



PeaceWorks News

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Niger Delta Youths mastering Obstacle courses at Citizenship and Leadership Camp, Aluu.

Constructive Engagement of Niger Delta Youths

Kingsley Akeni, AAPW Demobilization Officer and Delta State Monitor

Militia and armed groups' activities in the Niger Delta have assumed a worrisome dimension since mid 2003, due to a variety of factors which include patronage of these groups by the political class who are desperate to intimidate political opponents and electorates. The situation has been compounded by the lack of alternative incentives and initiatives designed to positively re-integrate



AAPW Election Observers in Warri South West LGA, April 14 2007.

and mainstream these youths into normal society. The Demobilisation component of the Niger Delta Peace and Security Strategy, (PaS) is a unique intervention model designed to drive the process for the disarmament, resettlement and mainstreaming of ex-combatant armed youth group members in the region into gainful economic opportunities rather than engaging in violence. The component is one of the twelve (12) thematic areas of intervention of PaS which broadly aims at working on the issues of the region in order to promote peace, security and sustainable

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Re-integration of Members of Armed Groups- The Nexus of Research, Training and Job Placement

By Sunny Kulutuye and Judy Asuni



Members of the AAPW MPCC team visiting the Ovie of Ughelli; Ram Shankar of UNDP is on the Ovie's left.

Multi Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) are designed to provide a number of activities for trainees and members of the host communities. These include technical skills, life skills, information technology and business training; personal and career counseling; mindset change; job placement; sports. During 2006 Academic Associates PeaceWorks collaborated with UNDP on 3 proposed MPCCs, one each in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. AAPW greatly broadened the original scope of the UNDP project, bringing in the Bayelsa and Delta State Governments, to renovate, equip and staff existing technical skills training centres, thereby quadrupling the original budget which was funded by Shell Petroleum Development Company. Although the AAPW/UNDP project was suspended in December 2006, the participating states have expressed enthusiasm for continuing the project, which we hope to do with the new Governors, as from June 2007.

Unlike run-of-the-mill technical skills training, the MPCCs are geared to provide training for real jobs in the oil and gas sector or through self-employment. AAPW had conducted a Technical Needs Assessment for UNDP (May 2006) which identified only TWO training centres in the 3 core states, which we considered of professional standard. One was the Bonny Vocational Centre, sponsored by NLNG. We approached the director of the BVC, Mr. Harvey Smith, who along with Ms. Folake Wilcox, have given invaluable technical advice and assistance over a period of months. The BVC staff helped to identify real skills requirements within the industry, develop equipment inventories, write procedural guidelines, and draft job descriptions. They also helped us recruit, interview, test and select appropriate staff. Twice the AAPW MPCC staff took groups of potential employees to Bonny Island for actual testing on BVC equipment.

We also had the invaluable services of a very experienced technical training consultant and former ILO staff, Mr. Bob Duffy for a month from September-October 2006. In spite of his age,

Bob traveled the nooks and crannies of the Niger Delta, visiting and measuring the 3 proposed sites, meeting with numerous companies to establish the market for our trainees, drawing up equipment lists, as well as tentative curricula. Another former ILO staff member, now an independent consultant on demobilization, Ms. Irma Specht, visited Nigeria in December for 10 days to advise on not only technical training but specifically on mindset change and reorientation for our participants- members of the armed groups. These are Niger Delta youth with whom we have been working intensively and extensively for three years.

Now comes the nexus- Academic Associates PeaceWorks has conducted two major studies over the past year, as part of the Niger Delta Peace and Security Secretariat. Chevron funded a major study on job creation, including traditional livelihoods, current forms of income generation and job creation potentials in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. This complements the Technical Needs Assessment mentioned earlier. Thus we have an in-depth knowledge of what is on the ground now and what are the possibilities. In addition we have a comprehensive study of all of the armed groups in the 5 states in which PaS operates- Ondo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom. (all studies are available upon request) As our work focuses on the members of the armed groups, the goal is to link these youth with training and employment opportunities. But- this training must be accompanied by all of the other elements of the MPCCs- especially counseling and mindset change.

Very important of course is that the youth must be linked with real jobs at the end of the training. Many people say that the Niger Delta youth are too used to easy money and will not accept normal jobs. While some indeed are incorrigible, especially the heavy users of drugs or drink, many would be only too happy to drop out of the cycle of violence. Our study of armed groups shows that 82% of the members of armed groups would drop out if they had real jobs. We are working with DfID's Regional Conflict Adviser, Mr. James Fennell, on designing a "Deep Demobilization" programme to help members of armed groups in the Niger Delta withdraw and keep themselves removed from violence.

It is a huge challenge, especially as some top people in government, the military, companies and society benefit from this violence. However as more and more Niger Delta youth realize the costs of this violence, more are willing to make a change. As the tribute to Casi says:

How many more vibrant Niger Delta youth will die needlessly through violence?

Let Casi's death be a lesson to all of us

Let us re-integrate these youth, with meaningful, fulfilling roles to themselves and to society. ■■■●

Proactive Approach to Peaceful Elections in the Niger Delta

By Maxwell James, Project Coordinator



Delta Youth enjoying the music of 'Barrister Smooth' during Warri Rally. The T shirt says "Niger Delta Youths for Nonviolent Elections"

The imperative of peace and development in the Niger Delta region cannot be over emphasized in view of the strategic importance of the region to Nigeria's socio-economic development. Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) has been involved in confidence building in the region over the years and lately conceived a holistic Nonviolent Election Initiative in 20 local governments of the core Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. The project as a whole engaged a total number of 1,000 youth leaders (including members of armed groups) and 400 others who worked as peace ambassadors before and during the April elections in Nigeria.

The objectives of the initiative were to encourage the youths to register and to actually vote, help them to encourage candidates to participate in issue based campaign, train them in early warning signs and responses to election conflict, and monitor and observe the elections in their localities.

Armed with these objectives, AAPW swiftly went into action by adopting a series of activities aimed at facilitating the success of the project. These activities which included rallies, voter education campaign, Training of Trainers (ToT) in election monitoring, Town Hall Meetings and Election Observation were carried out.

For instance, the rallies that were billed to take place in all the 3 states could only take place in Warri following growing tension that was raised by the primaries election at that time. However the Warri rally



Nonviolent Elections Warri Rally, November 2006

was a huge success considering the mass of the youths that turned out to demonstrate their love for peace during the run-up to the election. The youths numbering about 500 in a motorcade held Warri and environs spell bound preaching the message of nonviolence during the election, with the popular musician Barrister Smooth leading the train with his Ijaw music rendition.

To drive home the need for adequate sensitization in the build-up to the election, AAPW relying solidly on the principle of community partnership/sensitization to effect change, visited the 20 conflict-prone Local Governments involved in this project during the Christmas and New Year period and met traditional rulers, youth leaders and women groups in various community gatherings to emphasize the importance of participating in the voter registration and the actual election process. As part of voter education campaign efforts also, AAPW did not rest on its oars in ensuring a complete coverage of all the segments of the Niger Delta Society. Before the election period, AAPW conceived the idea of broadcasting a 13 episode television series entitled "Solution Hour for Peace" that ran before, during and after the elections proper. The television programme that was broadcast on both AIT and NTA networks was so welcomed by the viewing public because of its wide range of interesting episodes varying from; voter registration exercise; election observation; issue based campaign; mandate protection to incisive interviews with stakeholders working on election projects. AAPW "Solution Hour for Peace" featured prominent individuals such as the Rivers State INEC Chairman, Army Brigade Commander, Director of NOA, Police Commissioner, Students and Youth Leaders. It also included relevant clips of national meetings dealing with elections. The last episode showed the youth, chiefs and community members of Warri SouthWest Local Government, best known as MEND territory, actively participating constructively in the democratic process.

It has been said repeatedly that one of the major problems of Niger

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Proactive Approach to Peaceful Elections in the Niger Delta (Contd)

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Delta is her lack responsive leadership commitment. To address this, AAPW also as part of its Nonviolent Elections Project carried out well attended and publicized Town Hall Meetings in all the 20 Local Governments to get the politicians make commitments to the people as regards their programmes of action. This informed the basis in which these communities want AAPW to re - organize such meetings to bring the elected officials to task and to monitor their performance.

The formation of Nonviolent Election Committees (NECs) is discussed in an article by Lucky Duma. The NEC members also asked to be official election observers. Therefore AAPW fielded 1000 youth and 400 NEC observers for the April 14 and 21 elections. Using SPSS, Godwin Egbulefu, our computer analyst, and Stella Akani have done a state-by-state statistical analysis of the Election Observers Checklist, which was used by a number of domestic observer groups.

We are grateful to a number of donors/supporters for funding and technical input:

The U.K. government's Department for International Development (DfID) for 7 month funding and faith in the ability and desire of the Niger Delta youth to engage constructively in the democratic process. The Nonviolent Elections Project has shown that 1000 youths can work as Election Observers for only minimal logistics money and 40 youth leaders cheerfully work as Master Trainers for just stipends. Money is not the only consideration.

The United States Institute for Peace for funding of the Nonviolent Elections Committees for a period of 2 months mid-March to mid-May

Also USIP for training 6 of our project officers in election conflict

IFES for training 3 of our project officers in EVER-Election Violence Education and Resolution

National Democratic Institute for training in facilitation of Town Hall Meetings and use of their training handbook and Election Observers Checklist

The UNDP elections project for continuing technical advice

Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) for salaries and logistics of the 40 Master Trainers and 3 State Monitors, as part of an on-going Early Warning System in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States

As a result of the success of the Nonviolent Elections Project, the Dutch and Canadian governments have expressed willingness to fund continuation of the Nonviolent Elections Committees and Town Hall Meetings. We thank the international community for its interest and support of engaging the Niger Delta youth in their own democratic process.

Constructive Engagement of Niger Delta Youths

◀● Continued from cover page

development in the region.

The Demobilisation component which is being coordinated by the Academic Associates Peace Works, (AAPW) commenced its activities during one of the most intensified period of violence in the chequered history of the region. Indeed within the last thirteen months, insecurity, manifested in hostage-takings, agitation and criminal gangs, has become a daily phenomenon due primarily to the perceived neglect of the region by successive Nigerian governments.

To better understand the phenomenon of violence and insecurity, AAPW carried out a research on armed groups, militias, cults and drugs in the five target states of the region-Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Ondo and Akwa Ibom. The research team which had erudite Dr. Sofiri Peterside and myself as the Research Director and Assistant Director respectively was primarily aimed at strategically generating information on Niger Delta militia, armed groups and ascertaining the role of hard drugs in exacerbating the armed conflict index in the delta. This will be used as a mechanism for developing a framework for the proposed youth reorientation and mindset change. Moreover, it will be used as a basis for identifying key groups and their leadership across the delta that would benefit from the envisaged economic opportunities derivable from the Job Creation component. The research findings and recommendations have been quite revealing about the varying ideological foci, modus operandi as well as structural differences in the armed groups in the various states. Significantly, it was observed that poor socio-economic background, prevalent large-scale regional poverty and illiteracy were common amongst majority of the members of armed groups across the three states. Far-reaching mitigating recommendations based on peculiarity of the individual states were proposed for implementation by relevant stakeholders.

The study no doubt has deepened AAPW's understanding and appreciation of the regional conflict dynamics, actors and the influence of hard drugs in driving the conflict situation in the delta. It is therefore against this background that we crave the indulgence of all stakeholders in the delta including youths to join hands for a more sustainable and peaceful region.

This voluminous study is now available electronically, and we hope to publish it as a book in the near future. ■●

The People of the Niger Delta Speak Town Hall Meetings Communique



Town Hall Meeting, Kolokuma/Opukuma LGA, Bayelsa State

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) organized a number of Nonviolent Elections Activities in 20 local governments of Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States, in preparation for the April 2007 elections. These include a Nonviolent Election Rally in Warri, voter education, training of 3 State Monitors and 40 Master Trainers, training of 1000 election observers, a weekly television series entitled Solution Hour for Peace, and weekly meetings of Nonviolent Elections Committees in the 20 LGs. Town Hall Meetings were organized in the 20 local governments, with the objectives of creating awareness among the citizens on the importance of participating in the upcoming general elections and of identifying issues of top concern to the people of the specific local governments. These issues will be analyzed in our planned post-election monitoring of performance of elected officials.

While the usual Niger Delta problems such as: Lack of Good and Participatory Governance, Lack of Participation in the Oil and Gas industry, Lack of Socioeconomic Development and the Continuing Militarization of the Region featured prominently, a number of issues were repeatedly mentioned at virtually all of the Town Hall Meetings. These include:

- It was agreed very strongly that only free and fair election can restore confidence and faith in government and guarantee good governance which is an antidote for violence of any sort.
- Communities must be given the freedom to democratically choose their representatives in order to ensure free and peaceful participation in the electoral process. This is necessary because political parties have been fomenting troubles by imposing candidates against the wishes of the people.
- The meetings decried the use of money by politicians to buy over people's conscience. Moreover, this money is meant for the development of their communities. It is also a recipe for electoral violence because money meant for development is siphoned at the detriment of the masses.
- Another major problem that leads to electoral violence is political cronyism where a few friends and family members share council funds to the detriment of the entire council area's development. The meetings observed that only when development is spread that peace and harmony will reign. Politicians must see elective office as a call to serve the people.
- Apart from the corrupt tendencies of the elected officials, the meetings also observed that the council chairmen and other elected officials hardly reside in the council areas because they are always accountable to the godfathers that impose them on the people. This evil should stop in order for peace to reign in our communities.
- Civil Society Groups in collaboration with the traditional governance institutions should monitor and hold political parties and their winning candidates accountable to their election manifestoes and campaign promises after election.
- Instead of allowing the youths to be charlatans and renegades, the meetings called for the creation of job opportunities for the youths in order to have them engaged positively. The oil companies operating the area should be responsive to the people. CSOs should ensure that these companies reciprocate the gestures of benefiting from their host communities.
- All of the Town Hall Meetings resolved to form coalitions called Nonviolent Election Committees (NECs) which will be charged with the responsibility of monitoring the elections and the performance of the elected officials, facilitated by AAPW.

Specific issues mentioned by Local Governments include:

Rivers State

Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, 23rd February 2007
Stanley Worathu and George Sample, Master Trainers

1. That in the spirit of the much needed free and fair election in Port Harcourt City Council Area, the participants strongly affirm their commitment to any effort aimed at bringing peaceful elections because the 2003 election was marred by huge irregularities thereby producing unpopular candidates that never represented the interests of the communities.
2. Nongovernmental organizations should facilitate a local council coalition against corruption. This will help community people know who truly represents them.
3. Oil companies and other civil society organizations should organize training for local government officials in the areas of good governance and accountability. These will help them to be responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people.

Emohua Local Government Area, 24th February 2007
Chief Aho Okoaha and Wosu Samson, Master Trainers

1. The local government participants call for the relocation of INEC from the local council because election administrators in collaboration with the council chairmen are culprits in rigging elections

2. Government and oil companies must ensure the provision of basic amenities like potable water, electricity, schools and health care facilities in order to have a peaceful environment to conduct credible elections.

3. Niger Delta freedom fighters like Asari Dokubo should be released immediately. This will help in sending positive signal that the Niger Delta people are not victimized.

Degema Local Government Area, 27th February 2007
Sunny Iwo and Daniel Yellowe, Master Trainers

1. Though the election body has made good effort to ensure and instill confidence in the electoral process, the meeting views the use of corps members as ad hoc staff as gross inefficiency largely because they are not given the required training to carry out the task. Also they recruit political party's members as ad hoc staff. This, meeting observes could cause massive rigging.
2. The experience of Degema people in 2003 election leaves so much to be desired because electorates were chased out with clubs, knives, guns and other dangerous weapons in the presence of security operatives therefore the meeting challenges the various security outfits that are working on the electoral process to be vigilante in their duties.
3. The meeting calls for the continuous collaboration of community elders with police and other law enforcement agencies to bring about credible elections come April.

Gokana Local Government Area, 2nd March 2007

Tor-ue Gladman and Pabon Baribene, Master Trainers

1. Politicians are cautioned to stop forthwith the idea of buying guns and other arms for youths to intimidate their opponents because this portends great danger to the electoral process.
2. Civil Society Organizations must collaborate with traditional governance institutions to ensure that politicians are persuaded to deliver on their campaign promises. Also NGOs like AAPW should educate the youths on the dangers of electoral violence. The meeting suggests seminars, symposia, and trainings.
3. The church and family front should work in partnership with traditional governance institutions in order to instill our old values that are gradually eroding.
4. Civil Society Groups should get involved in the education of women as the custodian of our family values to participate actively in the political process. This can be achieved through the mobilization of support with the collaboration of religious and traditional institutions the meeting suggests.

Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, 23rd February 2007

Waleru Henry and Douglas Chiindah, Master Trainers

1. The meeting decries the use of money by politicians to buy over people's conscience. Moreover, this money is meant for the development of their communities. It is also a recipe for electoral violence because money meant for development is siphoned at the detriment of the masses.
2. Family values must be restored in order to check the excesses of the youths who have become a willing tool in hands of some inordinate politicians. The meeting also advocates for the provision of employment opportunities for the youths in order to keep them out the street. NGOs and oil companies should work towards the identification of the basic needs of the region and train the youths in such fields. This, the meeting identifies can check electoral violence and other violence practices in the region.
3. The government of the day should encourage the participation of more women in the political process in order to promote decency in the system. The meeting identifies women as the engine room of promoting transparency.
4. The government has the responsibility and the political power to curb the inflow of small arms in the community except the government has ulterior agenda. Therefore, all effort must be put in place to check the spread of arms.

Okrika Local Government Area 3rd March 2007

Desmond Iyalla Promise and Okisa Ochemiebina, Master Trainers

1. The meeting believes if all the NGOs have been doing their job properly, peace should have returned to Okrika. But as a mark of commitment to ensuring peaceful elections, the entire community is working towards a peaceful, credible and hitch free election.
2. The meeting acknowledges the presence of security operatives in the community as a trauma to the continuous existence of the Okrika citizens and it has also eroded the communal spirit in Okrika people. Therefore the meeting calls for a genuine reconciliatory meeting to be facilitated by an unbiased NGO to that ensure peace and harmony return to the once peaceful community.
3. The meeting condemns absolutely the unfortunate action of some Okrika sons in high places to continue to sponsor their youths to cause maximum mayhem. The meeting calls on all warring factions to disarm forthwith in order to pave way for free fair and credible elections in April.

Khana Local Government Area 1st March 2007

Duumaa Lucky and Atu Ledum, Master Trainers

1. Politicians are cautioned to stop without delay the idea of buying guns and other arms for youths to terrorize their opponents because this portends great danger to the electoral process.
2. Civil Society Organizations must collaborate with traditional governance institutions to ensure that politicians are persuaded to deliver on their campaign promises. Also NGOs like AAPW should educate the youths on the dangers of electoral violence.

Asari Toru Local Government Area 1st March 2007

Boyle Arolon and Eferabo Omiete, Master Trainers

1. The experience of the people in 2003 election leaves a sour test in their mouths because electorates were chased out with all sort of dangerous weapons like clubs, knives, guns and machetes in the presence of security operatives therefore the meeting challenges the various security outfits that are working on the electoral process to be vigilante in their duties and

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The People of the Niger Delta Speak (Contd)

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responsive to their duties.

2. The meeting expresses sadness over the continuous detention of Asari Dokubo, an illustrious son of the area by the federal government over treasonable charge despite calls by well meaning Nigerians to get him released unconditionally.

Bayelsa State

Kolokuma/Opokuma 1st March 2007
Lelei Martins and

1. Politicians are the main cause of electoral violence. The meeting identifies poverty as the major reason the politicians use to get their victims. Therefore employment opportunities should be provided for the teeming youths in order to engage them positively.
2. National Orientation Agency (NOA) is not doing its mandated work of sensitizing the general public. For instance no voter education materials are around the community to sensitize the people on the evils of electoral violence.
3. The meeting identifies a venue under the bridge as better venue carry out such meeting because it is more central to all violence activities in the community.

Nembe Local Government Area 6th March 2007
Bob Diepreye and Joseph Nimi Dumoye, Master Trainers

1. The meeting identifies rumour mongering as the major cause of electoral violence. Therefore the women particularly should desist from peddling unfounded stories that have the capacity to tear the communities apart.
2. The meeting also acknowledges the importance of such a meeting in the build-up to the election but insist that such meeting should be organized strictly for politicians that always foment trouble. Also, traditional chiefs are always biased in terms of dealing with crisis; particularly they support politicians. The participants all agree to work towards a common front where peace will reign.
3. Holding on to political power also heightens tension in the build up to the election. Therefore power rotation must be encouraged in order to give everybody a sense of belonging. A situation where a single family holds on to political power will not promote participatory democracy.
4. The State House of Assembly should make a law that will enforce elected official to reside in their communities because elected official in the oceanic areas prefer living in the state capital.

Brass Local Government Area 12th March 2007
Wokaliwei Promise and Lucky Temebara, Master Trainers

1. The meeting also acknowledges the importance of such a meeting but insist that such meeting should be organized strictly for the youths that always foment trouble. Also, traditional chiefs should be objective in terms of dealing with crisis particularly issues that could cause electoral violence.

Yenagoa Local Government Area 28th February 2007
Vincent E.M. and John Akunama, Master Trainers

1. Family values must be restored in order to check the excesses of the youths who have become a willing tool in hands of inordinate politicians. The meeting also advocates for the provision of employment opportunities for the youths in order to keep them out the streets. NGOs and oil companies should work towards the identification of the basic needs of the region and the train the youths in such fields. This the meeting identify can check electoral violence and other violence practices in the region.
2. The government of the day should encourage the participation of more women in the political process in order to promote decency in the system. The meeting identifies women as the engine room of promoting transparency.

Ekeremor Local Government Area 2nd March 2007
Anyamah Richard and Owelenze Godspower, Master Trainers

1. Ekeremor community agrees that a lot needs to be done to restore public confidence in the electoral process. The security agencies should be neutral in the discharge of their duties because they are being perceived as willing tools to rig the election.
2. The meeting agrees that the financial allocation to oceanic communities should not be the same as others because they have more challenges to contend with compared to up land communities. A lot must have been done to check cases of injustices that ultimately lead to violence of any sort
3. INEC should recognize the logistic difficulties in the Ekeremor communities. Therefore voting materials and distributions should be planned accordingly.

Southern Ijaw Local Government Area 13th March 2007
Africanus Williams and Ayabowei Godgift, Master Trainers

1. The meeting agrees that the financial allocation to oceanic communities should not be the same as others because they have more challenges to deal with, compared to others.
 2. INEC must recognize the logistic difficulties in the oceanic communities. Therefore voting materials and distributions should be planned accordingly.
 3. The meeting agrees that no candidate poster should be defaced in all the communities in Southern Ijaw local government area as such tendencies could lead to electoral violence.
 4. The meeting canvasses for rotation in elective offices to give all communities a sense of belonging.
 5. After the elections, all acrimony that might have arisen should be addressed at the community level.
- Delta State

Warri South Local Government Area 22nd February 2007
Lucky Ejuro and Adomi Erorote Emmanuel, Master Trainers

1. The meeting acknowledges the ethnic diversity of Warri South Local Government area

therefore ethnic tolerance should be promoted by the traditional rulers and the churches.

2. That in the will of the much needed free and fair election in the Council Area, the participants strongly affirm their commitment to any effort aimed at bringing peaceful elections because the 2003 elections was by huge irregularities thereby producing unpopular candidates that never represented the interest of the community.
3. It was also agreed that only free and election can restore confidence and faith in government and guarantee good governance.
4. Nongovernmental organizations should facilitate a local council coalition against corruption. This will help community people to know their true representatives.
5. Oil companies and other civil society organizations should organize training for local government officials in the areas of good governance and accountability. These will help them to be responsibly.

Uvwie Local Government Area 27th February 2007
Ejovi Egone and Ogaga Akpos, Master Trainers

1. The meeting also rejects in totally the imposition of candidates by political parties in a dubious language called "harmonization". This causes electoral violence because supporters of the popular candidates will always want to seek justice by whatever means.
2. The local government participants also call for the relocation of INEC from the local council because election administrators are always a willing collaborators with the council chairmen to rig elections
3. Government and oil companies must ensure the provision of basic amenities like potable water, electricity, schools and health care facilities in order to have a peaceful environment to conduct credible elections.

Warri North Local Government Area 28th February 2007
Ajulisan Akumagba and Tieno Isreal, Master Trainers

1. The experience of the people in 2003 election leaves so much to be desired because electorates were chased out with all sort of dangerous weapons like clubs, knives, guns and machetes in the present of security operatives therefore the meeting challenges the various security outfits that are working on the electoral process to be vigilante in their duties and responsive to their duties.
2. Often times, local campaign effort by politicians offend their opponents and incite others. Traditional rulers should be able to advice political parties and candidates on the need to maintain moderation and modesty in their campaigns.
3. The meeting condemns in it entirety the act of hostage taking in the area and opine that the criminal act is a direct fallout of many years of unfairness visited on the people.

Warri South West Local Government 2nd March 2007
Christopher Ulluse and Ebi Bebenimbo, Master Trainers

1. The participants say INEC and other relevant government agencies should find a solution to the total apathy of certain groups in the area. This will ensure their positive participation, rather than disruption of electoral process
2. Oil companies and other civil society organization should organize training for local government official in the areas of good governance and accountability. These will help them to be responsive.
3. Niger Delta people should be given increased opportunities to participate in the oil and gas industry through crude oil and product lifting and marginal field allocation and contract jobs - these will create a sense of belonging for the people of the region.

Ughelli North Local Government Area 1st March 2007
Sam Ogeleze and Joshua Tighiri, Master Trainers

1. The meeting acknowledges the importance such a meeting but insist that such meeting should be organized frequently.
2. Our politicians and youths are at the forefront of fomenting trouble. Also, traditional chiefs are always bias in terms of dealing with crisis particularly by supporting politicians. The participants all agree to work towards a common front where peace will reign.
3. Holding to political power also heightens tension in the build up to the election. Therefore power rotation must be encouraged in order to give everybody a sense of belonging. A situation where a single family holds on to political power will not promote participatory democracy.
4. Corruption by individuals in government and companies has led to massive disenfranchisement of the masses. While the masses suffer in abject poverty, the politicians live in opulence. The meeting demands that the role of such individuals be investigated and culprits brought to book.

Burutu Local Government Area 6th March 2007
Tom Ebiakpo Willy and Famous Tare Boubai, Master Trainers

1. Civil Society Organizations must collaborate with traditional governance institutions to ensure that politicians are persuaded to deliver on their campaign promises. Also NGOs like AAPW should educate the youths on the dangers of electoral violence.
2. Civil Society Groups should get involved in the education of women as the custodian of our family values to participate actively in the political process. This can be achieved through the mobilization of support from collaboration of religious and traditional institutions.
3. The participants say INEC and other relevant government agencies should find a solution to the total apathy of certain groups in the areas. This will ensure the positive participation, rather than disruption of electoral process

This communiqué is witnessed on behalf of all the above mentioned LGAs by;

Maxwell James	Project Coordinator - Nonviolent Elections Project	
	Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW)	
Eriye Tuaweri	Bayelsa State Monitor	AAPW
Stephen Iyama	Rivers State Monitor	AAPW
Kingsley Akeni	Delta State Monitor	AAPW

Peace Initiative through Nonviolent Elections Committees (NECs)

*By Lucky Duumaa, Master Trainer
Khana Local Government, Rivers State*

AAPW's Nonviolent Elections Committees were primarily inaugurated in 20 local governments to serve as a community thinktank in detecting and responding to early warning signs of election conflict, including those before, during and after the elections. Each NEC has 20 members including: police; SSS; Civil Defence; INEC (electoral commission); representatives of the 5 major political parties in the area; 2 people from the private sector; and representatives of the Local Government, traditional ruler and civil society. Each NEC is facilitated by the 2 Master Trainers in the area.

The NECs have fulfilled useful functions not related to election issues that are worth sustaining. For instance, they have intervened in a number of communal conflicts. The NECs have also intervened in intercult violence and rivalries involving cult groups such as Deebam and Deewell. For example, at the third meeting of the NEC in Khana local government area, a crisis in Pong community was brought to the notice of the house by Mr. Lucky Duumaa an AAPW project officer and the committee's facilitator. It was at this juncture that a subcommittee was mandated to visit the community to ascertain the immediate and remote causes of the conflict. The subcommittee reported as follows:

- There was a rivalry between two rival cult groups i.e. Deebam and Deewell
- The traditional institution in the community took side in its quest to resolve the matter
- Two persons lost their lives in the crisis and several others were wounded and properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed
- The community's internal crisis resolution mechanism failed to adequately arrest the situation
- It was also revealed that there was subsisting chieftaincy tussle in the community

NEC however decided to intervene in the crisis by ensuring that regular meetings were held with the leadership of the cult groups with the view to finding lasting solution to the problem. Separate meetings held with the community's elites to address the problem once and for all. Also, a meeting was held with the priests of the traditional deities to explore the traditional means of solving the problems. Contacts were made with appropriate Ministry of Rivers State Government. Finally, as a way of equitably solving the problem, NEC sought relief materials like food items and cash for the displayed individuals including the members of the cult groups. Effort is on-going to consolidate the peace recorded to achieve lasting peace and development in Khana by initiating peace accord to be signed by all warring factions.

However, peace restoration is an on-going process and all hands must be on deck. The NECs have no doubt generated a lot of interest and respect among the various communities in which they operate, and wish to continue, even after the election period.

Songhai Workshops for Master Trainers; Building the Capacity of Niger Delta Youth

*Bob Diepreye, Master Trainer
Nembe Local Government, Bayelsa State*

As part of the effort to build the capacity of the 40 youth leaders chosen as Master Trainers for the Nonviolent Elections Project, a three day training on Conflict Transformation and Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) was organized at Amukpe, Songhai in Delta State on the 29- 31 January 2007. Each of the 20 Local Governments that features on the AAPW Nonviolent Election Project has two Master Trainers, some of whom were identified during the voter education campaign, some are leaders of youth groups, and some were nominated by their communities. The training had the objectives of redirecting the mindset of the youths from participating in election related violence, building their capacity in managing conflict and other related issues as well as equipping them with the requisite knowledge to train others.

The second workshop held on March 8-9, 2007 was intended to analyze the success or shortcomings of the first 5 weeks of the project, to refresh old subjects and to give further training on specific election issues. Training and vital materials were offered by IFES, USIP and NDI, as well as the standard AAPW handbook.

After the initial workshop, Master Trainers organized Town Hall Meetings during the months of February and March. After the refresher workshop, we facilitated formation of the Nonviolent Election Committees. In April we also conducted 2-day training of the 50 Election Observers from each of our local governments. We supervised the election observation on April 14 and 21 and submitted completed checklists to our State Monitors. In addition, we as Master Trainers are conflict monitors in the Early Warning System and complete weekly reporting forms designed by IFES' EVER project. These are then passed to our State Monitors, then to the Project Coordinator, then to the Executive Director. In case of an immediate crisis, we contact the ED directly, who then decides on an appropriate response.

My best and most memorable experience as a Master Trainer was the Town Hall Meeting AAPW conducted, for which I was the moderator. The entire community gathered, and the hunger for peaceful election was evident as all stakeholders expressed their desire for constant town hall meetings. Chiefs, elders, women, youths now see me as a messiah of peace, courtesy of AAPW.

Voter Education: Campaigning for Community Participation in Elections.

Stella Akani, Stephen Iyama & Gospel Tamuno

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) organized and carried out community voter education activities in 20 local government areas in the 3 core Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. The communities in these local government areas, at the end of the voter education exercises, expressed gratitude and sincere appreciation to AAPW for this exposure.

In Rivers State, the exercise commenced first in Okrika LGA, because of the area's peculiar history of violent communal conflicts. Exercises in other communities followed thereafter. The voter education exercise was led by Gospel Tamuno and Stephen Iyama, two citizens of Okrika, JP, as Gospel is popularly called, and Stephen are now staff of AAPW working with ex-militants on Nonviolent Elections. They were assisted by Stella Akani, AAPW Demobilization Officer in Port Harcourt, JP, now Justice of Peace, and Stephen are working together to bring peace and stability not only to Okrika communities but to the entire Niger Delta region. This assertion was evident following the warm reception accorded them and their colleague Stella, when they paid courtesy visits to the Joint Task Force (JTF) Commandant and community leaders everywhere they go.

Every community they visited, the message remains the same: community members as citizens of Nigeria should exercise their fundamental human rights by actively participating in the democratic process such as voting. Other issues discussed during the voter education exercises include: Election in a Democratic Rule; The Right to Vote as a Youth; Voter Registration/Revalidation Exercises; Time to be Active; and Youths and Electoral Violence. The old saying that 'language is the greatest tool for human understanding' became apt when JP and Stephen, both speaking in Okrika dialect, informed the youths on the need to register and actually vote. Similarly, Stella used the Ikwerre dialect to speak to Ikwerre communities that were involved in communal conflicts with one another. According to her, 'the search for peace and credible free and fair election is everybody's business'.

At the end of each exercise, community members through their leaders expressed willingness to mobilize their people to register or revalidate their voter registration in order to vote. They also thanked the voter education team for finding time and courage to visit them. They promised to cooperate with any institution that will bring peace and development to their area.

During the months of December 2006-January 2007, voter education was conducted in 8 Local Governments in Rivers State, 6 in Bayelsa and 6 in Delta State by AAPW staff who are indigenes of the areas.



Citizenship & Leadership Training Camp: A Proactive Approach to Youth Violence & Restiveness in the Niger Delta

*Casimir Boate, Gospel Tamuno &
Justice Eleru (Demobilisation Officers)*



Casi Boate delivering lecture on Mindset Change during the ND Youth Camp, Aluu September 2006

Political violence has been a serious problem in the Niger Delta. It rears its ugly head before and during elections when politicians engage youths in political thuggery and other activities so unbecoming that the security of the nation is threatened. Youth from poor, uneducated families and backgrounds are used to unleash violence and terror on the populace, especially on the opposition groups, on behalf of their political godfathers. Once elections are over, these rewards are not forthcoming. Rather than returning these weapons, these youth groups engage themselves in a range of criminal activities, including illegal oil bunkering, hijacking of vessels (piracy), hostage taking and vandalisation of pipelines.

As a way of refocusing of the mindset of the youths from violence and cult activities and curtailing the continuous reoccurrence of their nefarious activities, a one-week Outward Bound-type training camp was organized by Academic Associates PeaceWorks for selected Niger Delta youths who are involved in cult activities, armed struggle, hostage taking and vandalisation of pipelines. The youth camp was organised with funds from the MacArthur Foundation partnering project and the PaS Demobilisation component. The youth camp was conducted at the Citizenship and Leadership Training Center, Aluu in Port Harcourt. The idea of the camp came from the Demobilisation Officers, who themselves were former members of armed groups. The camp which was aimed at youths, especially ex militia and cult members, was an attempt to maximize their creative potentials in more productive channels. This will in turn help them to maximize their capacity to make informed choices. The selection of participants was conducted by the Demobilisation Officers who identified members of armed groups from conflict and conflict-prone communities. The process allowed for identification of armed groups members and cultists who were involved in most of the hostage taking, kidnapping and vandalisation of pipelines in the Niger Delta. A total of one hundred and twenty participants were invited from

Continued on page 9



Citizenship & Leadership Training Camp: A Proactive Approach to Youth Violence & Restiveness in the Niger Delta (contd)

◀ ● *Continued from page 8*

the 3 core Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. There were also fifteen facilitators.

Each day, from Sunday September 24 to Saturday September 30, 2006, these youths were assembled as early as 5.30 am for morning devotional service. By 6.00 am, led by camp instructors, they went through various physical exercises. These were done based on their Houses, with the House leaders coordinating the process. After the physical exercises, the participants would go back to their various hostels for personal sanitation and later breakfast. Trainings using the Experiential Learning (learning-by-doing) techniques for Mindset Change, Conflict Management and Nonviolence were conducted by the Demobilisation officers in two sessions, morning and afternoon, while trainings on Citizenship and Leadership were conducted by the camp instructors. The sessions were quite interactive and structured in such a way that personal experiences, especially in conflict, were shared. For example, according to the youths, the process/evolution of conflict among the youths in the Niger Delta has to do with feelings of in-group (confraternities) superiority over one another. Confraternities evolved since 1999 as more players, for instance politicians, got involved. These politicians began to import arms, using the members of confraternities as political thugs to enforce their political will. With time this has evolved into crisis, with local confraternities within the delta appealing to national organizational heads for assistance.

Among reasons given by participants for joining confraternities and engaging in violence were money - "want to better myself" and providing security. According to them, youth groups (militants) resort to violence because they want jobs, economic empowerment and better livelihood which government and multinational companies refuse to provide. Other grievances by the militants were that there was no constitutional provision for youths and they therefore felt marginalized. Gas flaring by oil companies has led to ruin in communities and their environment. Compensations that were paid by the oil companies do not reach the communities due to the corruption of oil companies and government officials. According to the participants, the youths in the Niger Delta do not have the connections to gain employment, and job opportunities do not exist. That's why "problems exist". Graduates do not even get chances to write required tests that will enable them be employed by oil companies or government "that's why we're taking this fight home".

Every evening, before sporting activities, the principal of the Centre gave lectures geared towards inculcating the need for personal motivation and striving for excellence. He would therefore emphasize the overall objective of the centre which he maintained was to build future responsible Nigerian leaders of tomorrow. Participants were always enjoined by the organizers to be of good behaviour and orderly in their conduct during their stay in camp.

On Thursday, there were the usual early morning drills accompanied with jogging exercises. Participants were then instructed to join their various Houses for map reading exercises. This is to facilitate the field trip that was planned for the evening. After the map reading exercises, the participants were instructed to pack some clothes and other personal belongings that they would use during the field trip. They were informed that the field trip as well as the sleeping overnight in the bush is to test their endurance. They were also informed that they would be cooking their own food in the bush. Consequently, to encourage the participants to cooperate and cook together, there was a cooking competition among the Houses. The participants were given their cooking ingredients for making various types of soups. At the end of the cooking competition, Purple House came first. There was a Bonfire Night to celebrate the cooking competition and also to mark the end of the camping activities. Each House produced a song that was sung by all participants as they danced around a huge bonfire. The singing and dancing lasted throughout the night. The next morning, the participants returned to the camp amidst wild jubilation. They were informed by the camp instructors to rest for the day in preparation for an inter-House soccer competition in the evening. The soccer match was held between the four Houses in a round-robin method. Each House played against the other until a winner emerged at the finals of the competition.

On Saturday, there was a closing ceremony, with award of certificates to all participants and prizes for the best House and individual performers. While some of the participants departed for their homes in various chartered vehicles at about 1.00 pm, others were seen hanging around the premises of the camp. When asked why they had not left for their homes, they explained that they've enjoyed themselves so much that the thought of going back home makes them very sad! ●



*2 of the 3 Wise Men (JP and Casi)
with their 'Mum', Aluu Camp, September 2006*

MacArthur Foundation/NDDC/Rivers State Government Funded Project Ends!!!

Danjuma Sa'idu, Project Director

From October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2006 Academic Associates PeaceWorks has been conducting series of activities under the MacArthur Foundation/NDDC/Rivers State Government funded 'Promoting Partnering Among Stakeholders in the Niger Delta'. These activities were designed to promote partnerships and improve channels of communication and co-operation among the various stakeholders in the Niger Delta. Initial pilot stages of the project were sited in 3 local government areas of core Niger Delta States: Gbarain/Ekpetiama LGA, Bayelsa State; Warri South LGA, Delta State; and Etche LGA, Rivers State. Khana and Degema LGAs were established under the Rivers State Government funding. Such positive and non-threatening interaction among the stakeholders will also build bridges of trust and reconciliation leading to a reduction in the confrontational attitude exhibited by many stakeholders. It was hoped that the trust generated among the stakeholders as an outcome of these dialogues will assist the stakeholders in initiating more collaborative activities that maximize use of their resources.

Towards achieving these laudable objectives, field offices were opened in all the local government headquarters of the project. Database collection was conducted in these local government areas in order to identify all stakeholders as a prerequisite for developing a model stakeholders' partnership. Training workshops in conflict management, strategy and action planning, advocacy, environmental impact assessment/memorandum of understanding (EIA/MOU), needs assessment and evaluation of services were also conducted. Also, a one-week citizenship & leadership training workshop was organised for members of militant & cult groups in the Niger Delta. Furthermore, training workshops in strategy and action planning was specifically conducted for members of Stakeholder Partnership Committees. These training workshops were organised in order to assist the various stakeholders to initiate more collaborative activities that will maximize the use of their resources.

Key issues raised from these activities primarily center on the lack of social infrastructure and amenities vital to the sustenance of the living conditions of the people. Community stakeholders complained about government's neglect which is evident in the array of abandoned projects which dot the entire area. Communities often decried the spate of abandoned projects, particularly by the defunct OMPADEC while lamenting that the newly established NDDC has not been able to improve on their living conditions. The oil/gas companies operating in the area were also criticized for their discriminatory policies and for not helping to better their lives. Social amenities such as schools, hospitals and transport facilities like jetties were in very deplorable conditions.

It is expected that lessons learned from these activities will draw

attention to the role of the international community to the need of getting proactively involved in oil-producing communities that are experiencing some form of restiveness. There is a general tendency to believe that the actors are some local rough necks. This is not always the case. It is also important for the government and the oil companies to not be in denial of the issues that are cropping up. The greatest lessons that could be learned from these activities are:

1. Over the years, oil companies and intervention agency like NDDC have tried to effect changes, both within their own internal processes and in the management of their external relationships.
2. It is obvious that community expectations have not been static but rather dynamic. As the days roll by, it will be important for governments and oil companies to begin to seriously consider the idea of profit-sharing with the local communities.
3. AAPW has also been able to show how communities are more concerned with process than outcome. Oil companies and intervention/donor agencies will therefore need to make decisions as to whom to engage, where, when etc.
4. Communities are no longer content with mere consultation but are increasingly demanding being part of the decision-making process in planning projects.
5. Oil corporations must also begin to give serious thought to legacy issues. It is no longer enough to literally jump ahead. Oil corporations must clean up the stables before they move ahead.
6. Increasingly environmental issues, human rights, peace-building, corporate social responsibility, self-determination etc are becoming intertwined. The line between "pure business" issues and political issues are becoming blurred. This is because oil companies have often hidden behind their so-called apolitical stance in order not to get involved. This era is over. Oil companies must be in the forefront of promoting good governance.
7. As the saying goes, "one must not only keep away from evil, but must also keep away from all appearances of evil." Many of the issues that have confronted oil companies have a lot to do with perception. This is because Oil Company employees seem to assume so much and take so much for granted. This mistake is costly. Moreover, the companies must show transparency, accountability and responsibility in all their dealings with their host communities. Finally, the various stakeholder partnership committees established at the final stage of the project have shown restrained interest in partnering with other agencies and civil society groups. This is because a lot of NGOs had visited their communities with promise of attracting development projects to them. This was however not the case as these so-called NGOs never care to come back. This is another example of the broken promises that result in increased frustration and anger among the people of the Niger Delta. ■●

Common Ground Film Festival: Reel Stories for Peace

Danjuma Sa'idu, Festival Coordinator



Susan Koscis of Search for Common Ground, Washington DC, during the Common Ground Film Festival, Abuja 2007

The importance of using visual images to tell stories by different cultures and societies all over the world had been in existence for a very long time. These visual images captured on film are used to teach one lesson or the other depending on the circumstances. Because the visual images are so important and relevant to the people using them, it gradually became a very important medium for communication and interaction. Different societies all over the world had over the years, developed ways and means of sharing their stories. The coming together of various people to share each others stories using visual images are now referred to as 'Film Festivals'. In Nigeria, this film festival was celebrated courtesy of Search for Common Ground, an NGO based in Washington DC with support from UNDP-Nigeria. Academic Associates Peace Works coordinates the festival. The festival was held from Tuesday February 13 to Friday February 16, 2007 at the magnificent Yar'adua Centre in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city.

The four-day festival was attended by more than three hundred people from the Opening Night (Tuesday February 13) to subsequent screenings with almost a packed house each day. The opening night had Dr. Lanre Adebayo of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) giving the welcome address. Derrick Marco, a South African who has been working on conflict issues with IDASA in Nigeria for the past five years, Mr. Mthembisi Mjikeliso, a Counselor from the South African High Commissioner who represented the High Commissioner and Ambassador Ferguson IHEME from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja as a discussants. The theme of the evening session was "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa" and "In My Country", a feature film about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starring Samuel L. Jackson and Juliette Binoche, was screened.

Subsequent days of the festival had two sessions: afternoon and evening. With the theme The Role of the Media in Peacebuilding, the second day which was the Media Session began in the afternoon with the screening of "Talk Mogadishu", a documentary on a radio & tv station in Somalia and "Responsibility", an episode from the TV drama, The Station. The discussants were Obafemi Lasode from Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Allen Scheid, Executive Producer/Director, Common Ground Production. In the night, which was the Youth Night with the theme Youth - Consequences of Violence and also Valentine's Day, there was first of all, a very interesting and touching discussion about the experiences of two former members of armed groups from the Niger Delta. Their narrative of their experiences in cult activities held everybody spell-bound. Thereafter, the packed house of youth was shown "West Side Story". The youth in the audience were invited to think of this love story as a metaphor for what happens when enemies build relationships across adversarial lines.

The third day had 'Women Making Peace' as its theme, began in the afternoon with the screening of "Peace by Peace", a

documentary about women working in peace-building activities all over the world. The discussants for the session were Hajija Aisha Musa from Kawo New Extension Women Association (KANEWA) and Chief Dr Mrs. P.E.B. Uku, a woman activist from Warri, Delta State. The discussion was facilitated by David Angell, the Canadian High Commissioner. The discussion centered on how inequality between men and women had affected the participation of women in peace-building activities, and the fact that women are often left out of rehabilitation and reconstruction activities of communities affected by conflict. That evening was the first screening in Nigeria of the film 'The Imam and Pastor'. Both Imam Ashafa and Pastor James were present at the screening together with the Catholic Relief Service peace-building team from Plateau and Prof. Ferguson IHEME from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja. The theme was Coexistence and Bridgebuilding. The film, "Improbable Pairs" was also screened that evening. After the two screenings, there was inspiring dialogue with the audience who are mostly youth from University of Abuja. The discussions were mostly centered on Muslim/Christian relationship in Nigeria.

With children from various schools in Abuja participating, the fourth day had two films that were screened: "Dinner for Two" and "Just a Little Red Dot" and the theme for the session was "Children and Peace". Thereafter, there was a facilitated discussion about the two films. An art project was organised for the children where they were divided into groups and asked to produce drawings of what they think peace looks like. For the Closing Night, an internationally acclaimed Nigerian film about corruption and good governance called "Sarowo Ide" was screened. From the discussions that followed after the film, the audience really appreciated that Tunde Kelani's film was included in the festival and that the director himself was present to answer the audiences' questions. Also present to discuss the film was the media representative of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Osita Nwaji.

Each screening had the audiences, large and small, expressing interests and concern for the kind of visual images, inspiration and dialogue that the festival stimulates. The facilitated discussions were rich in bringing the salient issues that affects Nigeria people as a whole. The participants had shown that even films could be used as vehicles for discussing topical issues of not only national but world importance!



Children at the Film Festival sharing their pictures of peace

A Communique Issued at the Niger Delta Youth Summit Sponsored by The Delta State Government



The youth leaders from the Niger Delta, gathered under the auspices of the Academic Associates PeaceWorks, met from October 2- 4 2006 at Songhai-Amukpe, Delta State, deliberated on the familiar and nagging problems facing the Niger Delta region as follows:

1. Lack of Political Representation/Participation.
2. Lack of participation in the Oil and Gas industry.
3. Lack of Socio and Economic Development.
4. Over Militarization of the Niger Delta.

Whereas the Niger Delta region has remained grossly underdeveloped in spite of its being responsible for over 90% of the Nation's wealth; this state of underdevelopment appears unresolved in the near future.

We know that the youths from the region are desirous for justice, equity and development for the people and conscious of the fact that the youth segment of the society is the most affected by the sorry state of the region.

The Nigerian government knowing that the problems of the Niger Delta are economic and socio political, declared the plights of the people a national security risk. Gross unemployment of the Niger Delta Youth is one of the major problems facing the region and resulting in high levels of anger and frustration. These sometimes lead to use of violence to achieve political and socio-economic objectives. It was against this background of discontent and underdevelopment that the Presidential Council on the Socio-Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta was established to address point 3 above.

However points 1, 2 and 4 remain largely unaddressed. After extensive serious discussion, we the Youth Leaders of the Niger Delta, have developed the following:

OUR PLAN FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA

1. In the spirit of the much needed peace and development in the Niger Delta, we affirm **our commitment to peace and security** in the region provided that the government and the oil companies demonstrate sufficient political will and commitment to the development of the region.

2. Conscious that only **free and fair elections** can restore confidence and faith of our people in the government and guarantee good governance and engender the required political participation, which will check the abuse of political office and corruption, we commit ourselves to the principles of **free and fair elections**, come 2007. We, the youth of the Niger Delta, want to participate in electing our leaders, monitoring the execution of free elections and the performance of those elected. We do not want to be used by politicians as thugs and assailants.

3. We condemn in its entirety the nascent act of **hostage taking** in

the region and opine that the criminal act is a fallout of the many years of injustice visited on the people and frustration associated with it.

4. We strongly advocate for **increased consultation** by the government, companies, NDDC and other intervention agencies with the communities. It is only when people own their own development that it can succeed.

5. "**Encouraged corruption**" by individuals in government and companies has led to dislocation of the social fabric. One example is the role of some government officials in paying ransoms that encourage hostage taking as a profit making activity. We demand that the role of such individuals be investigated and culprits brought to book.

6. We wish to be professionally trained as **coastal guards and pipeline surveillance community groups**. In return we will guarantee the safety of pipelines and facilities in our particular areas. We, as stakeholders, are best placed to provide local security, thus enabling a reduction of the military presence in the Niger Delta, which is offensive and often provokes confrontation between the soldiers and the local communities.

7. Former militants should also be **integrated into the security forces**- police, army, SSS- as part of a good disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

8. We demand that the Niger Delta people be given increased opportunities to **participate in the oil and gas industry** through crude oil and product lifting, licenced oil bunkering, oil blocks and marginal fields' allocation and contract jobs.

9. Serious **job training and job creation opportunities** should be undertaken for the Niger Delta youths. Too many initiatives by state governments, oil companies, NDDC and other government agencies have been hijacked by politicians or company staff for their own selfish interests.

10. The Petroleum Technology Development Funds (**PTDF**) are meant for the training of Nigerians, Niger Deltans in particular. We demand that the gross looting and mismanagement of PTDF and other such agencies be investigated and culprits brought to book.

11. INEC should find a solution to the **lack of political participation** of certain groups, especially the Ijaws of Warri South West Local Government. This will ensure the positive participation, rather than disruption of the electoral process.

12. The Federal Government has the responsibility and the constitutional power to **curb the flow of illegal weapons** into Nigeria. The political will to address this issue will reduce the influx of arms and increase the security of the Niger Delta region.

The youths have constituted a seven man working committee to liaise with the different relevant government agencies, oil companies and interventionist agencies to ensure effective implementation.

Facilitated By Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW):

Chief (Dr) Judith Burdin Asuni
Justice Eleru
Casmir Boate
Gospel Tamuno
Wesley Okpara

Songhai Delta Amukpe

October 4, 2006

From the desk of the Executive Director-



Our last newsletter came out exactly a year ago- and what a year it has been! Full of some good things, some bad things, some unfulfilled promises, some unexpected joys.

For me personally, two of my daughters are marrying this year, which of course is a source of happiness all around. I also managed to

survive to my 60th birthday- not a small achievement for someone who has always lived a challenging life. We celebrated three times- with the staff in Port Harcourt, with the staff in Abuja, and then a big birthday bash in Abuja after the elections. My 92-year-old father passed away peacefully after a fulfilled life, which was celebrated by the extended family in the U.S. in October 2006.

This year has also been a year of sadness. Our beloved Casi Boate was killed in a cult reprisal in April. His laughter and thoughtful insights into problems of Niger Delta youth are sorely missed. Another of our 3 Wise Men, Olo, was shot by the police in September and is still in South Africa, receiving physiotherapy with the hope that he will walk again. Two people were also killed in our office in November in another cult attack- one an Icelando (the focus of the reprisal attack) and the other an innocent student- both members of the committee planning a rally for nonviolent elections.

When Casi died, I stopped and asked myself why so many people close to us have become victims of violence. I believe it is because we have chosen to work with members of the armed groups in the Niger Delta, who themselves have been involved in violence. It is extremely difficult for individuals to take themselves out of the cycle of violence if the environment does not change or they are not removed completely from that environment. We are in the process of compiling the life stories of some of these guys. Some were killed before their stories were finished, while those who are still alive are in the process of finishing their stories. For one who was killed, his widow was left to tell the rest of the story. Entitled 'Stories Through a Lifecycle', we hope to publish them either in a book form or serialize them in a newspaper or magazine. In hearing about how the guys became part of armed groups, we are struck with the thought, "There but for the grace of God go I".

I think back on all of the promises made to these guys at the time of the disarmament and demobilization process in late 2004- scholarships, skills training, job creation, psychosocial counseling, career counseling. It is partly frustration from these unfulfilled promises and partly lack of any constructive engagement that have allowed so many members of the armed groups to slip back into violence.

Come May 30, we anticipate working with the new Delta State Government on a proactive approach to issues of the Niger Delta youth. We look to the new Delta State as a pilot of good governance, accountability and political will. Only when these

principles are implemented in each state of the Niger Delta will we be able to break the deadly cycle of violence that has taken the lives of so many vibrant young men. ●

Judy Asuni



Living and Learning Together Lessons from Afar

Dorothy K. Payi

After working in an 'environment' like AAPW and meeting all kinds of people (colleagues and acquaintances), I thought I could not have had a more fascinating experience. Well, even when I thought of meeting more people home and abroad, I assumed it would be one of those ordinary every day things where you smiled or shook hands and life goes on but I guess I was wrong because it all changed when I went to the International People's College, Helsingor, Denmark where about 60 people from over 25 countries gathered for 6 months to live, work and study. It was a period of learning from one another; respecting values and appreciating the most bizarre things (believe me). We had the most wonderful group of teachers and staff who taught us a lot about sharing, caring and living as one. There was Kristof the Danish Principal, Ayman the Palestinian chef, Garba the Mauritanian teacher with his Norwegian wife, Runa and so on. It was a wonderful blend of cultures and nationalities. I learnt how to speak Danish, I joined the choir group and we had amateur nights where we displayed our 'talents', (I even sang a song in Danish!). We didn't just have fun; we did a lot of studying also. We took classes in World/Global Issues, Asian and African studies, held a weekly debate class where all the doors were open for everyone to join in- discussing political, socio-economic issues of the moment; We also learnt a lot about Denmark and the Danes. We did so presentations on special days like the Human Rights Day, World Earth Day, International Women's Day, etc, that I have become so good with Microsoft Powerpoint.



Dora and Friends at IPC, Denmark

Those months that I spent with my friends and the people I adopted as family opened my heart to a world made up of very special, interesting people who touched my life in their own special ways. It was a truly beautiful, enriching experience that preached world peace, international understanding and tolerance, and taught us to be responsible world citizens. ●

Here & There

Kaine Bob-Manuel and Dora Payi

Participation in National Meetings

● Prior to the April 2007 elections, a number of national meetings were held in Abuja. One with Moral Leaders was held in late February, organized by a Catholic and Muslim



Judy Asuni at the SPSP conference, January 2007 Abuja

coalition. Our Executive Director, Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni, gave the keynote address which featured 4 youth who had been used as political thugs in previous elections. JP Gospel Tamuno and late Casi Boate spoke on their experiences in Rivers politics, while two youth from Kano told how they had been employed as political thugs. The similarities were striking, in that regardless of the region of the country, youth are used and dumped by politicians. All four youth strongly urged others to not let their lives be disrupted by political thuggery.

● Casi and JP also spoke to hundreds of youth on Valentine's Night at the Common Ground Film Festival in Abuja. Their talk was followed by an old American film, "West Side Story" which tragically portrays the effects of intercultural violence. The students from the University of Abuja were so touched by the story of Casi and JP (who fought on opposite sides of the Ateke/Asari conflict of 2003-2004) that they invited the speakers to come to their campus and talk on the dangers of cultism. Sadly a young couple from UniAbuja was killed that very Valentine's Night in a cult-related attack.



Judy, Casi, JP and Dora during Casi's birthday

● Judy also participated in a national meeting of NGOs, organized by the Government/Civil Society Partnership, that focused on the April elections. She facilitated a syndicate group on security issues. The meeting resulted in the formation of CISPAD, which in turn facilitated a national Joint Security Committee. This model is similar to the NECs which we had started earlier in the Niger Delta, which in turn was similar to what we had done in Karu Local Government during the 2003 elections. See how ideas expand!

● Judy was also made a Fellow of the Society for Peace Studies and Practice in January 2007.

New Arrivals

● In 2006 AAPW witnessed an increase in its staff strength in the Port Harcourt office, with Maxwell James, a freelance journalist, coming in as the new Nonviolent Election Project Coordinator. Tammy Igberaese is the new Accounts and Admin. Officer, Kaine Bob-Manuel, Programme Officer and Theophilus Wigwe, a driver. The three were former employees of EU-MPP3

activities, as well as observers' checklists for the April 2007 elections.

● Mobola Oloyede has also joined the Abuja office as an intern.

Babies, Babies, Babies!

Bubbly Judith, a baby girl was born on the 22 of June 2006 to the family of Tamuno Gospel (JP), our Port Harcourt Office Demobilization Officer. Eriye Tuaweri, our Bayelsa State coordinator, was also blessed with a beautiful baby girl on 16th August 2006 at 4pm. Her names are Yelaye Asenka (Zainab) Tuaweri. Another of our Port Harcourt office former Demobilization Officers, Wesley Okpara had an addition to his family when Raphael Ayodeji Chinonso Okpara was delivered on November 27, 2006 in Port Harcourt. Salihu Abdullahi, our Abuja logistics officer, is also the proud father of a second son, Mahmoud Aghogho. You will note that we practice national unity by giving our AAPW babies names from different parts of the country.



Salihu Abdullahi with wife, 2nd son Mahmoud Aghogho and 1st son Abdullahi Kolade

Entrances/Exits

● Lauren Berry from the United States visited Nigeria last July and stayed with the AAPW family in Port Harcourt for 2 months. She visited some of the communities with our staff to look at corporate practices of the oil and gas companies. She has since returned to the US for postgraduate studies and has recently married.

● We also hosted Mark Wilson who came as an intern September-December 2006. Mark was a graduate student at the George Mason University and was interested in ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in the Warri area of Delta State. He was pretty proactive and contributed to the success of some of our activities. He was so much interested in the Nigerian culture that he was 'baptized' Bello' (a Northern Nigerian name) before he returned to the U.S.



Father and Son, Mark Wilson and Bob Duffy

● Mohammed Usman, the AAPW driver in Abuja, left the organisation in March to go into large-scale farming with his father in Kaduna. He was replaced by Timothy who just recently lost his aged mother.



Mohammed Usman

Here & There (contd)

Kaine Bob-Manuel and Dora Payi

● Judy's third angel, Kofo Asuni, has left Nigeria for a postgraduate course in international marketing in London. We wish her the best in her new adventure.



Kofo Asuni - Up and Out

● Olo, Herbert Akaluogo, one of the 3 Wise Men, unfortunately sustained spinal cord injuries from a police bullet in a nightclub on September 9, 2006. In spite of his injuries, Olo resumed work as a Demobilization Officer in November and has been in South Africa since December, receiving physiotherapy in the hope that he will be able to walk again. We wish him full recovery.



Dr Judith Burdin Asuni (Middle) with Herbert Akaluogbo, Leader of the KKK group and Casi Boate Icelander. Leadership and citizenship camp, Shere Hills, Jos. January 2005

● A very worrying exit was Imam Mohammed Nurayn Ashafa's sudden departure from Nigeria with a dislocated neck, following a motor accident in late March. A very happy entrance was his return on May 18, walking with only a cane. Ashafa is an example of a modern medical miracle, with a lot of assistance, financial support, and prayers from well wishers all over the world. Ashafa and his "twin" Pastor James Movel Wuye, of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, have worked with AAPW on a number of activities over the years.



Pastor James & Imam Ashafa at Art Burdin's Memorial Service in Abuja, November 2006. Ashafa, on the right is now recovering from a broken neck

Wedding Bells!

● Franklin Ejoh, our Project Officer in Warri Delta State married former Ms. Lovelyn Ossai on September 4, 2006. It was a beautiful additional wedding on a very interesting day RAINY DAY!!! But that didn't stop the dancing and singing. You just can't beat the typical Ijaw/Kwale enthusiasm.



Franklin Ejoh and wife, during traditional wedding

● Our own Dr. Bolanle Asuni, one of Judy's angels, wedded Dr. Baba Limann on January 6, 2007 in Lagos. Bolanle is our Executive Director's first Daughter and Baba Liman is the son of a former Ghanaian President. Both are medical doctors in the U.S. We wish this wonderful couple a blissful marriage!



AAPW staff group picture during Bolanle's wedding, Lagos, Jan 2007

● That's not all. Aderinola, Dr. Judy's second angel, also had her Introduction/ Engagement in Lagos on May 5, 2007. Derin, a teacher at the Italian School in Lagos, will soon marry her heartthrob, Tunde Karim, a Lagos businessman. Best wishes folks!!



Tunde Karim and Derin Asuni, during their introduction and engagement in Lagos. May 2007

Attack on the AAPW Port Harcourt Office

● Monday November 20, 2006 started very well, as most AAPW activities would. A group of youth was holding a final planning meeting for a nonviolent election rally in Port Harcourt, when at about 1:45pm, a group of five gunmen along with other accomplices attacked our Port Harcourt office, killing Wariboko Ngeribara (aka Yellow Man) and Betram Ogbonna a Youth Leader from Eneka community in Rivers State. Prince Zuweigha Andabai had a bullet lodged his leg, Godwin Egbulefi had a broken leg, Wesley Okpara (aka Smokey) also sustained injury on his face. It was a very traumatic period for us but we remain grateful to the support of the security agencies, friends, associates and colleagues for commiserating with the families and us during the period. This needless attack was a reprisal for the recent killing of one cult member by another group.

Transition

● It was with sadness that we received the news of the death of Arthur Ford Burdin, much loved father of our Executive Director, Chief Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni. He died on 9 September, 2006 and a memorial service was held in his hometown on his 92nd Birthday, in October. We never met him but we heard tales of his courage, family love and kindness.

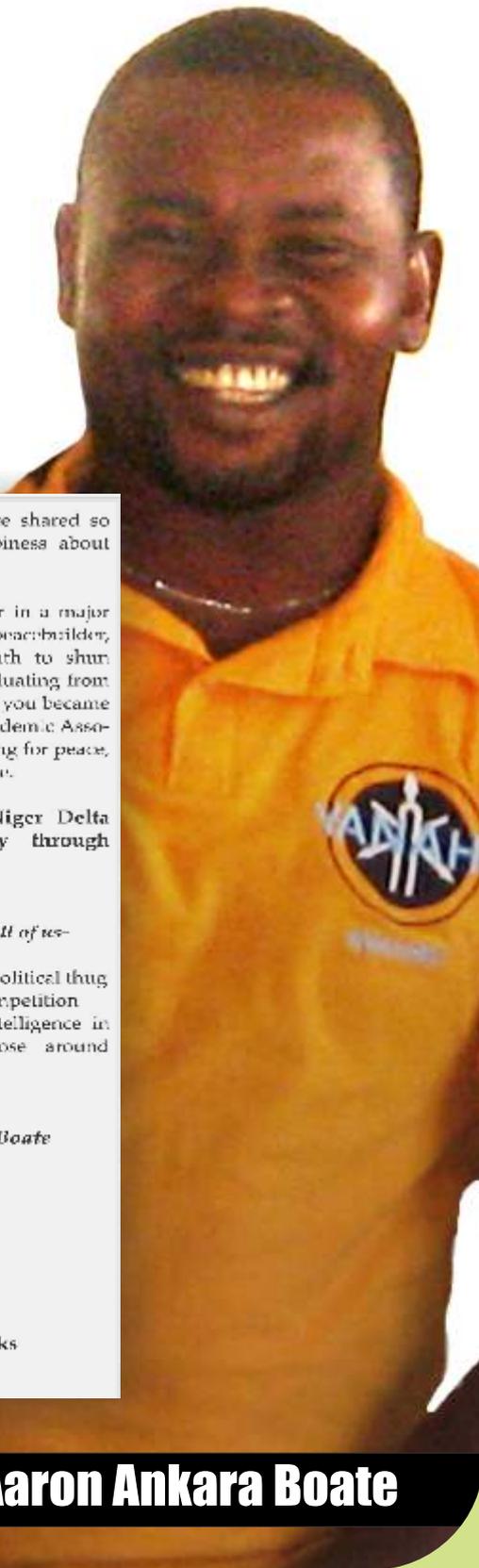


Art Burdin

● We also lost our dear friend and colleague, Casimir Boate (Casi). He was a young graduate of the University of Port Harcourt and one of our demobilization officers who also worked with the Nonviolent Election team in Bayelsa. Although Casi had dropped out of the cult group of which he was a national officer, he was murdered on April 26 in vengeance for the killing of the Greenlander leader in Bayelsa by his former cult group. He was buried on May 4 in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State and a memorial service was held for him on May 19 in Port Harcourt.

MAY THE SOULS OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED CONTINUE TO REST IN PEACE ●

Gone Too Soon



Casi- Just like yesterday, we shared so much laughter, so much happiness about your new found life!

You retired as a national officer in a major confraternity and became a peacebuilder, urging other Niger Delta youth to shun violence and cultism. After graduating from the University of Port Harcourt, you became a Demobilization Officer for Academic Associates PeaceWorks. While working for peace, you were murdered in vengeance.

How many more vibrant Niger Delta youth will die needlessly through violence?

Let Casi's death be a lesson to all of us-

Don't let yourself be used as a political thug
Don't kill or be killed in cult competition
Do apply your energy and intelligence in bettering your own life and those around you.

Casimir (Casi) Aaron Ankara Boate

Born 26th October 1977
Died 26th April 2007
Buried 4th May 2007
Memorial 19th May 2007

May His Soul Rest in Peace.

Academic Associates PeaceWorks
Abuja and Port Harcourt

Casimir Aaron Ankara Boate

Academics Associates PeaceWorks

Mission Statement

"Building capacities for managing conflict through studies, intervention and peace awareness in society"

Objectives of AAPW

To build awareness of the need and possibilities of peace in society.

To empower individuals and groups in building peace, through training and networking.

To develop the framework for the peace process through action-oriented research and intervention in current or potential conflicts.

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