training, research and peace education as a way of reducing the involvement of the youth in armed conflicts. This will make security risks decline to the advantage of a state's economy because much will not be spent on security when there are no threats. Such funds can be channelled to youth-focused human development and women empowerment. In addition, educational opportunities will help the women to acquire leadership skills necessary to participate in peacebuilding and reconstruction as well as to develop a positive role within the community and personal self-efficacy.

Investigation revealed that the neglect and omission of peace-focused education, character education, human rights education, entrepreneurial and financial literacy in school curriculums across all levels of education in Ikwerre indicate that Track Five diplomacy has not achieved much in the area of conflict prevention, management and transformation.

Political leaders are not committed to youth development, education and empowerment. Designing youth-targeted programmes aimed at addressing youth restiveness under poor conditions of social and political exclusion is crucial to the

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philosophy and principles of youth-focused human development. It has been difficult to build infrastructure to combat poverty, overcome sharp societal disparities, and build new institutions of accountability, law and order.

Development initiatives do not suggest youth empowerment. Rather, they are a modest project and measures to stop the escalation of youth crisis. There is substantial evidence that development initiatives were determined almost exclusively by the state actors. The views and plight of community youth and leaders were not considered. Whether the state leaders had definite plans for curbing youth bulge and youth unemployment is not known. Youth restiveness is a direct result of misplacement of development priorities.

Youth bulge, unemployment, ignorance and negligence of the constructive capacity of the youth to create wealth in Rivers State suggest human poverty and the security challenges that a peace education programme can address. Despite youth activism and popular resistance against the state and multi-national oil concerns as the rationale behind state actors' interventions, none of these initiatives systematically addressed some key empowerment and constructive engagement strategies, sustainable peace, and the linkage between youth-focused human development initiatives and conflict transformation. They did not also address how to use educational strategies to avoid terrors of crime and violence, good governance and what would appear to be collective striving for dignity and equality that propelled youth in Ikwerre in the direction of resistance, militancy and crime. It is not evident that youth bulge forms part of the current development initiative and there is currently little prospect for change. In the longer term, however, this will come, as current policies are seen to be unsustainable.

As far as the roadmap to peace is concerned, the state must promote security governance, as well as political, structural and social peacebuilding to engender social and economic development. Realizing the objectives of human security requires close collaboration among governments, oil concerns, development partners, and local communities. That is to say, given the strategic position of youth in peace and development, isolation of youth education is no longer safe; constructive engagement must come to the rescue. There is unchallengeable power of good in the Ikwerre youth and we must recognize the brilliance, innovation, patriotism, sacrifice and the passion for excellence that the Ikwerre youth have demonstrated time and again. In the light of this, collection of vital statistics on youth illiteracy and unemployment should form the basis for proper planning and adequate investment in economic skills acquisition as well as job/wealth creating ventures. Where priority is placed on youth education, economic empowerment and constructive engagement by the governments and multi-national oil companies, and conflict transformation on sustainable basis will be enhanced. Character education and development is a huge step towards permanent peace because you cannot build true peace on a foundation of lies.

Any area that prioritises youth development will enhance the opportunities to be derived from having an early warning system as response to conflict drivers rather than the threats associated with lack of peacebuilding. Threats can change nothing; only youth empowerment will do.

Through Track Five, peacebuilding in Ikwerre must focus on promoting youth entrepreneurship, self-employment and holistic sustainable livelihood rather than what the youths intend to benefit from politicians and oil companies. Enlightenment and education will encourage positive attitude towards empowerment and sustainable livelihoods, which

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are vital for alleviating poverty and reducing vulnerability to poverty and lack of understanding. This is achievable through the introduction of peace education methodology for the promotion of inclusive learning and teaching, namely group work, brainstorming, categorization, songs and dance, role plays, poetry and excursion, discussion, excursion trips, stimulation methods, guided discovery, group project and communication service. With role plays and brainstorming learned from peacebuilding, the practical and exploratory lessons will offer participants the opportunity to engage in exchange of ideas and practice of what they have understood in the form of feedback where necessary. By so doing, youths would begin to learn and appreciate being slow to violence and being quick to understand peace culture and non-violence. Track Five diplomacy will advance the creation of genuine democracy to ensure the full exercise of human rights, based on the equal dignity of human beings, promote a humane and peaceful Ikwerre society to foster compassion, peace and non-violence towards all sentient beings.

CONCLUSION

Peacebuilding has become a basic necessity of daily life in every society, and Ikwerre society cannot be an exception. Embarking on such crucial project requires active use of multi-track diplomacy, Track Five in particular, considering the relevance of peace education, research and training on peaceful living as part of peacebuilding. This paper has examined the need for peacebuilding projects in Ikwerre communities, Rivers State, using Track Five as an option that is instrumental in sustaining peaceful living across the communities where anti-social behaviours have contributed to instability that threatens harmonious living. With the Track Five initiative, it would be easier for the youthful population to appreciate the essence of peace without engaging in violent acts. This is crucial as peace is a basic need of human beings across the world as a result of different goals pursued by individuals and the need for them to live with understanding in tolerance or understanding of the essence of cooperation to promote peacebuilding initiatives.

Creating the atmosphere for avoiding violent conflicts is an effort that can be made for functional early warning to prevent conflict escalation in accordance with multi-track diplomacy. Building peace through education and training in research is instrumental to understanding of youths whose perceptions need to be shaped. Involving the youth in training and peace education would give them a sense of belonging and opportunity to develop their lifestyles for Track Five. This will provide the knowledge and needed skills to make people understand the essence of peace education, research and training. This paper argues that proper integration of peace education, training and research in accordance with the multi-track diplomacy is important for the actualisation of peacebuilding goals of Ikwerre land.

Accountable governance will break the circle of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment, reverse the dwindling economic capacity of the youth, as well as guarantee a peaceful and prosperous Ikwerre society. The SPSP could help to achieve any of these objectives if supported by the Rivers State Government as part of the efforts in linking Track V, peace education and peacebuilding to calm the turbulent nature of the rivers where metaphorically Rivers State derived its name. I call on the Rivers State Government to host a future conference of SPSP. At such a conference, participants can present well-researched papers specifically on peacebuilding in Rivers State. This will provide a more intellectual perspective to this issue and will make Rivers State a truly peaceful state.

Chibuzor C. N.

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