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## Mainstreaming Peacebuilding in the Development of Conflict-Affected Oil Producing Community of Imo State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** The quest for social peace and development, referred to as the effort to enhance the wellbeing of people in society has remained a concern in the conflict-affected oil producing communities in Imo State. Looking at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which focus on making human societies inclusive, safe, resilient and peaceful; the underlying understanding is that social conditions constitute the vital components of sustainable development. Sadly, these goals are significantly hampered by constant and widespread violent conflicts and extremism in the oil producing communities. The communities have remained a tale of poverty, squalor, and gross underdevelopment in the midst of plenty, due to environmental degradation which has continued to impact negatively on the people's means of livelihood. To address the challenges posed by violent conflicts and destructive impacts, this study interrogates the need for mainstreaming peacebuilding in development of conflict-affected oil producing communities in Imo State. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, using secondary data from journals and published articles. The theoretical framework of the peacebuilding and economic growth, developed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) was adopted. Findings of the study revealed that social losses attributable to violent conflicts especially, in developing oil producing communities call for development initiators to consider the mutual interface of peace and development. The study concludes that mainstreaming peacebuilding in development of oil producing communities in Imo State will encourage sustainability and therefore recommends that conflict-sensitive development programmes should be promoted, and development intervention initiators should focus on the root causes and dynamics of conflict in the oil producing communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Peacebuilding, Development, Conflict, Hazards, Communities, Imo State, Nigeria

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### INTRODUCTION

Violent conflicts and social disorders have continued to hamper the endeavours to combat poverty and underdevelopment in conflict-affected communities. This calls for the need to mainstream peacebuilding in development programmes. The global conception is that underdevelopment, poverty and violent conflicts are complementarily reinforcing. Development projects in Nigeria have been poorly implemented perhaps arising from as shallow understanding of the interface between development and conflict, especially in a pluralistic and complexity of Nigeria. The short-term impact of development initiatives in oil producing communities in Nigeria is consequent upon their insensitivity to conflict dynamics, especially in the communities where the core projects are sited.

It has become imperative for a paradigm shift in favour of conflict-sensitive development programming. Mainstreaming peacebuilding in development in the oil producing communities in Imo State will enjoy sustainability and create impacts on their livelihood. Conflict is unavoidable as far as human interaction exists. Conflict will definitely trigger as long as human beings operate in a dynamic and competitive social environment, especially amidst scarce resources. Most times, these conflicts turn to violent extremism with consequent dangers. The social losses attributable to violent conflicts, especially in developing communities call for development initiators to consider the mutual interface of peace and development (IPCR, 2003). Conflict-sensitive development programmes needs to be promoted, which will proactively engage the development planners and executors. The development intervention initiators must focus on the root causes and dynamics of conflict in oil producing communities.

The oil producing communities in Imo State majorly situate at Ohaji/Egbema and Oguta local government areas. These communities are highly underdeveloped in spite of the presence of the multi-national oil companies and their business activities in them. The constant violent conflicts and extremism have negatively affected the development of these communities. The youth restiveness and lack of productivity on the part of these communities underscores the fact that mainstreaming peacebuilding in the development projects in these communities has become imperative. It is against this background, this study investigates the nexus between mainstreaming peacebuilding and development engagements in the conflict-affected oil producing communities in Imo State.

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The term, mainstreaming describes the art of integrating a given set of values from one primary domain into a secondary one with the aim of bringing the insights from the former to bear on the latter and to achieve by this process a value-added outcome from the resulting practice (Vande, 2019). To further explain it, mainstreaming peacebuilding in development planning is about incorporating peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity into development planning and the stages of development programme/project cycle (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2003). Mainstreaming peacebuilding in development planning therefore involves adding value to a good process such that it results both in the achievement of the planned developmental targets, addressing the root causes of conflict and contributing to building lasting peace in conflict-affected communities in Imo State. The researcher therefore employed a content-analysis approach to strategically underpin the thesis of mainstreaming peacebuilding in development of conflict-affected communities.

### **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

#### **Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding refers to efforts to establish lasting peace by addressing root causes of conflict, rebuilding relationships and fostering social, economic and political stability. Peacebuilding activities include promoting human rights, supporting democratic governance, enhancing economic development, and facilitating reconciliation processes. Peacebuilding prevents recurrence of conflict, through addressing the root causes and transforming relationships. It promotes sustainable peace, by creating conditions for long term peace and stability. Peacebuilding addresses issues underlying conflict that present threats to a durable peace. It is a substantial step beyond peacemaking and peacekeeping. It promotes sustainable peace, by creating conditions for long-term peace and stability. It strengthens communities through empowering communities to resolve their disputes and build resilience for livelihood. Peacebuilding facilitates healing and reconciliation, by helping individuals and communities heal from past hurts and build trust among conflicting parties. Social structures and institutions are transferred for positive peace.

Galtung (1976:297-298), in his pioneering work: “Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding” argued that “structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur”. These observations prompted the scholars’ discourse of today’s concept of peacebuilding, which he defined as an effort aims at creating sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of violent conflict and eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful management, and resolution of conflict. Lederach (1997:84-85), also, in his similar work advanced the need for expanding the knowledge of peacebuilding. In his opinion, “peacebuilding is more than post-accord reconstruction” and “is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships”. Peacebuilding therefore refers to a wide range of activities that contribute towards the transformation of society into a just and harmonious order and development of an infrastructure capable of maintaining and sustaining peace (Vande, 2019). Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2024), conceptualized peacebuilding from the viewpoint of resolving injustice in non-violent ways and transforming structural conditions which has the capacity to generate further deadly conflict.

#### **CONFLICT**

Conflict can be defined as a clash of interests, values, actions, views or ideologies. Conflict arises as a result of incompatibility and competition for scarce resources. Conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome of human interaction. Conflict situations arise because of fear, force, fair or funds. Fear is imaginary concern for future; force of any kind initiates and concludes conflicts; fair is the sense of fairness, which determines the moral values of an individual. Conflict in social work ranges from interpersonal, to cultural differences, ethnic and religious, social and socio-psychological issues.

Conflict is an outcome of organizational intricacies, interactions and disagreements. It can be settled by identifying and neutralizing the etiological factors. It often leads to the generation of new ideas and change. Conflicts can be used as motivators for healthy change. Several factors that create competition in an organization can be integrated and exploited effectively to achieve organizational objectives.

Interpersonal conflicts arise because of differences in personality, perceptions, status and ideological and philosophical outlooks. Other causes of conflict can be communication gaps, substandard performance; disputes over approaches, responsibility and authority; lack of cooperation; or competition for limited resources. Conflict within society occurs when the balance of interests of individual is disrupted (Oberschall, 1978). Benefits provided for the disabled, women, children, patients, and individuals in need of welfare trigger conflict.

Conflict arises from imbalances in social relations, for instance, unequal social status, unequal wealth and access to resources, and unequal power-sharing leading to problems such as discrimination, oppression, poverty, unemployment and crime. Each situation links to the others, engendering a potentially powerful chain of factors either for constructive change or for destructive violence. Best (2006) defined Conflict as “the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups”. Micheilof, Kostner, & Devictor (2002) in outlining the causes of conflict in any society said that the history of every society as it concerns struggle for independence,

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control and freedom sometimes underlies general threats of dissatisfaction between individuals and members of that society. He argued that religious, economic, cultural and geographical factors breed unsafe environment for peace across societies and communities. Other causes include: Poor governance, endemic corruption and economic failure can weaken the state, and thereby engender a loss of trust on the part of the citizenry; Public policies that influence suppression, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination may become deliberate actions to cause conflicts. This happens when there is political or economic exclusion of some ethnic groups. Wherever conflict exist, there may be frustration because of the pursuit of one goal is blocked by the pursuit of other goal(s).

### **DEVELOPMENT**

The oxford dictionary defines development as an event constituting a new stage in a changing situation, the process of developing or being developed, the act or process of growing or causing something to grow or more advanced. The enhancement of living conditions is essentially an integral part of the concept of development. The broad issues of development bother on poverty, misery and wellbeing, and the fulfillment of basic needs and enhancing the quality of life. Development also involves economic growth. This process of economic development cannot abstract from expanding the supply of food, clothing, housing, medical services, educational facilities, and from transforming the production structure of economy. Development entails the availability of public goods by the government to the citizens. In view of this study, the definition of Todaro (1977:96-98) is considered all embracing:

Development must be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within the system, moves away from the conditions of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better".

The purview of this study is on the improvement of income and social radical changes and transformation in institutions, social and administrative structures, as well as the livelihood of the peoples of the oil producing communities in Imo State. The implication is that development involves the radical changes, the reduction of inequalities and eradication of poverty in these communities, which poses a big question, considering the level of underdevelopment seen in these communities. According to Seers (1969:3) development indices are investigated based on certain aspects of the socio-economic impacts; as he asserts:

The questions to ask about a community's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these declined from high levels to low, then beyond doubt, this will reveal the need of development for the community concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if the entire three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if *per capita* income doubled.

Looking at the level of poverty, ignorance and disease contending with the citizens of the oil producing communities, the salient question is how has development programmes/projects in these communities transform them socially and structurally? How much have the basic necessities of life, such as food, jobs, affordable and accessible health care, good roads, water, electricity and education being provided for the people in these oil producing communities in Imo state.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study employed the theoretical framework of the Peacebuilding and Economic Growth, developed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2010), Hoeffler, Ijaz & von Billerbeck (2010) and Strachan (2013). The scholars agree on the positive relationship between peacebuilding and economic development. UNDESA asserts that the end of a conflict often brings about rapid economic growth, while Hoeffler, et.al (2010) further postulate that post-conflict economies grow at around three per cent per year, which is about one per cent more than the average country. Hence, economic revitalization should be a core component of any national peacebuilding strategy (UNDESA, 2010). In the same vein, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010:25), states that inclusive economic growth may be prioritized over approaches to peacebuilding that focus on justice and impunity, because it is vital for job creation and it increases the legitimacy of the state. On the other hand, they are of the opinion that without "transparent systems of public financial management, effective management of resources and peace", growth can add to inequality and undermine peacebuilding (OECD, 2010:25-26).

According to the UNDESA (2010:13), establishing safety and security, as well as a degree of political stability, "are likely prerequisites for economic revitalization and are vital for private sector investment". They also suggest that peace dividends, such as cash-for-work public works projects may be an early priority when developing a peacebuilding strategy (UNDESA, 2010). The OECD (2010) opines that states or communities emerging from conflict are often under pressure to provide immediate benefits or reliefs for the people, while at the same time needing to support sustainable economic reform and development (OECD, 2010:37), therefore short-term economic reconstruction activities stabilize the conflict-affected communities by meeting the needs and increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable groups, while long-term activities aim at consolidating the gains made, and work on the preconditions for self-sustaining development. This perspective suggests that development has intrinsic relationship with peacebuilding, and has the capacity to confront and eliminate the root causes of violent conflict in oil producing communities. In

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view of these facts, mainstreaming peacebuilding in development enable planners to initiate proactive response to the potential impact on their interventions on peace and conflict dynamics, especially in the conflict-prone oil producing communities. This framework can be used to facilitate recovery in these communities. It will serve as toolkit for social reconstruction, peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

### **EVOLUTION OF PEACEBUILDING**

The concept of peacebuilding dates back to the Marshall Plan, which introduced the efforts to rebuild Europe's economic, social and governance capacities after World War II. George Marshall's Plan was a multifaceted approach to recovery, through fostering peace and development, and it earned him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1953, because of its sharp contrast with the punitive approach taken by the Treaty of Versailles after the World War I. However, peacebuilding remained an ad hoc activity for many years.

The United Nations commenced to consider peace in wider view at the end of the cold war, recognizing that peacekeeping was insufficient to lay adequate foundation for long-term peace. In the 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace* UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali established the conceptual basis for UN peacebuilding operations, especially post-conflict peacebuilding (UNSG, 1992). The document set forth an integrated approach that aims to strengthen social, economic, and political structures that are the foundation for lasting peace. Issues which were imperative in the framework include addressing natural resources. The UN and other organizations started to apply peacebuilding approaches from Guatemala to Cambodia and to Western Balkan States. Based on the former experiences, the UN and other organizations began to develop integrated peacebuilding approaches and strategies. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the General Assembly inaugurated the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 to address what the Secretary-General called a "gaping hole in the United Nations institutional machinery" (UNSG, 2005:2).

Post-conflict peacebuilding has continued to grow into a field that comprises many types of activities and actors—although the specific objectives, dynamics, and approaches are still being articulated and defined. Between 2009 and 2011, there was a substantial shift in international policy. The U.N. Secretary-General, the U.N. Secretariat, the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank all issued landmark reports framing approaches to post-conflict peacebuilding.

The 2009 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict emphasized that threats to and opportunities for peace are greatest during the period immediately following conflict and that peacebuilding efforts must be individualized to meet national needs (UNSG 2009). UNEP also issued a report recognizing the importance of considering natural resources and the environment in the post-conflict peacebuilding process and that failing to do so could result in a return to conflict (UNEP, 2009).

In the 2010 Progress Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called upon "Member States and the United Nations system to make questions of natural resource allocation, ownership and access an integral part of peacebuilding strategies" (UNSG 2010 : 44). The 2011 Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict: Independent Report of the Senior Advisory Group underscores the necessity of civilian engagement in ensuring the durability of institutions put in place to aid in the success of peace efforts (U.N. 2011). It also underscores the importance of setting up U.N. capacity to support countries in addressing natural resource management challenges as part of standard thematic clusters. The World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development note how the increased development of institutions and governance can lead to a more lasting peace (World Bank 2011).

Since 2011, international reports and documents have continued to highlight the importance of the environment and natural resources to post-conflict peacebuilding. For example, one of the major advances of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals is a dedicated Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. In 2016, the U.N. General Assembly and the Security Council adopted substantively identical resolutions on peacebuilding (UNGA 2016; UNSC 2016). These far-reaching resolutions break new conceptual ground on peacebuilding. They focus on sustaining peace "at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions" and on the imperative to prevent "the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict." The resolutions offer an opportunity to increase the focus of the U.N. system to preventing conflicts in a manner where both the effects and root causes of conflict can be addressed. The "Sustaining Peace" Agenda offers a critically important policy anchor for addressing potential conflict risks from the environment, natural resources, and climate change.

Two years later, the United Nations and the World Bank released a joint report on "Pathways for Peace." This report emphasizes that the "best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis, including but not limited to conflict, is to ensure that they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development." The report recognizes that natural resources such as land, water, and extractives are traditional sources of friction and social conflict primarily driven by inequality and exclusion. Moreover, the effects of climate change, population growth, and urbanization are dramatically intensifying these risks. The report notes that disputes over resources have escalated to violent conflict and instability, in particular where dispute resolution mechanisms are lacking or ineffective. It recommends that improving ways to better share resources, and the benefits derived from them, are important focus areas, as are ways to strengthen local conflict resolution mechanisms.

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## **The Nexus between Development, Peace and Conflict**

Development in Nigeria at the micro (individual), meso (communities) and macro (national) levels have been grossly affected by inadequate planning. This is more evident in the politics of the exploitation oil, resource control and the political economy of systemic corruption which has been the trigger of violent conflicts in the context of development, especially in oil producing communities. The social realities in these conflict-prone communities must take into account the interrelationship of development and conflict.

Development policies of the nation must be organized to evolve sustainability and immense contribution to building peace and reducing the risk of violent conflicts. Institutional capacities are to be built for development programmes in the oil producing communities. In every context and stage of development in the rural communities, there are always a link of the root causes of resource-based, political, social, religious, identity or ethnic conflicts to development. Of course, development initiatives often challenge the existing socio-economic, political and cultural equations in ways that could threaten or inhibit the aspirations of some individuals, groups or communities (IPCR, 2003). The ability of the stakeholders to constructively respond to perceived threats determines if such conflicts will enhance or jeopardize the peace and development of such communities. For instance, the development interventions by oil companies in the Niger Delta region have been grossly conflict-ridden, leading to destruction of human life, property and ecosystem of the communities. Particularly, the constant inter and intra community violent conflicts in most communities of Ohaji/Egbema and Oguta local government of Imo state are struggles over development projects and benefits. It is therefore, obvious that development projects inevitably impact on the peace or conflict environment either positively or negatively; directly or indirectly. In the light of this, mainstreaming peacebuilding in development initiatives enables the planners to evolve a proactive response to the potential impact of the interventions on peace and conflict dynamics in the communities.

The political interferences on development interventions by some politicians through deployment of ethnic, religious and indigene-settler sentiments and bias often exacerbate conflicts and tensions in oil producing communities. Peacebuilding therefore serves as both immediate and long-term preventive measures, before, during and after a conflict. Peacebuilding approaches must consider environmental peacebuilding: this is imperative because the nexus between conflict and natural resources extends throughout the conflict cycle.

## **Socioeconomic Malaise of Oil Producing Communities of Imo State**

The exploration of oil in the communities in Imo State has brought about significant socioeconomic and environmental malaise, raising concerns about displacement, pollution, impoverishment, degradation and violent conflicts; bearing on the fact that these oil producing communities are largely agricultural zones in the State.

Economic prosperity, albeit tangible, often proves elusive for many residents of these oil producing communities. Despite the influx of revenue from oil-related activities, disparities in wealth distribution persist, leaving greater number of the population marginalized, vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. The paradox of plenty, a phenomenon wherein resource-rich regions struggle to translate their endowments into broad-based development, casts a shadow over the promises of prosperity. Most of the indigenous communities are displaced from their ancestral lands. These communities are marginalized, and often excluded from decision-making processes; they find themselves at the mercy of powerful corporations and government entities keen on exploiting the communities' natural resources. The resulting conflicts over land rights not only exacerbate existing social tensions but also underscore the broader struggle for recognition and empowerment among the indigenes.

Ahmadu & Egbodion (2013) posited that oil spillage in oil producing communities destroy cassava farm land, yield and land productivity, which leads to crop failure, poor yield, rotting tubers and stunted growth. Also, unplanned exploration of mineral resources like crude oil, leads to gas flaring and it produces harmful environmental heat, with negative impacts on the ecosystem of the host communities (Budnuka, Cliton and Agi-Ottoh, 2015). As a result of the gas flaring, the economic lives of the peoples are subjected to health hazards. Some of these health challenges faced by people of the oil producing communities include high level of emotional stress, risk perception and various related diseases (Nriagu, et.al., 2016).

These communities experience unrest and violent conflicts due to unpaid compensation claims, a general lack of concern for their wellbeing by the oil companies. The constant intra and inter-community violent conflicts that hampers development are also challenges occasioned by oil exploration. Iheriohanma (2016) and Dode (2007), also posited that oil exploration has heightened the level of economic hardship in terms of hunger in the oil producing communities, due to the challenges associated with oil exploration and consequent effects on the aquatic lives, lands and human livelihoods. All these, therefore necessitates the imperativeness of mainstreaming peacebuilding in development of oil producing communities of Imo state.

## **Environmental Peacebuilding**

Environmental peacebuilding (EP) is defined as efforts aimed at building more peaceful relations through environmental cooperations, natural resources management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (Ide, 2019). EP is the process of governing and managing natural resources and the environment for sustainable peace. It include efforts to prevent, mitigate, resolve,

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and recover from violent conflict, and involves renewable natural resources (such as land, water, and fisheries), non-renewable natural resources (such as minerals, oil and gas), and ecosystems (including their services). It extends to preventing threats to human health and livelihoods caused by violent conflicts.

After the end of Cold War, the concerns on the relationship between environmental stress, resource scarcity, and violent conflicts grew, resulting in the understanding that peacebuilding practices or processes should include addressing environmental issues. According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres:

many conflicts are triggered, exacerbated or prolonged by competition over scarce natural resources; climate change will only make the situation worse. That is why protecting our environment is critical to the founding goals of the United Nations to prevent war and sustain peace (UNEP, 2017).

This statement has revealed the imperativeness of factoring environment in peacebuilding practices in oil producing communities. Environmental peacebuilding is a wide and growing concept in research and practices. It refers to at least five areas of (mutually non-exclusive) practices. The first aspect incorporates efforts to prevent or mediate on environment-related conflicts, such as scarce water resources or impacts of and revenues from mining (Adano, Dietz, Witsenburg & Zaal, 2012; Bebbington & Williams, 2008). The second aspects relates to the management of natural resources and other environmental issues in (often post-civil-war) peacebuilding processes. This extends to, among others, providing agricultural land or employment to former combatants as part of the integration, restoring water-related infrastructure to address grievances and support livelihoods, and reducing illegal resource extraction that might finance further violence (Bruch, et.al, 2016). The third area has to do with climate security, which includes efforts to reduce grievances and incentives for violence by adapting to climate change and building resilience, especially in issues of potential political instability (Vivekanada, et.al, 2014), and to integrate climate change issues into peacebuilding (Mathew, 2014). The fourth aspect is disaster risk reduction (DRR) and post-disaster reconstruction which aims to address existing conflict dynamics or to promote positive forms of peace, such as community cohesion and related issues of the environment. The fifth aspect is often referred to as environmental peacemaking. It provides incentives for joint problem-solving, which facilitates better intergroup relations. For instance, relatively easy entering points for cooperation between the conflicting parties. Such cooperation often demonstrate potential for positive-sum interactions, supports processes of trust building and facilitates reintegration (Ide, 2019), including in illiberal and violent contexts.

### **Merits of Environmental Peacebuilding in Conflict-affected Communities**

The advantages of environmental peacebuilding cannot be overemphasized. As a concept, it demonstrates a deep interweave of environmental change and security in the Anthropocene (Chandler, 2019). It encourages environmental conflict resolution and integrates environmental management issues into peacebuilding missions. According to Mathew (2014), conflict-sensitive adaptation to climate and DRR can protect local ecosystems, advance human development, address the grievances and livelihood insecurities that contribute to armed violence and help integrate climate-related issues into peacebuilding. For instance, most oil producing communities in Imo State are part of the agricultural zones, with agriculture (such as farming, fishery, palm produce) as the mainstay of the people. Environmental peacebuilding will facilitate the rehabilitation of their farmlands and ecosystems; and reconstruction of institutions for sustainable peace and development.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ibeanu (2005) advanced a concept that “peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community”. Therefore, peace represents a dynamic process that facilitates the creation of a conducive environment that enables the stakeholders in a polity to interact harmoniously for the establishment of the society’s goal and realization of the potential of the individual. No meaningful development both socioeconomic and infrastructural can be achieved amidst violent conflicts and extremism. Hence, Boutrous, Boutrous-Ghali posited, “there can be no development without economic and social development, just as development is not possible in the absence of peace”. This captured the imperativeness of mainstreaming peacebuilding in development programmes/projects in oil producing communities of Imo State, which this study interrogated.

Mainstreaming peacebuilding should therefor capture the process of carry out regular and updating conflict analysis in the communities; interfacing the outcome of the conflict analysis with the situation analysis and the programme cycle; utilizing a multivariate and multi-sector checklist for tracking peacebuilding and social inclusiveness (including gender inclusion, budgeting, and auditing); and planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the project intervention in a conflict-sensitive manner. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda 2030, Target 1.5 (reducing vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks, and disasters); Target 2.4 (ensuring sustainable food production systems that help maintain ecosystems and strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change and other disasters) and Target 11, 13 and 16.1 should be applied in peacebuilding processes in the oil producing communities in Imo State.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this study, these recommendations are hereby advanced for the effective mainstreaming of peacebuilding in development of the oil producing communities in Imo State.

1. There should be community's stakeholders' participation: Community participation gives an opportunity to transform the relationships of the stakeholders by providing them with a platform to dialogue and see things from the perspective of their opponents. A participatory process ensures 'mutual learning or ownership' with those directly affected by the conflict in relation to its strategy and programming. Involving community stakeholders (the youth, women, traditional rulers and community based organizations CBO) ensures ownership (increasing sustainability of initiative) and builds their capacity for conflict resolution, transformation and peacebuilding and culture of peace.
2. Efforts should be applied by the stakeholders to minimize the negative impact of all humanitarian and development assistance under conditions of conflict, in the communities.
3. Oil producing communities should be empowered through capacity building, education, and inclusive participatory in planning, implementing, and monitoring of peacebuilding projects, to safeguard their rights, interests and wellbeing.
4. There should be the creation of a more inclusive and equitable governance structures that prioritize the wellbeing of the people and the planet over long-term projects.
5. Environmental peacebuilding should include environmental remediation and restoration by allocating resources for the reconstruction of communities affected by oil pollution to mitigate environmental degradation and restore their ecosystems and enhance their resilience for future impacts.

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