Article title: BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE IN WEST AFRICA
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Abstract

For decades, the Nigerian states have struggled with incidence of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. The inability of the Federal Government of Nigeria to find enduring and sustainable solution is the bane of peace in the region. Human security jeopardy which culminates from oil exploration and bunkering cornered the locals of the region in an unfortunate situation of environmental degradation. Dangerous contamination of natural resources that people grapple with in the land of their birth over time served as impetus for the agitations and violent conflict that ensued between non-states actors, multinational oil corporations and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Different administrations in Nigeria have attempted to restore peace in the Niger Delta region. What is however noticed in theory and practice is that critical stakeholders are not included in the peacebuilding framework and effort of the Nigerian state in the Niger delta region. This perhaps accounts for the persistence of different environmental problems that have given rise to violent conflict in the region. The discourse relying on both primary and secondary data to examine the potentials of different categories of stakeholders (youths, women, academics, traditional rulers, civil society groups) and underlining reasons for their exclusion in the peace-building effort in the region. The study pinpoints the imperatives of an all-inclusive peace building architecture as panacea to the Niger Delta crises and recommends that there should be constitutional coverage for the stated stakeholders.

Keywords: Peace, Peace-building, All-inclusive, Architecture, Niger Delta, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

For decades, the Nigerian states have had to struggle with incidence of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. Inability of the federal government of Nigeria to find lasting solution is the bane of peace in the region. Human security has been devastated by environmental degradation that culminates from oil exploration and illegal bunkering which plunge Nigerians in the region in an unfortunate situation (Jaspreet, 2012). The danger that the people face by contamination of the natural resources in the land of their birth is an impetus for the violent conflict that ensued between non-states actors, international organization and the Federal Government of Nigeria (Ejovi, Austine & Ebie, 2013). It must be recalled that their agitation can be traced back to the pre-colonial era when the regions suffered series of conflict in the bid to rid injustice and secure the management of region’s natural resources (Kasomo, 2012).
The 1956 oil discovery in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in present day Bayelsa and the invaluable dollar-outcomes of the Hydrocarbon resources which have been the core of Nigeria’s economy, as 95% of Nigeria’s foreign exchange earnings and 80% of the government’s budgetary revenues are derivatives of oil exploration (Davis 2010:1–2). Oil was discovered, no doubt; while the political elites smile to the bank literally thanking their God for “national blessing of oil”, oil exploration became a curse as the exploration which was first expected to improve the lot of the sourced region was accompanied by untold hardships the accompany air and water pollution (Ajodo-Adebanjoko 2016:1). The politicization of oil management by the federal government resulted in indigenous mistrust that instigated agitations for compensation and control of the oil resources. Activists, multinational oil companies and Federal Government of Nigeria for decades have remained at loggerheads since the struggle started in a peaceful demonstration and transformed into armed conflict (Nore and Turner, 1980). The killing of playwright and human right activist Ken Saro Wiwa in the region and the eight Ogoni men was smooth ride for the peaceful protest transition to armed conflict (Na’Allah, 1998). The armed protest is characterized by forceful detention of expatriates, foreign oil workers, and destruction of oil installations, property and the exit of individuals to an early grave (Sabella, 2009).

To curtail the lingering crisis in the region, the federal government established special agencies to find lasting solution in the oil producing region. The likes of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB), the Oil Mineral Producing Areas commission (OMPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) were instituted. Despite proactive moves towards eradicating ungodly activities of the militants and ameliorating problems of the region, the crises seem insurmountable. In the course to resolve the issues of unrest in the region, former President Umar Musa Yar’Adua (Late) in 2009, initiated an amnesty policy meant to reduce and possibly proffer lasting solution to the insurgency, kidnapping, hostage-taking, insecurity and other phenomenon of concern paramount to the people of Niger Delta (Thomas, 2009). A close examination of these programmes by the Nigerian government to create peace in the region shows that the people affected are practically excluded from the peacebuilding framework. This perhaps explains why the crisis still lingers despite the energy, finance and human and material resources expended by the government in the Niger delta region (Paul-Sewa & Shamsudeen, 2010).

Against this backdrop, the core thrust of this paper is to investigate the underlining reasons the critical stakeholders are not included in Nigeria’s peacebuilding framework in the Niger delta region. In this context, the paper will be divided into five sections; the first will introduce the subject matter; secondly, gaps in the peacebuilding framework and effort of Nigerian government in the Niger delta are explained; third section elucidates the idea peacebuilding architecture as an analytical framework and the methodology adopted having divided the critical stakeholders into five (5) variables (CSOs, academic, youth, women, traditional institutions); challenges to creating an all
inclusive peacebuilding framework is however investigated in the fourth section. The conclusion and recommendation are later drawn from as final analysis of the paper.

2.0 Gaps Identified in Peace-building Architecture and Methods of Inquiry

Despite the escalation of numerous violent clashes in the Niger delta, clamours and agitations for an all inclusive peacebuilding effort in the Niger delta is not popular and widely considered. This is perhaps an iota of strong mistrust between the states, officials and the society for which the state exists to protect. This serves as the precursor for the lack of collaboration between the civilians and members of security forces in the Niger delta region. It is ironical to think that critical stakeholders have been excluded from the peace-building process and programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the Niger delta region.

Conversely, the existence of autonomous Civil Society Groups between the state and private entities have a point in making sure that an inclusive peacebuilding architecture will set the norms, agenda for governance and act as watchdogs for individuals in public institutions working to ensure peaceful operations of international and national actors without endangering the lives of the people in the Niger Delta region. Regardless of the well acclaimed and pronounced responsibilities of civil society organizations in preventing the state from tyrannical tendencies, championing the course of the oppressed, shaping public opinion and ensuring a sane society through stern advocacy for proper governance, most CSOs are utterly sidestepped from the peace-building agenda, formulation and implementation in the Niger Delta space.

The academic communities on whose shoulder research and knowledge productivity on issues *inter alia* conflict, resolution, management, peace research rest are inextricably left out of the effort to ensure sanity in the oil producing region. There exist several academics with research interest in peace-conflict and post-conflict reconstruction research, gathering and analyzing data in Nigeria. The puzzling issue in the country is that their cutting edge research, empirical studies, findings through a well crafted methodology, conclusions and policy recommendation are sparsely sought and utilized for peacebuilding processes in the Niger delta region.

The surprising part of this conversation is the neglected youth of the region. The youth are the major participants in most of violent conflict in the Niger Delta. They are the freedom fighter, perpetrator and victims. In most violent agitations is the young men deployed willfully or forcefully as foot soldiers. This is the harsh reality of the youth in the Nigerian state. Youth have been found nearly in all major conflict in Nigeria; whether in ethno religious conflict, banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, armed militias, fulani-herders crisis. However policy processes especially one aimed at sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region has not provided a framework for youth involvement. Other sad reality in Nigeria’s effort to resolve the root and immediate sources of conflict in the Niger delta region is the exclusion of women. This is notwithstanding them
constituting the large casualty figure in any violent conflict situation. In most cases, women are the soft targets who find it difficult to run for their dare lives because they have their children with them to protect. In the process of trying to protect their children in an escalated conflict get injured, maimed and even killed. Despite these situation, the input of adversely affected women in ensuring peace in the Niger Delta is hardly consulted.

Traditional leaders who possess wealthy grassroots governance responsibility are also excluded from peacebuilding policy effort in the Niger delta. They are key ingredient for sustainable peace since they often involve in resolution of diverse kind of disputes. They possess good knowledge of sources of threat and actual conflict and the solution to making peace reign in the region. Despite the grassroots wealth of knowledge they are barely included in any peace effort at the Niger Delta region. This discourse centres on uncovering the underlining factors affecting the ability of the Nigerian government to set up a robust and holistic inclusive peacebuilding framework in a democratic settings like Nigeria. This is a qualitative research method that adopts both primary and secondary data to enrich the study. Interview conducted included three (3) members of CSOs, three (3) academics, three (3) youths, three (3) influential women, three (3) traditional rulers in the Niger Delta region. Descriptive method of analysis is adopted to discuss the impediment to an all inclusive peacebuilding effort of the Nigerian state.

3.0 Peace-building Architecture: Conceptual and Analytical Framework

Peacebuilding has increasingly gained recognition as critical for post conflict reconstruction and crisis management. In the last few decades, peacebuilding has gained wide acceptance as vital part of interventions in conflict ridden state and societies working towards stability. However, the scope of peacebuilding effort has not been captured in debates among scholars, policy makers, and practitioners. While the maintenance of security was ab initio regarded as the prerogative of states, the scope has been broadened in the past few years to accentuate the invaluable role of non-state actors including civil society, community leaders, traditional institutions, youths, media, academics and other critical stakeholder. It is therefore safe to mention that since the scope of security is expanded to consider individuals affected and not just state centric approach, peacebuilding effort in Nigeria at the Niger delta region will have no positive effect if critical stakeholders who are directly affected are not included in the implementation of peace processes.

All inclusive peacebuilding denotes expansive and wide range of practices, interest and actors. It is used in this piece to encapsulate holistic framework for the involvement of directly affected people aimed at addressing diverse threat to peace and security challenges faced by societies struggling with or emerging from conflict situations and seek to stabilize in line with democratic practices, principle and norms (Jackson, 2015). Peacebuilding architecture refers to democratic planned intervention with the deliberate involvement of interest groups by the government with the target to
restoring and maintaining peace in trouble zones where atrocities imaginable and unimaginable are committed and requires healing and reconstruction.

Peacebuilding architecture is an all inclusive one programmed in line with democratic initiatives to facilitate wider participation of people. It is not as though the people or interest group are the one rising and fighting for their rights; but a deliberate effort of the government to design and formulate and deploy the interest groups on matters that directly affect them. It is designed and formed to reflect the whole spectrum of a society. Indeed, most conflict situation affect all and sundry who fall into different segment of the society. Against the background is peacebuilding architecture crafted and characterized by fairness, equity and social justice.

The principle of all inclusivity is a cardinal element of sustainable peace. To ensure peace, critical stakeholders must be engaged in peacebuilding processes. Hutchful, 2012: 65 noted that full participation by all four dimension of civil – executive legislature, judiciary, media, civil society, youths, women must be secured in any peace processes. What is however seen in all the effort of Nigeria to restoring and maintaining peace in the Niger delta, is the exclusive participation of executive and legislative arms of government and their ancillaries. This perhaps explains why certain issues still persist and defy government effort to reconstruct and restore peace in the Niger Delta. All inclusive peacebuilding architecture is one that provides full participation of state and non state actors in any effort to provide security and peace.

4.0 Impediment to an all-Inclusive Peace-building Architecture in Niger Delta

The growing popularity of peacebuilding in Niger delta notwithstanding, issues of concern still persists as critical stakeholders of the region are left out in the peacebuilding architecture. The deployment of security sector alone to the Niger delta region could not guarantee peace and post-conflict reconstruction and development majorly on the account of low or no participation of critical stakeholders. However, effort to ensure inclusive participation of stakeholders in peacebuilding practices continues to encounter bottlenecks and challenges.

4.0.1 Civil Society and Peacebuilding Architecture in the Niger Delta

Civil society encapsulates institutions, organization, individual actors driven by goals of better public governance through ideas, actions demand on government (Sakpere, 2015). It is an open social life autonomous from state and operates in the public realm with civility and public demonstrations. Civil society functions as intermediary between the government, state and individuals (Ikelegbe, 2003). The civil society is made up of masses largely peasants, institutions, professional groups and trade unions. Civil society is a critical factor in a situation where the state is lagging in the discharge of its core duties such as meeting the needs and aspirations of the citizens as well as securing lives and properties. (Ikelegbe, 2013).
The civil society develops capacities of individuals; provide platforms for addressing welfare and needs of citizens through dialogues, mediation and advocacy (Osumah, 2016). In this case, it could be conceived an alternative governance structure as it performs complimentary role to the state. There is the notion that civil society play significant role in peacebuilding of conflict state and societies, sustaining political reforms, and government legitimization (Aghedo, 2013). In an interview with a respondent, civil society is critical part of peacebuilding architecture. They are the most affected. They suffer death, destruction of properties, and violation of human right. The issues of oil spillage for example cause environmental degradation and conflict result in armed robbery, destruction of properties. Despite being the direct casualties of conflict, unrest and pollution in the Niger delta, unless they fight for their right and privileges; they are still left out in the scheme of peacebuilding. As opined by a respondent, the civil society play significant role in peacebuilding of conflict state and societies, sustaining political reforms, and government legitimization (Aghedo, 2013). As expressed by a respondent, civil society is critical part of peacebuilding architecture. They are the most affected. They suffer death, destruction of properties, and violation of human right. The issues of oil spillage for example cause environmental degradation and conflict result in armed robbery, destruction of properties. Despite being the direct casualties of conflict, unrest and pollution in the Niger delta, unless they fight for their right and privileges; they are still left out in the scheme of peacebuilding. As opined by a respondent, the non inclusion of civil society in groups in Niger delta crisis is hinged on the fact they are numerous and not all of them can be captured and accommodated to be part of the peace processes. The respondent comments that, the proliferation of civil society groups has made it difficult for the state government to work with all of them. Another respondent speaking on the case of several CSOs posits that, they need to operate under an umbrella that can advocate for their yarning regionally and ethnically. The respondent shared that in a particular place, there can be diverse interest groups agitating for different things and so the government does not deem fit to include them because they appear unorganized and unstructured thereby losing the capacities to function with the government. Another respondent point that many of the civil society groups are short-lived. They exist for a period of time as they emerge to tackle pressing issues with the government. It is hard to see a group exist for close to a decade. The respondents also allude that most civil society group appear to be myopic once their agitation is met with certain gesture from the government, even if it does not totally solve the problems, they will just declined and resort to solving internal problems that ensues from the financial support given by an administration. It becomes a challenge for them to be included in the peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta.

Corruption even among the civil society groups was identified by the respondents. The respondents noted that leadership of many civil society groups end up mismanaging funds thereby drifting away from the original and genuine purpose of emergence. The experience respondent share with the researchers shows that some civil society groups although rises to the occasion of problems end up becoming the conduit for financial mismanagement. Although literature (Osumah and Azelama, 2016; Tonwe and Osumah, 2015; Audu, 2015; Ubhenin, 2016) attest to the potential and contribution of civil society groups in the Niger delta, their inclusion in peacebuilding process in the Niger delta region have been minimal except they rise up and agitate, partner with other non state donors. The unscrupulous behavior of some members of the civil society groups account for the challenges the government face in factoring them in the peace building process. It is not as though the government is not aware of the active presence of the civil society but the politics among members of the civil society groups
compound the problem of including the peacebuilding architecture. Respondents clear the air by claiming that some conflict in the Niger delta region is traced to the way and manner leaders of civil society groups handle situation in time past.

4.0.2 Academics and Peacebuilding Architecture in the Niger Delta

Academic community in Nigeria comprises lecturers, researchers in tertiary institutions and several think tanks groups in the country. These academics across all disciplines have made impact local and international. Most of the academics in the Niger delta region and beyond with research interest in issues surrounding the Niger delta are dissatisfied with the condition of human existence in the region. Several of them have applied and yes few have received grants on conducting research from local and international donors (Rashid, 1994). And likewise there are many that without grants have conducted research to provide insight that can be converted to policies in resolving the root and immediate cause of conflict and environmental degradation in the Niger delta region. This depict the extent of excitement the academic community have deployed in contributing to the development and peacebuilding policy blueprint of the government in addressing the Niger delta devastating situation (NIPSS, 2019).

Seminar papers with informed analysis and opinion, expert advice necessary to proffer solution that policy maker can take rational choices among competing policy decisions. However, the federal government is found lagging behind in using finding and recommendation of the academic community or say include them in the peacebuilding, reconstruction process of the Niger delta region.

A Respondent was of the opinion that “negligence on the part of policy makers and will neglect of the impact of academic is the main reason they are not included in the peacebuilding architecture of the oil producing region”. Speaking further another respondent opined that the divergent views of the academic community are always seen as opposition. So what we have is different administrations that are insecure with the dissenting views of the academics. They are oftentimes seen as seeking to subvert the existing effort of the government.” Another respondent attest to the willful neglect of academic by the government, soliciting recommendations from the academic community with so many funds has amount to nothing because in the long run the paper produced are not utilized. So I can say it was for cosmetic sake that the academic were sought”

Adding to the disregard for research work of the academic community is the insensitivity of the state and federal government to the divergent commentaries providing solution for engendering lasting peace in the Niger Delta region. The intellectual productivity of the academic are wasted as they are readily dismissed as unrealistic, idealistic and mirage whose view is only good in paper. The recommendation of many academics are selfless and this does not go down well with the corrupt nature, plans and schemes of the policy maker, implementation not just regarding the Niger delta but entire faculty Governance of Nigerian State is stated by a
respondent of the policy maker only look for the people that will tell them what suits their whims and caprices. It’s unfortunate even among academics that they have allowed policies to prolarge them. They have been infiltrated by the political class now will only select “loyal goat” among them that will not act according to the idiosyncrasts of the taskmaster

4.0.3 Youths and Peacebuilding Architecture in the Niger Delta

The concept of youth defined by age is measure with different parameters. There are national and regional variations. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSER) 2250 (2015) as person within the age range of 18 to 29 years (Ban Ki Moon, 2016). This is the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood (Osumah 2016). At the national level, youth in Nigeria is an estimate 70 percent of the nation’s population since youth constitute the active participation of Nigeria’s populations. Successive Nigerian government have created platform such as Ministry of Youth, Youwin Enterprise Empowerment Schemes; Anchor Borrowers. But what is seriously lacking is evidently co-opting them in the peacebuilding processes of Nigeria as a whole and Niger Delta in particular (Kimani, 2009; Tade and Adeniyi 2020). Options to expand and boost youth participation in issues of environmental security and governance have not been exhausted. Very little is done to ensure that youth are involve in issue that directly affect them (Imobighe, 2003; Jega 2007).

The challenge of including youths in the Niger was addressed in an interview. A respondent posit that the youth are not well represented in the Niger Delta issues. The platform setups are managed by the elite youth who are connected with the political class. The respondent further said that any where you see youth participation they are mostly the children of the poor agitating against unfair treatment, social injustice. Speaking further, another respondent was of the opinion that the government lacks the political will and the sincerity to reach the youth who directly suffer from oil spillage, environmental degradation and include them in the peace processing of the Niger Delta region. They would prefer to establish platforms that serve as conduit pipe for siphoning national, state and local treasury in the name of establishing youth empowerment schemes in the Niger Delta Region.

Even the genuine youth platforms that emerge to address the needs of the youth in the region without political affiliation are deliberately neglected in the peacebuilding process. What we see in the Ministry here is that we don’t even present proposals to top officials especially those that involve fund raising. It is actually a deliberate effort to sidestepped the youth from peacebuilding process. The effect of excluding youth is that many of them create armed group since they believe that taking arms can help them get a share of their entitlement by origin of birth. It is so sad to think that many of us in this place did not start by taking arms but when they will not listen, they are unfair, and we had to rise and survive - arms is survival.
During conflict, the youth are mostly affected as they suffer terrible consequences such as injury, loss of lives, loved ones, inability to access quality education, displacement and even forced or willful recruitment into armed militias that have existed in the Niger delta. They have been forced many times to assume adulthood as they bear the responsibility of survival against the odds and horror of oil spillage, environmental degradation, and lack of basic amenities in their horribly affected communities.

4.0.4 Women and Peacebuilding Architecture in the Niger Delta

Gender sensitivity and equality for increased participation of women is crucial to installing sustainable peace in crises region (Glutton, Letouck, and Bastick, 2019). This informed the recommendation of the UN Police to increase the number of female police officers in peacekeeping operations internal policing services because their presence and representation is critical to effectiveness and efficiency of peacebuilding process. This is evident in the ability of women to be trained and proficient in leadership positions, public order and management, intelligence tactics. The critical contribution of women in peacebuilding architecture is confirmed by the comment of UN police that female officers help to rebuild trust in some societies. In peacebuilding effort women included in peace process will be the only one allowed to interface and interact with women and girl child in Niger Delta region and by principle other conflict zones. In the Niger delta region where female gender (girls and women) are among the worst affected they are most likely able to relate with female peacebuilding actors in the Niger delta area (UNPolice 2016).

The ecology of the Niger Delta largely determines the economic activities and engagement of women. Women in the Niger delta area engage in fishing and collection of seafood. Abundance of vegetation of mangroves in the marine found in rivers and creeks have not only become sources of food but of income (Ajayi, 2018). Women benefit from fresh water swamp forest ecosystems that are around freshwater, creeks and lakes; they do gin distillation from raffia palm tree and various other activities in the environment. Women in the Niger delta are affected by oil spillage, river bank erosion, gas flaring, noise pollution water waste pollution land degradation, soil fertility loss such that their source of livelihood is gravely destroyed. Yet, in the scheme of peacebuilding, reconstruction of the Niger delta they hardly consulted. Despite the high sensitivity of the crisis to women, peacebuilding effort only centred on programmes and not dealing with the real issue that affect the women. A respondent sharing his opinion on why women are not included in the peacebuilding and reconstruction of the Niger delta accentuate that perception about women matters significantly. As it is a common knowledge, women in Africa and in some part of Nigeria especially in the Niger delta are considered of value in issues of development and reconstruction.

From a respondent, women participation in peacebuilding architecture is lacking because consciously or subconsciously women are still tagged inferior. The respondent
laments the horror that women face in misrepresentation, under-representation and stigmatization in the region. It is erroneously believed by some quarters of policy makers that women can “spoil things” and arrangement for peace process...they are disregarded with no value to bring to the table. It is a deliberate thing to exclude women who are directly affected by effect of oil exploration in the region. The few representatives of women that you see agitating for their right did agitate else, nothing will be done. It is quite unfortunate that as a woman we are not even consulted before we see some reconstruction work in this place”

4.0.5 Traditional institutions and Peacebuilding Architecture in the Niger Delta

Traditional rulers occupy communal political leadership positions laced with cultural mores and values. Individuals in the communal political authorities are sanctified by traditions and rituals of their communities that confer on them legitimacy to direct the affairs of the indigenes (Adewumi and Egwurube, 1985:20). Nigeria is home to high profile traditional rulers including Sultan of Sokoto, Emir of Zulu, Emir of Kano, Oni of Ife, Oba of Benin Ewuare II, Olowo of Owo, Oba of Lagos, Obi of Onithsa. There are also female traditional rulers but not as many as the male traditional leaders. This does not suggest that female traditional rulers are insignificant compare to male counterparts. There is Her Royal majesty Obi Marthar Dunklin in Delta State and female regent in Ondo State which is also referred to as Kabiyesi - male king and father (Aidoo, 2019).

Traditional rulers in modern times are regarded as modicum of wise counsel on socio-political matters of which including them peacebuilding process sustainable peace engineering cannot be overlooked (Chizea and Osumah, 2017). Certain traditional rulers such as the Sultan of Sokoto command a high level of respect than some formal government institutions in Nigeria. (Ubhemen, 2014). Their role in the socio-economic issues of Nigerian state is evident in their active participation when called upon to curtailing various security threats in their locality. The peak of youth militias and resurgence of militancy in the post-Amnesty intervention project in the Niger delta saw the involvement of traditional rulers encouraging the youth militants to embrace Amnesty in the Niger Delta (Chizea and Osuma 2017). For peacebuilding in the Niger Delta region, traditional rulers have been asked by the state government to provide support. For instance Deputy Governor of Delta State and Chairman Delta State Advocacy Committee Against Oil Facility Vandalism, Mr Kingsly Otuaro enjoined traditional rulers in the riverine Delta State to utilize their privileged position to stop the militant from further vandalisation of oil and gas facilities (Ofiebor, 2006).

Some traditional leaders in Ogoni communities in Rivers State reportedly appealed to the Federal Government to eradicate arms from their locality. They called upon the Federal government to deploy military to their communities. While traditional rulers have been involved in curtailing security threats their level of involvement in peacebuilding and reconstruction in the Niger delta is relegated to ordinary, traditional
formalities and ceremonial advisory role. A respondent, an enlightened chief, speaking on the difficulties of playing significant role in the peacebuilding process in the region opined that their role is not covered in the nation’s constitution. “Nothing is stipulated for our inclusion in the peacebuilding project anywhere in Nigeria. And it is viewed as insubordination for traditional leaders to agitate for inclusion since he who pays the piper dictates the tune”.

Sharing insight, a respondent explains that the way and manner traditional leaders are treated would not give room for their active full participation in any peacebuilding architecture of Niger delta region. He further state that “traditional leaders, chiefs are reduced to the background such that they dare not speak against the government or on any issue unless invited. Anyone who voices his opinion without due consultation risk losing his/her position. No one who one tasted power even a traditional prominence want to condescend. Ministry, Department and state security agencies are occasionally overbearing and threatening in asking them to maintain peace in their locality”. Alluding to the lack of constitutional provision for traditional leaders, a respondent said the resultant effect is that they are used as more chess pawns and bullying from the political class. A case is the River State Governor, Nyesom Wike threatening traditional leaders of their position if cultism and kidnapping does not stop. Delta state police command threatened sanctioning traditional rulers whose domain of influence is a den for criminality, armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom. Another respondent states that they are easily manipulated to act as member of political elites. This is seen as many of them are compelled made to play along the whims and caprices of the political elites, else they are dismissed from their position. They are considered only relevant during electioneering. “We are compelled to canvass for support state governorship candidates or we face risk of suspension or dethronement. We don’t have a say on any issue. I don’t blame them since they are already paying us salaries. Can you fight with your employer and not get dismissed. We just sit down and be looking unless consulted”.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The foregoing analysis shows that stakeholders such as CSOs, youth, academics, women, traditional leaders though have the potential to make impactful steps in peacebuilding process are rarely included in the peacebuilding and reconstruction process in the Niger delta region. This paper aims to accentuate that all-inclusive peacebuilding architecture is imperative. Given the pivotal role they can play in completely assuaging public fears; and satisfying the agitations of affected populace in the Niger delta, suggestions hereby point the need for a deliberate steps on the part of the political class or government to ensure that peacebuilding process constitute critical stakeholders for quality reconstruction and amelioration of the deplorable conditions of the Niger Delta region. Collaboration and partnership with these stakeholders in ensuring peace should be schemed and maintained to forestall antagonistic dispositions between and among them. This is in a way calling for government-local engagement
such community peace patrol, anti crime campaigns by youth women, academics and traditional leaders. Government and security operatives should be advised that accepting constructive criticisms goes a long way in engineering peaceful process and reconstruction of Niger delta. A line of communication between academic community and government on the issue of Niger delta needs to be established such that the partnership will be productive enough to ameliorate the deplorable conditions of the community members in various areas of the Niger delta. Likewise, existing platform created for youth should be consolidated and reformed to accommodate the masses-youth who are directly victims of oil spillage, exploration gas flaring etc. in the Niger delta. They should be trained and not just comprise the youth who are politically affiliated but the leadership should be from the people. The government should endeavour to fund their activities and provide a framework for their campaigns and works of securing peaceful existence in the Niger delta region. It is admirable to include women in the peacebuilding process as they are the legitimate persons that can interface with girl child and women without fear of sexual abuse or gender-based abuses. Also, it is pertinent to mention that discrimination against women should be eradicated to show the strength and the value they can bring to the peacebuilding table. The traditional rulers in this piece have played a good role in the peacebuilding process but not until they are called upon. The rise of any traditional rulers will smell doom for such as the political class will see them as opposition. However constitutional empowerment is important to give the traditional institution the honour of being included in the peacebuilding architecture.

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