**PROMOTING PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ART-BASED APPROACHES: THE CASE OF KOKO AND OPUAMA COMMUNITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

**Introduction**

The Niger-delta represents one of the most important regions in Nigeria due to its huge 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 grassroots which have triggered agitations and conflicts in the region. As critically observed by Adejoh (2008), “the situation in the Niger Delta is clearly a paradox. The region is so enormously endowed, yet it is so poor; it is also economically strategic, yet it is so marginalized and so voiceless.”

Conflicts in the region have been increasingly frequent and intensely violent leading to incessant loss of lives and property. Violent conflicts and economic progress are mutually exclusive. This is precarious, particularly for Nigeria whose source of foreign exchange earnings is based and domiciled in the Niger-Delta region. Moreover, recent management strategies such as the creations of such institutions as the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC), the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Ministry of Niger-Delta Affairs, the creation of local government areas/councils, the provision of social amenities and payment of compensation for land have all failed to arrest conflicts in the Niger-Delta. The recent peace building effort by the Federal Government which is the Amnesty programme may be said to have achieved a reasonable level of peace in the region but given the cost of the programme, it is doubtful, if the programme is sustainable. These points to the need to revisit the management strategies of relations within and between communities and oil companies and communities and government, with a view to instituting sustainable conflict management procedures that would lead to peace and sustainable development in the Niger-Delta region and the Nigerian economy.

In his book Art and Upheaval: Artists on the World’s Frontlines, Cleveland (2008) observes that, “in the face of destruction, we are impelled to create”. This statement represents a powerful acknowledgment 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 have the potential to influence and inform peace building in profound ways.

Art –based approaches play a number of roles in the promotion of peace. In conflict-ridden areas, international actors, for example be they governments, international institutions or NGOs can help promote art based activities in such a way as will give local people ownership of the endeavours. These contributions are becoming increasingly important in areas devastated by civil war and in which former adversaries must live in close proximity and lack the dividing line of a national border. Arts can play four roles in conflict resolution, namely, as a: (1) Catalyst for peace-building or buffer to foster peace; (2) Tool to relativize armed conflict; (3) Means of building peace in the hearts and minds of local people by building (a) tolerance, mutual understanding, trust, confidence and, ultimately achieving reconciliation; (b) encouraging the sublimation of identities changed by war; (c) caring for and healing those traumatized by conflicts and (4) Device to empower those in conflict-ridden areas (Fukushima, 2011). The arts thus, offer peace builders unique tools for transforming intractable interpersonal, inter-communal, national, and global conflicts tools that are not currently prevalent or available within the peace building field.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Arts-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 numbers of individuals and civil society organizations engaging the arts for the positive transformation of societal conflict. Individual artists, cultural groups and peace builders working in zones of violent conflict have engaged various arts-based methods in peace building. These methods include participatory theatre, as well as comic books, radio and television. Artists in every medium -visual arts, theatre, music, dance, literary arts, film, etc. are supporting communities in campaigns of non-violent resistance to abuses of power, and creating opportunities for building bridges across differences, addressing legacies of past violence, and imagining a new future.

In the past decade, such arts-based approaches to the transformation of conflict have begun to gain critical attention from scholars and policy-makers from a range of disciplines. However, there are little studies evaluating the use of arts-based approaches in peace building. In the study area which is the Niger-delta, despite the multitude of strategies adopted by stakeholders to sustain peace in the region, art based approaches have received little or no attention. This research seeks to fill this gap by exploring art-based approaches and their potentials for peace building in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria.

**Goal of the Study**

This study aims at exploring art-based approaches and their potentials for peace building in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify arts and cultural based activities in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta
2. identify existing case studies of arts-based approaches in conflict resolution and transformation in the study area
3. Determine the awareness level of the application of art-based approaches in peace building among individuals in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta.
4. Identify the constraints in the application of art based approaches in peace building in the in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta.
5. Suggests strategies that will promote the utilization of art-based activities in peace building in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria.

**Justification of the study**

The Niger-delta region in Nigeria has been embroiled with conflicts in the recent years. This has not only affected local communities but the Nigerian nation economically and otherwise. Several efforts adopted over the years geared towards addressing some of the causes of the conflict have all ended in fiasco. Others that seem to be successful such as the Amnesty Programme are rather too expensive to sustain and hence the need for a sustainable approach to peace building in Niger-Delta has become inevitable. This study derives its relevance from this perspective as it is geared towards identifying approaches and strategies that can promote peaceful co-existence in the Niger-delta at the very minimum cost. Again, a review of the extant literature quickly shows mounting evidences of art-based approaches as one of the contemporary strategies for peace building in conflict prone areas. Incidentally, this approach has not being explored in the Niger-delta region despite numerous efforts at building sustainable peace in the region. This is study is therefore relevant to the federal government of Nigeria, Niger-Delta states, the Ministry of Niger-Delta Affairs, the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC), local communities in the region and other stakeholders interested in sustainable peace and development in the Niger-Delta region.

Scope of the Study

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. The selected community for this project are Koko and Opuama Communities both in Warri North L.G.A of Delta State. The Koko people are Itsekiris by tribe and the language spoken are Itsekiri, Pigin English and English Language. The purpose of the of the Research Project is to produce qualitative Data that will shed light to all issues pertaining to promoting peace building and conflict transformation through art-based approaches in selected ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta. Koko Community is located in Warri North LGA of Delta state with a population of about 7 thousand people. Koko town is the gateway to the Atlantic Ocean and a coaster town located in the mangrove swamp of the Niger Delta. The source of livelihood includes fishing, farming, trading, brewing of local gin (Ogogoro), Weaving of baskets and mats, Palm Oil, Transportation (Water/Land} Timber business. The town is border by several communities Such as Ajoki, kolokolo, Ajamogha, Ajatiton in Edo State, while in Delta we have Communities like Ureju, Ebrohimi, Ajagbodudu, Ugbokoda, Koko community exert much influence on these neighbouring communities. The Itsekiri people are predominantly Christians but deeply rooted in their culture.

**Limitation of the Study**

The major limitations of the study is the limited sample sizes of the study due to budget constraints and thus limit the number of states and local government areas to be covered by the study. Thus, the study may not be able to identify all the relevant art-based and cultural activities within the Niger-Delta region. Another major limitation of the study is the absence of baseline data on art-based activities within the study area and even organizations adopting the approach in the management and transformation of conflict in the Niger-delta region.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conceptual framework and review of literature. This is aimed at presenting the framework of analyses while at the same time identifying the research gap which the present study aims at filling. However, it begins with a discussion on the conceptual framework.

**Conceptual Framework**

There are many possible definitions of peace building and varying opinions about what it involves. The term peace building emerged in the last 30 years after the work of Johan Galtung, who called for the creation of peace building framework to promote sustainable peace by addressing the “root causes” of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution. Peace building is one of the United Nations cardinal models of peace process. The concept was made globally popular in Boutro-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Peace*. Boutros Ghali wrote this paper in 1992, while he was the United Nations Secretary General. Peace building involves addressing not only the triggers, which are the immediate variables that mechanize the outbreak of any armed conflict.

According to the British army (1997), peace building usually involves Actions which support political, economic, social and military measures and structures aiming to strengthen and solidify political settlement in order to redress the causes of conflict. These mechanisms to identify and support structures that tend to consolidate peace, advance a sense of confidence and well-being and support economic reconstruction. Boutros-Ghali in his *An Agenda for Peace* categorized peace building into two: Pre-conflict and post conflict peace building. Pre-conflict peace building includes such measures like ‘[de] militarisation, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social and economic development.’ Similarly, Rechler (1997) sees pre-conflict peace building as: Preventive measures that aim to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor; to promote and implement human rights and the rights of the minorities, and to promote durable development and the realization of a just and fair social order in which there is no discrimination based on race or sex.

On his part, Albert (2001) defined peace building as an art of repairing” relationships, institutions and social facilities and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing communities to be united once again. It consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation. Peace building is a long-term process, which occurs after violent conflict has subsided or ended. It is that peace process that follows exhaustion of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

**Dimensions of Peace Building**

There are basically three dimension of peace building. These are:

1. **The Structural Dimension:** The structural dimension of peace building centers its focus on the social conditions, which promote violent conflict. It is widely acknowledged that sustainable peace is a product of social, economic, and political opportunities on equal terms, which take care of the needs of the entire people or parties. However, most of the armed conflict situations are hinged on systemic roots. These root causes are somehow complex, which may include skewed land distribution, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation (Monsuru, 2006).
2. **The 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 focuses mainly on reconciliation, forgiveness, trust building, and future imagining. It strives to play down poorly functioning communication and optimally increase mutual understanding between the parties (Monsuru, 2006).
3. **The Personal Dimension:** The personal dimension of peace building focuses on desired changes at the individual level. If individuals do not enjoy any healing process, it may result in greater political and economic consequences. Peace building efforts must therefore be geared towards treating mental, psychological and spiritual health problems that may follow the end of an armed conflict. Integration, rehabilitation and re-entry measures must be proactive enough to take care of the psychological needs of war victims and the former combatants.

**Peace Building Efforts in the Niger Delta**

In this section, we attempt to review the peace building efforts of the federal, states government, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), development agencies, and oil companies in the Niger-delta region. In the Niger Delta, there have been multi-track approaches to building peace and restoring the torn social fabric. Sometimes, interventions have taken the form of partnerships between business entities, government agencies, NGOs and community-based organisations in the area of planning and delivery in order to achieve the desired impact and sustainability. We review first the effort of the Nigerian Government in Peace building in the Niger-Delta.

**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 by 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 (Babatunde, 2010). 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 developmental 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 (Ikporukpo, 2001).

The next peace building effort was the establishment of the Niger Delta Basic and Rural Development Authority following the failure of the Niger Delta Development Board, the NDBDA (Niger Delta Basic and Rural Development Authority) was established. According to Abosede (2010) the NDBDA was provided with a meager allocation of just 1.5% of the Federation Account for the development of the region. 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 (Hassan, 2007). 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 so on.

In the year 2008, the Yar’Adua regime created the Ministry of the Niger Delta. The new ministry has continued to suffer similar fate like its predecessors.

**Peace Building Efforts by other Stakeholder in the Niger-Delta**

In the Niger Delta, a myriad of actors have been involved in peace building activities. In their Annual Reports, multinational oil companies claim that they spend massive amounts of money on activities that are meant to promote peaceful relationships and sustainable development in Niger Delta communities. For example, Chevron adopted the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) which, for the first time, firmly places the responsibility for local development at the doorstep of those that will benefit. Chevron’s five-year, $50 million Niger Delta Partnership Initiative attracted support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID); another $5 million, five-year community development program with International Foundation for Education and Self Help (IFESH) called “The Western Niger Delta Development Program” also focused on bringing benefits to host communities; while Statoil Nigeria partnered with Pro-Natura (Nigeria) to develop a model of participatory development, peace and stability in Akassa Kingdom that has now been expanded to other areas such as Eket, Egi, Kolo Creek, Oron, Esit Eket, Opobo, Nkoro, and Eastern Obolo.

**Case Studies of Art-based Approaches in Conflict Transformation**

There are fledging evidences of the application of the art-based approaches in peace building from the literature. This section of the report presents these evidences of the application of art-based approaches in peace building efforts 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 and organizers (Zelizer, 2003; 2004).

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where music is a frequent mechanism for discussing social and political issues, youth use hip-hop to teach others about joblessness, corruption, class differences, AIDS, and other problems (Perrullo, 2005). 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 and transcending trauma (War Child International's, 2007). In Israel, the Peres Center for Peace brings together Palestinians and Israelis to create joint theatre projects to foster dialogue (International Platform on Sports and Development', 2007). In Venezuela, Dr. 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 introduce the concept of a peaceful coexistence between Muslim, Christian, and Indigenous communities (Fernandez, 1995).

Macclain (2009) reported the use of reggae, rap, and R&B fusion style in Northern Uganda 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, justice, and defilement. During the later years of the war in Uganda, this music had the unique opportunity to reach vast audiences in northern Ugandan society through the radio, namely through the station Mega FM. 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, Uganda that travels around the country and teaches 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, all while attaching positive messages.

**Conclusion**

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 application in the management of conflict especially in Nigeria; this research attempt to build the foundation by exploring various art-based approaches at the community level and their potentials for conflict management and transformation in the Niger-Delta region.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**METHODOLOGY**

**Introduction**

The research methods employed in the study are discussed under the following sub-headings: research design, population of study, sources of data and data types, sampling technique and method of data collection and analyses.

**Research Design:** The study design is case study and utilized mainly qualitative approach which allows for the use of selected cases to explore a social phenomenon of interest based on the researcher’s curiosity (Yin, 1994). A case study is intended to describe, understand and explain a research phenomenon. However, unlike quantitative research, the findings of a case study are no t generalized to the rest of the population. Therefore, the question of representative sampling does not arise (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Thus, the number of participants in a study does not matter for a case study to be considered acceptable, provided the study has met its objective of describing the phenomenon being studied (Tellis, 1997).

**Population of Study:** The population of the study consists of selected household heads resident in Koko and Opuama communities in Delta state.

**Sources of Data:** The study utilized primary and qualitative data. Primary data were collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interview (IDI). The primary data were obtained from community leaders and other members of the community.

**Instruments and Methods of Data Collection**

The study employed qualitative methods in data collection. Two main qualitative methods including in-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were employed during the data collection exercise. The IDI and FGD were used to obtain the qualitative information from the respondents.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

The study generated mainly qualitative data. These were content analyzed taking out the key variables of investigation to achieve the objectives of the study.

**Quality Assurance Measures**

The issue of quality assurance is very critical in an exploratory study of this nature. This was not lost on the research team. Thus, in all the stages involved in the execution of the study adequate measure were taken to enhance the credibility of the exercise and the quality of data collected.

## Design of Data Collection Instruments

First, the design of the data collection instruments was tailored to the scope of the study, taken cognizance of broad goal and the specific objectives. This informed the variables stated in the data collection instruments. In addition to this, the decision to utilize Focus Group Discussion Guide and Key Informant Interview Guide was to ensure that adequate data is collected from different sources in a complementary manner. More importantly, before the final set of data collection instruments were produced, efforts were made to ensure that they were adequately revised to accommodate the views and comments of reviewers, especially PIND.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

**Introduction**

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. It begins with the identification of arts and cultural based activities in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta, the awareness level of the application of art-based approaches in peace building and the constraints in the application of art based approaches in peace building in the in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta.

 **Arts and Cultural Based Activities in Koko and Opuama Communities in the Niger-Delta**

The result from the IDI and FGD indicate that there are several art-based and cultural activities at Koko and Opuama communities. These include festivals, annual dances, and musical concerts/drama. The following excerpts from IDI and FGD present evidence of these art-based activities in the study area.

***Compini Annual Dance:*** *This festival is a cultural dance festival of the Koko community people which is celebrated December 27th of every year in Koko. During the period of the festival people are forbidding from bearing grudges against one another. So people must set their differences aside because every community member is involved in this Compini festival. Also, it was identified that festival brings those abroad home which create opportunity to settle any lingering family disagreement (FGD in Koko community).*

***“THE EPI MASQUERADE****:This masquerade comes out every Sunday to play the hide and seek game with people. This is usually for young people. Almost every young person in the community is involved in this Epi masquerade Sunday race. The race makes two enemies 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 (FGD in Koko community).”*

 ***“CHRISTIANMUSICALCONCERT/DRAMA****: These are periodic church event that brings people together. In such events teachings of good morals are taught to members of Koko community and that has helped to change mind sets (FGD in Koko community).”*

*FOLKLORES/BALLAD: There are several folk dances where massages of peace and good intercommunity relations messages are passed across. Examples are, The Ejukeju Dance, Omoko, Agunmekpe and Agogo Dance. Even individual have also used music as a tool for conflict resolution such as Tsefere Olu by Olugbo (Koko IDI)*

Another major art-based activity in Koko community is the Ori-Omi worship 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 excerpt for the Koko FGD helps to buttress this.

*“ORI-OMI WORSHIP: This is the koko Community pagan festival and conflicts have been settled during this festival. Although these festivals have naturally settled several disputes on its own but many have not come to identify with the fact they can be evolved into a tool for peace building and conflict transformation* (Koko IDI).”

The Epi Masquerade is another art-based approach which comes out every Sunday in Koko community. This event is particularly suited for conflict management in the community because of the ways it bring warring factions together as part of the Epi masquerade Sunday race. The excerpts below illustrate this.

*“THE EPI MASQUERADE: T his masquerade comes out every Sunday to play the hide and seek game with people. This is usually for young people. Almost every young person in the community is involved in this Epi masquerade Sunday race. The race makes two enemies 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 (FGD in Koko community).”*

*“ORI-OMI WORSHIP: This is the koko community pagan festival and conflicts have been settled during this festival. Although these festivals have naturally settled several disputes on its own but many have not come to identify with the fact they can be evolved into a tool for peace building and conflict transformation. The compini dance would be very effective in peace building and conflict management since it’s a festival that brings the indigenes together in happiness and fun. The Ejukeju dances dramatises different live situations to send a message to an earring member of the community or the need to do the right thing (FGD in Koko community).”*

The above findings show that there are several art-based activities that have potential for conflict management and transformation in the study area. Thus, it became important to explore cases of conflict management and transformation using art-based approaches and the implementing organizations. In the next section of the report, we attempt to map organizations engaged in conflict management using art-based approaches in the area of study.

**Case Studies of Arts-Based Approaches in Conflict Resolution and Transformation in the Study Area**

The content analysis of the IDI and the FGDs identified several organizations that have employed art-based approaches in the management of conflict in the study area. These organizations include NIPRODEV, Search For Common Ground and Institute For Media Society (IMSO),, West Africa Network of Peace-Nigeria (WANEP) and Women in Peace building (WIPNET), BASKET BALL FOR PEACE (BB4P). The following excerpts help to buttress this point.

*“In the process of the Focused Group discussion we were able to identify that Some Organizations like NIPRODEV, Search For Common Ground (SFC) and Institute For Media Society (IMSO) have done some peace building project and conflict transformation in Koko community with the project titled ‘‘Tomorrow is a New Day’’ which centred on Community Re-integration (the rehabilitation and re-integration of ex-militants) for sustainable development in the Niger Delta. The project seeks to establish a community radio station although that has not materialised because the federal government has not started giving radio licences to communities. Also, the establishing of an information and Resource Centre with Trauma healing activities such as drama and storytelling are all part of the project. This project Tomorrow is a New Day was funded by the European Union. The project is targeted at seven communities from three states of the Niger Delta namely: Delta State ­-Koko & Oporoza, Bayelsa State- Kaiama & Amassoma, Rivers State- Ogu, Okrika and Kpor. The time frame for this violent reduction project is put at 18 months (Koko FGD).*

*The USAID has done a project for peace in Warri South LGA tagged BASKET BALL FOR PEACE (BB4P). Youth were trained on how to use the sport basketball for peace building and conflict management in the Niger Delta. Another organization that was at the centre stage of the Ijaw Itsekiri crises from 1997 to 2003 was The International Foundation for Education and Self Help- IFESH. They played the role of a mediator in that crisis that engulfed the two tribes. IFESH had an MOU with USAID to pilot the project Conflict Abatement through Local Mitigation-CALM. Also West Africa Network of Peace-Nigeria (WANEP) and Women in Peace building (WIPNET) are organizations that are managing conflicts in the Niger delta through training on Early Warning Systems mechanism and the mainstreaming of women in conflict management (Koko FGD).*

**Awareness Level of the Application of Art-based Approaches in Peace Building among Members**

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. In this section of the report, we attempt to determine the awareness level of the application of art-based approaches in conflict management in the area of study.

The results indicate a generally low awareness level of the application of art-based approaches in peace building among respondents in the area of study. While the respondents were able to identify relevant art-based activities, they were grossly ignorant of their relevance in peace building. Only very few respondents were able to identify the use of art-based approaches in the management of conflict and peace building in their communities. The following excerpts help to illustrate the above facts.

*Yes, in our community, there are many art-based activities like ORI-OMI festivals and many others that I cannot mentioned now. The festivals and the associated activities come and go every year and we normally look forward to them because it normally brings all our children in the township home. The festivals do not serve any purpose apart from the fact that it help to maintain our tradition in our community. They have not been used in resolving quarrels among individuals and between communities (Opuama FGD).*

*They cannot be used to settle dispute because that will be against our culture. They are better ways of settling disputes in our community and art-based cultural activities cannot be used because of the sacred nature of many them. There are some of our masquerades that cannot be seen by a stranger and so how can you use that to settle conflicts (Opuama KII).*

*The community has three major groups who are key actors in conflict resolution in Opuama namely, Community Elders, Women group and the Youth body who enforces the decisions of the community because whatever is decided is regarded as the community decision. Art-based activities are not use in peace building and cannot be used because there are procedures already in place for peace building in our community (Opuama KII).*

*The Opuama community like most African communities is enmeshed in within art based practices like festivals and cultural dance groups to entertain community members. Festivals like Abosei and Ijawsei are major festivals in Opuama community that brings the sons and daughters of the community home at the end of every year. Also the Awo-giri cultural and Sei-owo are cultural dances use to entertain people. I have not seen it used in peace building in this community (Opuama KII).*

Although they are plethora of art based practice in Opuama but the awareness level that it can be 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 Opuama is 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 to achieve that. The Art based approaches in peace building as a strategy for conflict transformation can be developed if individuals, groups and institutions develop modules for the application of art based practice in peace building and conflict management for ethnic communities in the Niger Delta. The festivals and cultural dances are resources on ground to develop art based practiced but the leadership of the community must be enlightened and trained on how to use these resources for peace building and conflict transformation.

**Constraints in the Application of Art -Based Approaches in Peace Building in the in the Niger-delta**

Despite international calls for expansions of the peace processes frontier to enable women actively participate in peace processes; inclusion of women especially in the Niger Delta is on a very low scale. Certain factors impede the involvement of women 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. The following excerpts help to buttress this.

*“Our art-based activities are for cultural occasion and there are allowed to be used for other purposes. Using them for other purposes will be going again the tradition of our land and sometimes the consequences are too much for anybody to face (Opuama KII).”*

**Financial Incapacitation:** Poverty is 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 and issues demand time and finance, not being a one off activity. 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 help to buttress this.

*“The major challenges militating against the development and survival of these cultural dances are money to put the festivals together. Such festivals are usually 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 word work to be done of which money plays a very big role, although the Awankere festival of the Okere community in Warri South LGA use to get sponsorship of the festival from the Glo network service provider. To the Youth the long and short of all is economic empowerment, to them an ‘’ hungry man is and angry man’’ if the enable environment to create wealth is there these festivals and cultural dances will thrive. And no busy person will have the time to be involved in the kind of community conflict that is prevalent and peculiar to the Niger Delta* *(Opuama KII).*

**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 like wildfire in our community and this tends to keep many people away from participating in the art based activities. The following excerpts help to buttress this.

*“The teachings of the Christian faith which regard such festivals not as the peoples culture but paganise activities and celebrations. Most people in the community have embraced Christianity and because of their belief they no longer want to have anything 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. (Koko FGD).”*

**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 negotiating team is usually drawn from the high echelon of 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 process but ultimately hinders the application of art-based approaches in the management of conflict in the affected communities.

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

Art-based activities as shown in the previous sections abound in the Niger-Delta and in view of its potentials in conflict management it is important to promote its use in the Niger-delta area. 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 region. 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 explain 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 on 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 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 conflicts as the need arises.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

* 1. **Introduction**

The study explores art-based approaches and their potentials for peace building in Koko and Opuama communities in the Niger-Delta region. The study utilized the case study approach drawing mainly qualitative data from key informants in the two communities. The main findings, conclusion as well as the recommendations are presented below.

**Main Findings**

1. The study reveals that there are several art-based and cultural activities at Koko and Opuama communities. These include festivals, annual dances, and musical concerts/drama.
2. The study further identified three case studies of the utilization of art-based approaches in the management of conflict in the study area. The institutions involved include Search For Common Ground and Institute For Media Society (IMSO),,West Africa Network of Peace-Nigeria (WANEP) and Women in Peace building (WIPNET), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Basket Ball For Peace (BB4P).
3. In addition, the study identified several constraints militating against the utilization of art-based approaches for peace building to include cultural restrictions, financial incapacitation among community members, religion and the non-utilization of community members during peace building activities.
4. The study finally identified strategies to promote peace building in the study area to include:
5. Documentation of cultural and art-based practices in the conflict prone communities in the Niger-Delta region.
6. Practical demonstration of the application of art-based approaches in the management of conflict using existing case studies of successful utilization of art-based approaches in the management of conflict.
7. Enlightenment campaign both at the community level and some agencies interested in peace building in the Niger-Delta**.**
8. Collaboration between agencies involved in peace building and local communities where art-based activities are domicile**.**

**Conclusion**

Peace is one of the fundamental prerequisite for development. The Niger-delta region has been embroiled with conflicts in recent time and all effort to tame the trends in the conflicts has received little success. Therefore, the need for a consideration of 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 mainstream these approaches in peace building effort in the Niger-Delta region. 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 communities in the Niger-Delta region.
2. The Niger-delta Ministry, the Niger-Delta Development commission (NDDC), the oil companies operating in the region and other organization interested in the maintenance of peace in the region should embarked 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 domicile**.**
4. It is important for government agencies such as the ones mentioned above integrate local communities in peace building effort in conflict prone communities in the Niger-delta region.

**QUESTION GUIDE PROTOCOL FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AND FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION FOR SMALL GRANT RESEARCH PROGRAM ON PROMOTING PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ART-BASED APPROACHES IN SELECTED ETHNIC NATIONALITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA**

**PREAMBLE**

The general purpose of the In-depth interview guide is to yield qualitative data that will shed light to all issues pertaining to community governance and development planning in conflict prone areas in Ondo State. Data/information obtained through this guide would be kept confidential and used only for research and planning purposes.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

The target respondents for this guide are head of communities and rulers, head of community groups such as men, women and youths groups.

1. How are conflicts resolved in your community?
2. Who are the key actors in conflict resolution in your community?
3. What are their roles?
4. Are there art-based practices in your community like drama, festivals, dances etc?
5. Who are the custodians of this art –based approaches?
6. Who are the individuals, groups and institutions involved in the use of art-based approaches in peace building in Ethnic groups in the Niger-Delta?
7. What is the awareness level of the application of art-based approaches in peace building among individuals in conflict prone areas?
8. How effective are art-based approaches in peace building in your community?
9. How can we promote the use of art-based approaches in peace building as a strategy for conflict transformation?
10. What are the organizations engaged in peace building efforts in your community?
11. Are you aware of the use of any art-based approaches in conflict management in your community?
12. What are the constraints in the application of art based approaches in peace building in the study area?

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