



# PeaceWorks News

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## Water in Ado!

*Kaneng Ja and Roberto Lopez*

*The Honorable Minister of Water Resources, Alh. Muktar Shagari commissioning the new water in Ado, Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State.*

Access to reliable sources of fresh water has defined human history. Our ancient civilizations were built on the banks of the world's great rivers, and the ability to control the river's flow for the benefit of its citizens, livestock, and agriculture, was oftentimes the hallmark of advanced societies. To the members of these ancient civilizations, water was life.

After all, the human body is approximately 80% water, and we can survive only 3 days without it. Those without access to fresh water must spend an inordinate part of their day addressing this basic need. In most developing societies for instance, women wake up as early as 5:00 a.m in company of their children to search for this essential commodity, thus, making the children go to school late or not at all. The need for potable water cannot be overemphasized because even from a religious perspective the Muslim needs water for ablution before prayers and the Christian needs to have a bath before going to Church! Today, there are still millions of people across the globe without reliable access to fresh water,

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## The Warri Forum: A Shared Peace

*Dimieri Von Kemedi*

Today Warri has become synonymous with War; people often playing on the words- Warri, War, War, Warri. Since early last year when a fresh round of violence began in the Warri area, the war weary people of Warri have vacillated from hope to hopelessness on the question of peace in Warri.

Even as factional fighters unleash violence on mainly innocent people for simply being Itsekiri or Ijaw, many Ijaws and Itsekiris continue to dance in the same churches to the melody of Itsekiri, Urhobo or Ijaw songs.

Another place where Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris are doing things together is at the Warri Forum on Peace, Security and Human Rights. The Warri Forum is composed of men and women, chosen from among the Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo communities, on the basis of wide consultations. In the choice of members for the Warri Forum, great consideration was given to leadership credentials and commitment to peace.

The Warri Forum is a product of several months of consultations amongst the three ethnic groups and other stakeholders, including the Federal Government, the State Government, the oil industry and the security agencies. The forum, which, is facilitated by Academic Associates PeaceWorks, was formally launched in November 2003 at Asaba.

Since then three follow-up sessions have been held in Warri. The Forum has combined skills building and problem solving in an attempt to find a common ground. Gradually the Forum members understand each other better (despite occasional flares of temper) and are beginning to work as a team.

Apart from the community members of the Forum, who are from the three Warri ethnic groups, representatives of the police, the State Security Service, and the military have shown a level of commitment that belies the negative image they sometimes have. The oil industry on the other hand has been less active since the production of oil began in some areas. Participation by representatives of the Delta State Government has also been sporadic, although the Forum has been funded by the state government, ChevronTexaco, and USAID.



*One day analysis meeting in Abuja, which planned the Warri Forum on Peace Security and Human Rights. From left; Dep Aigbe, representative of the Inspector General of Police; Commodore Timson, Nigerian Navy; General Azazi, DMI; Senator Patrick Osakwe; Hon Minister R. OritseJafor; Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni; Prof. Thomas Imobighe; Mr. Joshua Otoko, Delta State SSS.*

This year the Forum plans to consolidate the gains of last year (which have been mainly in the area of confidence building) to build and implement a strategy that will help the government of Delta state and the people of Warri in the search for peace.

In 2004 the Forum will continue to hold its regular meetings at least once in a month. The forum will work with committees that it had established to work on important aspects of peacebuilding: Security and Confidence Building, Enlightenment, Advocacy, Joint Projects, and Resettlement.

The Warri Forum on Peace, Security and Human Rights will continue to work to gain the confidence of the Itsekiri, Ijaw, and Urhobo leaders and people in order to achieve its objectives.

Expectations are high amongst members of the Forum, and more so among the people of Warri, who are looking at all directions for the peace they so desperately need. But many understand that the Forum cannot take the place of the government or even that of the people themselves. What the Forum could do, and precisely what it is doing, is to provide a common space for all to share in the search for peace.

## Obasanjo Government Dialogue with Civil Society

*Goodluck Onyegbule, Business Consultant to AAPW*



*The Honourable Minister of the FCT, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai (right) chatting with Sadiu Ibrahim (left) of the Karu BEDC during a cocktail party preceding the Civil Society Dialogue in November 2003*

A new vista was opened in the relationship of Government and the civil society at the inception of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Obasanjo Administration with the creation of a pseudo-cabinet portfolio Special Adviser, Relations with Civil Society. However, the appointment of a level-headed Engr. Abba Gana to the office threw up some sort of contradiction in addition to previously held prejudices: How could a barely democratized President Obasanjo be institutionalizing a relationship with the civil Society?

The maiden interactive forum between the Federal Government and civil society which took place on Thursday, November 28, 2003 at the Sheraton Hotel, Abuja under the auspices of the Special Adviser to the President, Relations with Civil Society, Engr. Abba Gana significantly reduced the prejudices and insinuations of insincerity against the Government. This is because of the broad-based response and attendance by the civil society at the dialogue session. The previous evening, civil society participants had the opportunity to rub shoulders and minds with a number of Ministers at the informal cocktail held at the Sheraton Hotel. Among those present were the Honourable Ministers of the FCT, Defence, Education, Culture and the Minister of State for Defence.

The Forum was declared open by President Olusegun Obasanjo in person. His opening remarks underscored the recognition of the increasing importance and relevance of civil society organizations in the affairs of the country. The dialogue sessions were attended by the entire Presidential Economic Team. Presentations were

given on: generating growth and reducing poverty; budget and expenditure; debt management; tax reform; monitoring and evaluation; public sector reform; due process; NNPC; and agriculture. Expectantly, the team conducted an 'open air crusade' on the new economic reform program of the Government with a buzzword of NEEDS New Economic Empowerment Development Strategy. The economic crusade won many converts and souls for the lord in the Villa.

It was unique and intriguing to see the Federal Government dialogue with the "outsiders" from civil society about the various areas of economic reforms agenda. This is against the old practice where those in government articulated the reforms and proceeded with the implementation while oblivious of the input from other stakeholders despite the impact such reforms usually would have on the people. As a result, civil society turned into ardent critics due to lack of information. Under this dispensation, the dialogue has provided a window of opportunity to see the concern civil society organizations in the country have shown for good governance, social development, law and order, human rights, anti-corruption crusade and the determination to improve the general condition in the society. This window of opportunity created a massive, positive response with the Federal Government and the civil society dialogue. In fact, it was agreed that the non-recognition or abandonment of civil society groups by past Governments has contributed enormously to the weakening of the foundation of our governmental system and the democratic institution. The costly neglect was in spite of the fact that civil society, in all genuine democratic societies acts as the most reliable advocates and pillars of representative government. They are vocal, courageous and forthright in combating dictatorship, corruption, indiscipline and maladministration.

The dialogue session helped to explain to civil society the many important things Government is doing and also explain to Government the demands, the contributions and the expectations of civil society in a most unprecedented forum. The Government sought to carry the civil society along in the implementation of its programme, policies and reforms and ipso facto requested that civil society organizations adjust their stance and role vis-à-vis their posturing during the long years of military dictatorship. The era of mutual antagonism between Government and civil society was expected to now give

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## A Royal Visit

*Roberto Lopez and Bassey Okon*



*Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, escorted by his Excellency, Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu, Executive Governor of Nasarawa State being welcomed by cultural troupes during the Queen's visit to Karu in December 2003*

Decades from now, Karu citizens will still want to share stories about what happened on Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003. These stories will be shared over meals with out-of-town guests and during family gatherings with grandchildren. Karuans will tell stories of how hard the community worked to refurbish the Karu Local Secretariat. Had it ever looked so good? They will say there were seemingly endless lines of children dressed in bright pink school uniforms, all waving along the roadside to greet her. And about the community Cultural Celebration, they will say that it was one to remember. They will say they danced and sang, and that everyone on that day was proud to be a Nigerian. The images of that day will last for lifetimes.

And who was the focus of this excitement? None other than Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II!

In recognition of the cultural diversity of Nasarawa State and Karu Local Government, the Nasarawa State Government and Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) organized a cultural celebration at the Karu Local Government Secretariat and the Esu Karu's Palace. This community event was attended by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II during her official state visit to Nigeria as part of the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Abuja. During her visit to Karu, the Queen also launched the BBC radio

drama, *Voices*, which is sponsored by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the U.K. The Executive Governor of Nasarawa State, Alh. Abdullahi Adamu, was the host of the occasion, which had fellow governors, principal officers of the National Assembly, members of the diplomatic corps, traditional rulers, and other dignitaries as distinguished guests.

Based on the success of the Karu Unity Festival in January 2003, Karu was selected as the Queen's only opportunity to see "real Nigeria". The site of this event was carefully selected to highlight the unique diversity of cultures present in Karu Local Government and Nasarawa State in general. Karu Local Government is a mini-Nigeria, with virtually all of the Nigerian ethnic groups present. Nasarawa State is also a meeting point of various groups from north, south, east and west, being one of the states most centrally located in the heart of the country. With events such as the Unity Festival and this Cultural Celebration, Governor Adamu has taken a proactive approach to encouraging peaceful coexistence of people of diverse backgrounds in Karu.

On the day of the Karu Cultural Celebration and the Queen's visit, we realized how much we had learned by organizing the previous Karu Unity Festival. Organizing our share of duties for the event between members of

● ► *Continued on page 8*

## Peacebuilding Drama

Roberto Lopez

AAPW's proposed television drama with Search for Common Ground, based in Washington, DC and Brussels, continues to make steady progress. This project is designed to target urban youths ages 15-25, which is the group most prone to political, ethnic, and religious violence in Nigeria. AAPW and SfCG collaborated on a radio drama entitled Peace House. Based on the appeal of the radio drama, we are moving ahead with a 2 year project for a television drama of the same name. To date, Canadian CIDA, and a major corporate sponsor have made financial commitments, while President Obasanjo has given strong endorsement to the project. We are currently negotiating various "in-kind" contributions from the Federal Government such as free airtime on NTA's national network, and President Obasanjo has committed the Ministry of Housing to finding a suitable structure near Lagos to be converted into a recording studio which will eventually be turned over to NTA after the project's completion.

As a follow up meeting to their 2-week visit over in August 2003, Allen Scheid, Vice President for Common Ground Productions, Sandra Mellone, Executive Director of the European Center for Common Ground, and Phil Bob Hellmich of their Washington, DC office, visited in December 2003 in order to recommit themselves to the project and meet once again with President Obasanjo. AAPW organized a fundraising reception at our Abuja office for the diplomatic community and SfCG delivered a presentation of their television projects in Macedonia and Cyprus. SfCG and AAPW also met with various companies and other foreign donors working in Nigeria.

Search for Common Ground and Common Ground Productions have produced highly successful television programmes in Macedonia and Cyprus, as well as radio programmes in many African countries. We expect our television drama to reach the Nigerian audience in 2005, following development of a peace education curriculum for the programme, and thorough training of Nigerian professionals in writing and production. Macedonia's drama is entitled *Nashe Maalo* (meaning "Our Neighborhood"). This phrase has become synonymous with a new, non-confrontational way of handling problems. We look forward to a similar reorientation in the minds of Nigerians through this kind of educational entertainment.

## Civil Society contd:

◀ ● Continued from page 3

way to an era of mutual collaboration through regular dialogue, consultation and cooperation.

The Civil Society Dialogue intended to alter the perception of the civil society about Government from cynicism to credulity. How this credulous image will be sustained is the crux of the matter. A way out was canvassed by the Special Adviser himself, Engr. Abba Gana "that this interactive forum will henceforth be a regular event so that in no distant future, all the distrust and frictions of the past would be put behind us", even as he admitted "that there is no way in a democratic set up for all adult citizens to agree on every issue and on every matter before a nation can move forward. This is an impossible condition and impossible expectations". Be that as it may, it was opined that "certainly, there are issues in which it is important to get national consensus either through elected representation or some other ways" such as the articulated views and hard stance of pressure groups e.g. Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

In the main, the civil society dialogue was indeed valiant effort at forging national consensus through sincere dialogue and positive enlightenment and to that extent, it has been primed to be a regular event. At such fora, policy issues would be reviewed and the impact assessed as they concern critical stakeholders, but it was spectacular to behold the President and his economic team espousing NEEDS to a needy audience.

It is a matter of curiosity for many to see how a barely democratic president will nurture a positive and burgeoning relationship with the usually critical civil society group. Will the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo accept in practice that there are issues in society on which we respect and recognize each other's right to differ but without bitterness, anger or hatred? That there are also issues on which we need to continue to talk and gradually reach common ground instead of calling 'operation fire-for-fire', abducting elected executives or expelling State House correspondents. Given that the central mission of civil society is to curb the excesses of the State and its over-zealous officials, increase the margin of freedom for groups and individuals, and encourage the people to compel government to act in the best interest of the people, only time will tell how far the relationship will last. The Obasanjo presidency should prove critics wrong otherwise it will be like Abacha's regime establishing the human rights commission!

## Water contd:

◀ ● *Continued from page 1*

and even in the proximity of the FCT of Nigeria, many residents still struggle to meet the basic need for water.

However, progress was made on January 23, 2004 in Ado, Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa state. This was facilitated by Academic Associates PeaceWorks who has been working in Karu for two years now. Initial funding for AAPW's project in Karu came from GTZ, while the Nasarawa State Government sponsored the second phase.

Academic Associates PeaceWorks had conducted conflict management workshops for 8 communities in the Local Government and set up Peace and Development Committees. An evaluation of social services and employment opportunities was also conducted by Kaneng Ja, Peace and Development Officer and Simon Iya, Community Development Officer of Karu Local Government Council in each of these communities and donors were approached for funding.

For Ado community, water was a priority and from the database of donors compiled by AAPW, the German Embassy, Abuja was identified as a potential donor. A proposal was sent to the German Embassy and approval was given for 5 hand dug wells with hand pumps.

The Director of Academic Associates PeaceWorks Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni and several staff members visited the Honourable Minister of Water Resources, Alh. Muktari Shagari, some time in October, 2003 during which they told him about the grant by the German Embassy to do the wells at Ado. He was very enthusiastic about AAPW's role in mobilizing communities in Karu and expressed a desire to enter into partnership with the organization. He also promised the Peace and Development Committee, Ado 5 free pumps.

Having received free hand pumps from the Ministry of Water Resources, The Peace and Development Committee, Ado decided to use the money that was saved from the donation of the hand pumps to resuscitate two existing wells in the community. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources gave 2 additional hand pumps for the wells making a total of 7 wells. Management committees were established in all the settlements where these wells are located. UNICEF has promised to do facilitate training on water and sanitation, while the Federal Ministry of Water

Resources has made a commitment to give technical training for these committees.

The wells were completed and commissioned on Friday January 23, 2004 by the Honourable Minister of Water Resources Alh. Muktari Shagari. The commissioning ceremony was attended by other distinguished luminaries such as Mrs. Angelika Saake of the German Embassy; Engr. M.K. Abubakar, Director, Water Supply and Quality control (FMWR) and his deputy, Mr. Aletun; Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni, Executive Director of AAPW; HRH Esu Karu, Dr. Bulus Chetubo; the Transition Chairman of Karu Local Government, Mr. Elisha Dachor and all his councilors. A number of press men turned up for this occasion and it hit the headlines of the NTA, AIT, FRCN network news that evening and for 3 days!

The project has not always been easy, as it has brought together a number of groups:

- The local PDC, which itself includes members from about 8 different ethnic groups and educational levels from engineer to illiterate
- The Central PDC of Karu Local Government
- The traditional rulers in Ado
- The German Embassy
- The Federal Ministry of Water Resources
- Water Aid, an international NGO
- UNICEF

The impetus from the communities themselves to undertake development activities increases the resources of the communities, thus reducing the chance of conflict. These activities also bring together people from diverse ethnic, religious, and economic groups, thus building a solid foundation for peaceful co-existence.

However, helping these diverse groups work together has been a learning experience in itself, and is a good example of how local groups, foreign donors and government can partner together.

Proposals have been submitted to a number of embassies for other communities in Karu and as we wrote in the last newsletter, all you can see on the faces of people in Karu is that "we are getting there!"

## Promoting Partnering in the Niger Delta

Allswell O. Muzan, Esq



*Mac Arthur/ NDDC Partnering Project Director, Dr. Allswell Muzan; Mrs. Mercy Ikpe, NDDC Director of Community Development; Chief Bristol. Alagbariya of Bonny Kingdom; and Dr. Judy Asuni, at the Shell stakeholders workshop Warri, Delta State, in February 2004*

AAPW announces the take-off of its Partnering project funded by the MacArthur Foundation of the U.S. and the Niger Delta Development Commission. In October 2003, the MacArthur Foundation approved AAPW's proposal to promote Partnerships and Improved Communication Among Stakeholders in the Niger Delta. The project starts in February 2004 and it is initially expected to last for 2 years.

The initial pilot stage of the project is sited in three local government areas of core Niger Delta States: Gbarain Ekpetaima LGA, Bayelsa State; Warri South LGA, Delta State; and Etche LGA, Rivers State. These LGAs share the following common features:

- They are host communities to one of the biggest oil giants in Nigeria: Shell Petroleum Development Company.

- They have all experienced violent conflicts in the past;

The project is designed to improve channels of communication and cooperation among the various stakeholders in the Niger Delta, in order to maximize effectiveness of the human and financial resources in the region. Such positive and non-threatening interaction among the stakeholders will also build bridges of trust and lead to a reduction in the confrontational attitude exhibited by many stakeholders at present. The trust generated among the stakeholders as an outcome of these dialogues will then assist the stakeholders in initiating more collaborative activities that maximize use of their resources. The project also

aims to establish and gain cooperation for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Track Nongovernmental Advisory Committee for the NDDC. Towards achieving the above objectives, the project will identify and develop a database of stakeholders.

The above objectives fall into three major activity categories:

- The Establishment of a Stakeholders Information and Coordination Center.
- Development of model Stakeholders Partnerships.
- Establishment and facilitation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Track Nongovernmental Advisory Committee for the NDDC.

The Project Director for this project is myself, Allswell O. Muzan Esq, a lawyer/economist. I lead a team of Project Officers and Admin Officers who work centrally from the AAPW Coordinating Center at No. 19 Lord Emmanuel Drive, Rumuomasi, near Air Force base, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The Chairmen of the 3 Local Governments have kindly given us office space in their LG Secretariats, which will ease communication among the various government and civil society stakeholders. The contacts for the central and branches offices are:

Central office in Port Harcourt:

|                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Allswell Muzan  | 0803 341 9433 |
| Jimdorgu Godson | 0803 303 9836 |
| Kate Onuoha     | 0803 310 7660 |

Etche Local Government Secretariat, Rivers State:

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Mercy Meje | 0803 339 9117 |
|------------|---------------|

Gbarain Ekpetaima Secretariat, Bayelsa State

|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| Tari Dadiwei | 0803 316 4572 |
|--------------|---------------|

Warri South Secretariat, Delta State

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Kingsley Akeni | 0802 369 8017 |
| Joel Bisina    | 0802 327 0549 |

## Business and Economic Development Committee (BEDC)

By Sadisu Ibrahim



Members of the BEDC and PDC join AAPW staff for a Christmas Party.

Abdullahi Adamu Sarkin Yakin Keffi and Ms. Deepali Tewari of the World Bank.

The major aim behind the formation of the BEDC was to bring all the business groups together for a common cause and to improve other economic activities in Karu. Since Karu is a gold mine, what is needed is an organized private sector to exploit the business opportunities within the local environment.

Since its formation the following were some of the activities were carried out by BEDC:

- Despite limited resources at the disposal of the committee it has continued to meet regularly with members.
- BEDC has also been provided with useful information about various business opportunities and has settled

disputes among members.

- The Committee has paid for a familiarization tour to the royal fathers where they offered useful advice to committee members.
- The Committee was able to acquire an office in The Karu Local Government Secretariat.
- A solidarity visit to the security agencies was carried out by the committee in order to encourage them to provide a safe environment for business growth and protection of lives and properties.
- Established a very cordial relationship with the Karu Local Government and encouraged the Council to do everything possible to facilitate our activities.
- Continued our productive relationships with AAPW and GTZ. We are receiving tremendous support and encouragement from these two organizations, especially in the area of training, counseling, and other useful discussions on how to best improve business activities for the well-being of our society.

Our hope this year is to be able to furnish our office, to acquire some computers, photocopy machine, and telephone services which will enable the office to function effectively. We therefore hope some of the promises made by various organizations will be fulfilled.

## Royal Visit contd:

◀ ● *Continued from page 4*

AAPW and its creative arm, PeaceWorks Productions, was effective and efficient. We were able to capitalize on our relationships with many of the cultural troupes and quickly direct and choreograph their performances. In the Secretariat, AAPW organized professional cultural dance troupes to perform for the visiting dignitaries and to give Her Majesty a proper welcome to Karu. In order to adequately and fairly represent the diversity of Nasarawa, Governor Adamu invited cultural troupes from every local government in the state to perform at the Esu's Palace for a public community festival and a final show of unity. Constructed by *Voices*, a temporary market display was also toured by the Queen, and the *Voices* project was launched. From the smile on her face throughout her visit, we could all tell Her Majesty enjoyed Karu.

The Queen's visit to Karu received national and international press. There were some misperceptions

created by the BBC press release which referred to the site of the Queen's visit as a permanent sound stage for their *Voices* project. In reality the site was the Karu Local Government Secretariat where an artificial marketplace had been purposely built for the launch of the *Voices* workshop. This discrepancy was noted by numerous members of the international press. Despite these shortcomings, the Queen's visit did provide positive press for Karu and Nasarawa State. Also although the set was dismantled the day following the visit, we are still enjoying the fresh paint and paved road which were by-products of the event.

To the citizens of Karu, they were just thrilled to catch a glimpse of their famous visitor. The images of this historic occasion will surely last lifetimes. Hopefully in the future, Karuans will look back on the occasion and remember to continue celebrating their diversity.

# From the Desk of the Executive Director

## *Partnering for Peace and Progress*

*Judith Burdin Asuni*

When I was asked by UNDP to write one of the background papers for the first international conference of the Niger Delta Development Commission in 2001, I was initially disappointed that I was assigned the topic of partnering rather than governance, with which I was more familiar. However as I researched the topic and interviewed over 35 stakeholders of NDDC, I became more interested in the concept of partnering. Over the past 2 ½ years, our work in peace and development has involved me in partnering that I never anticipated.



A classic example is our work in Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State. GTZ approached us about a conflict management project in Karu, as it was anticipated that any area with an annual growth rate of 40% was likely to have conflict. In the initial 5 months of the project, we went far beyond conflict management to include adult literacy, entrepreneurial training, and capacity building for civil society groups. The Nasarawa State Government picked up funding for the project a year ago and AAPW has since worked with the Nasarawa State House of Assembly and members of the Executive. Simultaneously the World Bank's Community-based Urban Development Project is taking off in Karu, and we are working with the PIU staff. During the lull before elections, we wanted to keep the momentum going, so we decided to train monitors for the upcoming elections, who then worked with the Local Government officials, INEC, police and SSS in ensuring peaceful elections in Karu.

The Peace and Development Committees in the 8 communities following conflict management training each determined priorities for their areas. We then developed a database of donors and taught reps from each community how to write applications for foreign funding. The first successful application was from the Ado PDC to the German Embassy, which funded 5 handdug wells. We also approached the Federal Ministry of Water Resources for free handpumps. With the money saved by not having to buy pumps, the PDC was able to resuscitate two old wells, for which the Ministry gave us an additional two pumps. The Ministry of Water Resources is interested in partnering with us, as civil society groups mobilizing community initiatives and ownership of water sources helps the ministry achieve its goal more effectively.

AAPW worked on the Warri conflict from 1999 to 2001 and established the Warri Peace Forum, with representatives of the 3 major ethnic groups in the area. However when foreign

funding ended, the Forum gradually dispersed as there was no local funding. In 2003 we sought a broader base of support, with funding from USAID, ChevronTexaco and the Delta State Government. The newly formed Warri Forum on Peace, Security and Human Rights consists of not only representatives of the three ethnic groups, but also representatives of the oil companies and all of the security agencies. The emphasis is on civil society, companies and government working together to bring sustainable peace to Warri. For example at the January 2004 meeting, the head of the Joint Task Force, Brig. Gen. Elias Zamani, presented a paper on how civil society can work with security agents in detecting and responding to early warning signs of conflict. During the military era, both government and civil society were very suspicious of each other, but now with a democratic government, we are gradually learning to partner together.

The upcoming AAPW/MacArthur Foundation/NDDC project in the Niger Delta seeks to promote partnering and improved communication among the stakeholders in 3 pilot local governments in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States. We are asking the State Governors to buy in to the project by each financing projects in a second local government per state. We have also been in discussion with the National Poverty Alleviation Programme, about pilot peace and poverty reduction projects, again in the Niger Delta.

These partnerships are not easy, as each partner comes from essentially a different culture- whether it's the bureaucratic one of government, or the profit-driven approach of companies or the conscience-based soft approach of NGOs. Sometimes things evolve spontaneously in response to requests from the community partners themselves, as in our work in Karu. It takes time to develop trust among partners and to determine the working relationship. However the results are well-worth the effort. As the Danmasine Karu said at the end of the commissioning of the Ado wells by the Honourable Minister of Water Resources, life in Karu has not been the same since the peace and development work started. Now the Local Government is alive with activity and people have a feeling of control over their own peace and development. Surely that is empowerment!

Judith Burdin Asuni, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

# Conflict Management, Transparency and Accountability:

## *A Unique Mechanism for Good Governance in Nasarawa State*

*Danjuma Sa'idu*  
Peace Education Project Office

I knew the Nasarawa State Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Adamu, to be a pragmatic leader until during the training of the State Executives, including commissioners and permanent secretaries of Nasarawa State. At the workshop, which was held in October 2003, the Governor exhibited sterling qualities that were worthy of a leader.

This training workshop, which was a continuation of the one conducted for members of Nasarawa State House Assembly in July and August 2003, had as its theme Conflict Management, Transparency and Accountability. On the first day of the 2-day workshop, the Governor, in his characteristic manner, informed the participants that he would use every available opportunity to test them in the skills they would acquire during the workshop. He therefore advised them to pay close attention to what they were taught. And true to his word, the governor stayed throughout the 2-day workshop. This took everyone, including the team of facilitators, by surprise as we were not used to having a Governor sitting with other participants throughout a 2-day workshop.

All the participants were able to exhibit a high sense of responsibility and tolerance and used the relaxed atmosphere of the workshop to actively participate. The governor, whom I consider the most active participant, was always ready to share his experience in certain aspects of governance. In fact, at one point, because of the way he contributed, I was tempted to ask the Governor to come to the flipchart board to facilitate!

My fearless director, Judy Asuni, was full of praise for the participants as they showed signs of maturity. Most importantly, they were not intimidated by the presence of the Governor and his Deputy and so were able to share experiences of their various ministries and departments.

Because the workshop was conducted in the conference room of the Governor's office, we were skeptical about the level of attention we were going to get from the participants. This was because we believed that since the workshop involved members of the state executive, there would be constant interruption from people who might need their attention. Our fears were however allayed by the Governor who reminded the participants that prior to the commencement of the workshop, he had advised them to ensure that their attention would not be diverted by any responsibility from outside. To ensure strict compliance to this directive therefore, security personnel were stationed outside the venue of the workshop to stop people from going in to interrupt the proceedings.

Even though the workshop was conducted during the month

of Ramadan, the Christian participants, in solidarity with their Muslim counterparts, agreed that there would be no tea or lunch breaks throughout the duration of the workshop.

Of particular interest was the request made by the Deputy Governor, Hon. Labaran Maku, to the participants during the Strategy Planning session. He asked them to use the skills of strategy planning to find alternative sources of funding for their ministries instead of relying solely on state or federal funding.

## Peace is Felt in Karu

*Lynda Abur*  
PDC Office, Karu Local Government

For peace to reign, there must be peace within one's self, the home, in the family, with relations and neighbours, only then that peace can radiate to the neighbourhood, the environs and the locality. For every living creature, there is the desire to belong to a progressive union- where there is peace, there is positive progress and peace itself radiates.

Academic Associates PeaceWorks represents a group that one would say has done a lot of thinking and research on how best to educate people on such things as accommodating situations that surround them, to create awareness on how to avert crisis and how best to manage situations.

In Karu, today, especially in the environs of the local government, a kid on the street will tell you that they are taught to shun violence in their words "Trouble and fighting are bad."

Karu is blessed as her populace is beginning to appreciate the effects of AAPW and the PDC. The formation of the PDC has done it all. The committee members are people of different ethnic groups, irrespective of creed and family background, and every member takes peace home to their family, friends and neighbours.

Today, peace is felt in Karu. The atmosphere has changed; people in Karu now have a sense of direction and the desire to belong. Today, one hears and sees surprise on the faces of those concerned over the behaviour of others, and you often hear questions like:

- Why do you do this?
- Why do you take such decisions?
- Isn't it better like this?

## AAPW Branch Office in Karu LGA of Nasarawa State

*Simon Iya*



When Derin Asuni (AAPW) asked me to write this article, I had no idea how difficult it was going to be.

In fact, I did not even know how and where to start. This is because AAPW has gone beyond explanation not only in Karu town but in what comprises the Karu geographical entity.

I must not forget my experience with the Karu Local Government Council as a Community Development officer prior to the coming of AAPW. Community Development is supposed to be the most vital department to receive attention from the LGC because of the section's primary assignment to deal directly with the community, but the reverse is the case. The department is relegated to the background.

A clear example is the frustration of the opening of Reflect classes by AAPW in all the five districts and villages of the local government in which the council pays just a monthly motivation fee of N500 to the twenty seven facilitators. Well, at last, I think the problem will soon be taken care of and the classes to resume fully. The present LGC Chairman, Hon Elisha Dachor Jarami is a professional in the adult literacy field. In order to resolve the situation, he asked Kaneng Ja AAPW to submit a vivid record request of what is supposed to be paid to the 27 facilitators and any other matter that needs addressing.

AAPW in its effort to see that communication reaches the grass roots level always holds monthly meetings with the five district heads and other village chiefs in the Karu Local Government Council Chambers. An office has been opened in the Local Government to bridge the communication gap. This office is to focus as a communication link by passing information between the Executive Council, Peace and Development Committee, and the Central Working Committee. The office is headed by one of our AAPW staff in the person of Ms. Lynda Abur (09 - 671 6292).

AAPW aims at embarking upon a proactive approach to building bridges of interdependence among various groups and ethnicities through adult literacy, HIV awareness, CBO and NGO capacity building, peace education, conflict management training, technical skills assessment, etc. All these activities have peacefully brought together the many different ethnic groups under one umbrella.

Kudos to the Executive Director of AAPW, Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni; entire staff; Local Government chairman and council members; the paramount Chief of Karu, HRH Dr. Ishaku Bulus Chetubo; district and village heads; the ExCo/PDC and central working committee members.

## Gwagwalada Displaced

*Yaro Tor Gowon and Zara Goni*



*Yaro Tor Gowon (second right) and Zara Goni (with white veil) visit displaced persons in the FCT.*

Due to the fact that this project has evolved over time, this piece would not be complete without a brief history of its origin. I (Yaro) first became involved in the effort to work with displaced persons with the escalation of the Tiv/Jukun crisis that resulted in genocide. Being a Tiv activist myself I was committed to finding a resolution. The initial proposal was to establish a round table dialogue that would facilitate conflict resolution between the Tiv and their neighbours. Several meetings and consultations were held with many people including Chief Anthony Enahoro, Alfred Illenre (Ethnic Minorities Right of Africa), Chom Bagu, and Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti. It was eventually concluded that the issue should be handled by an NGO located in North Central Nigeria and that is how I was first introduced to Academic Associates PeaceWorks.

The issue was brought before the Executive Director Dr. Judith Asuni who ordered the re-examination and re-analysis of the proposal and the following decisions were

*Continued from page 11*

arrived at:

- That there is a need for a Tiv in-house workshop which will enable the Tiv to examine themselves first
- This would then be followed by a workshop between the Tiv and their neighbours.
- And finally, a workshop would be conducted that would include the entire Middle Belt (this is still pending).

As a result of this re-examination, a case of displaced Tiv from their original homes to the FCT was raised. Dr. Asuni began conducting visits to these villages of displaced people. Among these areas was Gwagwalada which is one of the satellite towns around the FCT and lies about 30 kms north and about 45 minutes by car. It houses major areas like the University of Abuja and a specialist hospital. After these visits, a census was conducted among approximately 10,000 displaced Tiv and a proposal was submitted to the former Hon. Minister Engr. Abba Gana. Unfortunately the elections were held at the same time, so he was unable to pursue the project.

After the elections and the formation of a new government, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai was appointed as the new Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory. We reintroduced the issue of the displaced persons to him and he felt that the proposal should not be limited to the displaced Tiv alone, but should include all other ethnic groups who have sought refuge in the Abuja metropolitan area. Another visit was made and it was found that there were displaced people from all over Nigeria with different languages, cultures and norms. After this discovery, another proposal embracing all these ethnic groups was submitted.

A comprehensive census is underway to acquire the exact or near exact number of displaced people already in Gwagwalada and at the time of writing this article we are still waiting for a reply from the authorities of the FCT.

In addition to resettling individuals, AAPW plans on doing various activities including conflict management, peace education, HIV/AIDS awareness, adult literacy and skills acquisition and general empowerment for poverty reduction. While the project in Karu dealt with persons who already had land and houses of their own, the pilot project in Gwagwalada on displaced persons will deal with people from all over Nigeria, different languages, cultures and norms who have come together to live in clusters with a lot of fear and distrust. After a visit to the area, one cannot help but break down in tears as their children come up to you in a desperate bid to acquire a better life.

## “Give Honour to Whom Honour is Due”

*Dorathy Payi*



*Invited guest and honoree's at the NAWPREG Nigerian Dream Ceremony  
5th and 8th from left; Judith Asuni, of AAPW;  
Imam Mohammed Nurayn Ashafa of MCDF;*

Appreciation and acknowledgment are often expressed for a job well done. It is common knowledge that what contribute to the outbreak of violence are mainly religious and ethnic conflicts. Lives are lost, anarchy, doubt and confusion set in and it takes quite an effort to quell such situations. Academic Associates PeaceWorks and Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum are two organizations recognized for their contribution in the field of conflict resolution & management.

It is by this same recognition that our Executive Director, Academic Associates PeaceWorks, Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni and Imam Nurayn Ashafa of the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum who is also one of our consultants, were conferred with a pan Commonwealth award as Nigerian Dream Models 2003 on December 6, 2003 at the Yar'adua Centre, Abuja. These awards were presented by the National Women Peace Group (NAWOPEG) and Organization for Youths and Women Affairs (OYWA), as part of the CHOGM programme.

One of the many reasons given for the conferment is the zeal, strong will and determination of the recipients to acknowledge the presence of crisis situations and make efforts to storm through them. It is not an easy task but these two activists and honorees have embraced the true meaning of peace and hope to make it available to those who seek it. It is to these and to all others following the same path that we say “*more grease to your elbows*”.

## Abuja International Peace Park: The Dream and the Story

Osita P. Akwah II



*From Left: Ambassador A. Esan; President Olusegun Obasanjo; Dr Judith Asuni; Mr. Don McKinnon, Secretary General of the Commonwealth; Ms. Agatha Chukwueke; Ms. Derin Asuni; and Mr. Reginald Iheuzor, Coordinating Secretary, CHOGM, BSG.*

The story of the Abuja International Peace Park dates back to the early 1990s (1993 to be exact) when the then Director of Marketing at the Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Ms Agatha Chukwueke, conceived the idea of starting a horticultural society to bring together professional and amateur gardeners and other lovers of the environment within the FCT. The hotel bought the idea and sponsored the society under its “going green” program. Thus the Abuja Horticultural Society was born. The society provided a forum for environmental enthusiasts to interrelate and exchange ideas about issues concerning them. It also provided a powerful and unified platform for gardeners and enthusiasts in the FCT to lobby for the protection of the green areas in Abuja, as provided in the Abuja Master plan. It was so successful in this regard that the then minister for the FCT, Major-General Mamman Kontagora, in appreciation, ceded a strategic plot right next to the International Conference centre to the society to develop as a world standard park.

Due to various challenges the society faced in the years that followed, the park project (then named the “Abuja Horticultural Garden”) practically ground to a halt. Several attempts were made to revive the project, but these failed due to one thing or the other. It was not until the year 2003, that Agatha (now retired from the Sheraton, and having become the Chairperson of the Society's Board of Trustees) took the bold step of contracting a project coordinator (me!), whose entire brief revolved around making the park a reality. Probably my earliest major success was pulling onto the Board of Trustees the Executive Director of Academic Associates PeaceWorks, Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni. Judy came with all her usual energy, and dragged along Mr.

Murphy Ola Ojikutu, an Abuja-based businessman. Between them, Agatha, Judy and Ola breathed new life into the project (and nearly sucked the life out of the rest of us mere mortals with their superhuman endeavors!). From then on, the project was firmly on its way. The name of the park evolved and metamorphosed through “Abuja Horticultural Park”, “Abuja Commonwealth Park”, and a host of others, into its current form, the “Abuja International Peace Park” emphasizing the vision behind its founding. We also had our first major outing, the launching of the “Uzo-Ulo” walkway at the 2003 Sullivan Summit in Abuja. Though not too successful in terms of revenue generation, that event yielded a lot of experience, exposure and goodwill.

Back from the Sullivan summit, we did not rest on our oars, but forged on ahead. Uncle Ola took our case to the Minister of Works, and through him was able to get the Surveyor-General of the Federation to sponsor a topographical and perimeter survey of the park site. Judy brought the project to the attention of Mr. President. Architect Ugot, another member of the BOT, revised and updated the site plan for the park. Perhaps, most importantly, the Presidential Taskforce for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) chose our project site as the media centre venue for the meet, and Agatha, through her links with the Business Support Group for CHOGM, was able to convince them to sponsor the landscaping of the centre, and subsequently, jumpstart the park project.

Thus, finally empowered, our project team was able to get down to work. Uche, a horticulturist, was our landscape designer, resident female and all-round terror. Bernhard was our magician who could make anything work. Ifeanyi and John worked wonders with the men and labourers on site. The AAPW volunteers Kaneng and Dora were wonderful at the Sullivan summit and Roberto and Derin helped with pre-CHOGM activities. Oh, and I

Held it all together, and did everything else. (OK, maybe not everything!) And our trustees never once let up, encouraging, cajoling and even getting down and dirty with us on the site. Special mention too of the AHS President - she and some members of the executive did their part with distinction.

●► *Continued on page 14*

## The News From Yobe Is...

*Derin Asuni and Mohammed Ghalli*

The media plays a critical role in our perception of activities taking place in the country. Whether we realize it or not, we are often inundated with information from print media or television and radio. As a result of this influence, the media has the ability to not only disperse information to members of the public but also to educate them. It also has the ability to correct misconceptions that the public may have. With these abilities, it is crucial to involve the media in the peacebuilding process. With the media involved, positive messages can be delivered to the public.

The media recently played a critical role in providing an avenue to educate the public on the topic of religious tolerance. At the beginning of January 2004 rumours began to spread that there were acts of terrorism and religious persecution taking place in parts of Yobe, Borno and Jos. A group of religious believers decided that they wanted to go on a Hijra, or live in seclusion, claiming that this was a more holy way of life. The goal was to cut themselves off from all things secular. Their view of what was secular however was vast and included things like acquiring western education and serving under the secular government. Conflict arose as a result of the interaction between the police force and this group. Conflict has also resulted as a product of these religious beliefs. Many Muslim scholars claim that what this group views as the true form of Islam is instead a falsification of the religion. These Muslim scholars pointed out that the Qu'ran states that people should respect and obey those in authority and should not defy them. This separatist group that referred to themselves as the "Taliban" but were known within themselves as Jamaatu Suna Walhijira however demonstrated disregard for authority figures.

The media played an important role in providing these religious scholars a means through which to educate the public on the true Islamic beliefs and on religious tolerance in general. Several Islamic scholars from Yobe and Kaduna States and the Central Mosque, Abuja were interviewed both on television and radio. This gave them the opportunity to not only present their beliefs, but also to answer questions from the public that were received through calls into the studio. A Sudanese professor of law was also interviewed on television and he stated that terrorism was unislamic.

The media proved to be most valuable in aiding the restoration and maintenance of peace. They were able to educate the public on such topics as religious tolerance which in a country like Nigeria is vital because of the diverse religious beliefs held by its people. We look forward to the media continuing to play a vital role in the peacebuilding process.

## Peace Park contd:

*Continued from page 13*



*From Left: Mr. Ola Ojikutu, Member BOT; Osita Akwah, Project Coordinator, AIPP; Ms. Agatha Chukwueke, Chair, BOT.*

Our thanks also have to go to the good people of GlobeCast S. A.: Sandy, Stefan, Mandy, Alan; the media centre contractor, Engineer Usman, and everyone else who worked on the

media centre. They were absolutely fantastic! It's strange to admit that in our own country, we needed the help of foreign visitors to enter our own project site!

The story is long, but in brief, we took a flat, barren wasteland, and in one month, worked a minor miracle on it. We worked from early morning to late night, Sunday to Sunday. We threw in everything, but we worked a miracle nonetheless. The miracle came to a satisfying climax when Judy was able to convince Mr. President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, to commission the park and unveil the commemorative plaque inside. This he did, on the final day of CHOGM 2003, at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Post-CHOGM, the way is still long, and the distance far. Tentatively, we have some sponsors-to-be: the National Tree Nursery Development Commission and the Federal Ministry of Water Resources spring to mind.

We have, by and large, completed the first phase of the Abuja International Peace Park project. The next phase may be the most taxing, in terms of time, energy, money and materials, but now our minds are focused and our hearts are strong. We have overcome tremendous hurdles to get this far: finances (or the lack thereof!), credibility, and the ever-lurking twin spectres of the Federal Capital Development Authority and the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory. We have come this far, and we are confident we can go the rest of the way.

## Here & There

*Roberto Lopez*



*From Left; Roberto Lopez, Jason Ladnier, Judy Asuni, Patricia Taft and Derin Asuni*

### *Fund for Peace*

In November 2003, Jason Ladnier and Patricia Taft of Fund for Peace (FFP) in Washington, DC, visited Nigeria and our offices in Abuja and Lagos to conduct field research for their project, "Regional Responses to Internal War." They are shown here with Judy, Derin and Roberto during their visit to Abuja.

### *USIP*

Taylor Seybolt, Program Officer for the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), visited our Abuja office in September 2003 to meet with members of civil society working in conflict management. Mr. Seybolt visited both Nigeria and Ghana in order to learn about the pressing needs of local peacemakers and researchers and also to discuss how to prepare grant applications to USIP. Bassey Okon of PeaceWorks Productions also coordinated Seybolt's meetings in Lagos and Ibadan.

### *Transitions*

#### *We Welcome:*



*Derin Asuni and Roberto Lopez pose for a picture with Governor Adamu of Nasarawa State*

Derin Asuni and Roberto Lopez, who joined the AAPW staff on October 1, 2003. Derin and Roberto worked together at *Score!*, an educational company in Washington, D.C. Now they are working with us in Karu and Warri- a slight change from D.C.!

#### *We Mourn:*



*Late Mr. Blessing Abam*

Mr. Blessing Abam, a consultant at the AAPW office in Port Harcourt. Mr. Abam first came into the AAPW sphere in 2001, when he and Elder Gomba Osarollor became co-chairmen of the Eleme/Okrika Joint Peace Committee. Mr. Abam subsequently worked with us on the Soku/Elem Sangama/Oluasiri and Ugborodu conflicts. Being a retired Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Abam was a key facilitator in the training of the Nigeria Police on early warning signs of election conflict, held in April 2003. Mr. Abam died suddenly in January 2004.



*Late Mrs. Binta Wokocha*

We also mourn the death of Mrs. Binta Wokocha. Binta worked with us in Karu, especially on the REFLECT Adult Literacy training. Binta died unexpectedly in late 2003, cutting short the life of a beautiful and kind young woman.

#### *We Will Miss:*



*Zara Goni*

Zara Goni, who has won a scholarship for a masters degree programme in India. Zara has been a volunteer with AAPW, working on the Advocacy Team in Karu Local Government, as well as on issues of displaced persons in the Federal Capital Territory. We'll miss Zara's enthusiasm and energy, but know that she will come back better equipped for her work in sustainable development.

We are also currently missing Rosemarie McBean, who returned to the US in September 2003, after 15 months in Nigeria. However rumours have it that Rose may well return to work on the Search for Common Ground television drama. Last newsletter we reported that Rose loves Nigeria; this rumour confirms it!

## Coming Events

*Roberto Lopez*

### *Conflict Impact Assessment Training for EU MPP3*

Academic Associates PeaceWorks has been asked to train the staff and partner organizations of the European Union Microprojects in the initial 3 core Niger Delta states. Judy Asuni, Kingsley Akeni and Jimdorgu Godson will spend 3 weeks in March/April 2004 to work with participants in assessing conflict before a project begins, any conflict that arises as the project progresses and the impact of the development project on either reducing or increasing conflict in the area. The workshops will take place in Asaba, Yenagoa and Port Harcourt.

### *National Youth Peace and Empowerment Project*

The staff of Academic Associates PeaceWorks is working with some dynamic young men attached to the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on National Orientation and Public Enlightenment on a Youth Peace Empowerment Summit, tentatively scheduled for mid-April in Abuja. The NAYOPET will attract youths from every local government in Nigeria, with the goals of developing a positive mindset and entrepreneurial spirit to truly empower youths mentally and professionally. Several youths who demonstrate these characteristics will be guest speakers at the summit. The summit will also enjoy the spaciousness of the Abuja International Peace Park for outdoor lunches and musical concerts.

### *Partnering with NNPC*

The new GMD of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Engr. Funso Kupolokun has asked AAPW to assist in facilitating dialogue between NNPC and its stakeholders in the Niger Delta. Our contacts across the delta are identifying youths who can either promote or disrupt an effective working environment for NNPC. These youths will be invited for the upcoming Stakeholders meeting.

A number of Major Players in the Niger Delta will also be invited to the Stakeholders meeting as observers. It is anticipated that these Major Players will then meet on a quarterly basis, to promote more partnering among the groups, which will include NNPC, NDDC, the oil and gas companies, servicing companies, the State Governments, the security agencies, donors working in the Niger Delta, and other government programmes such as NAPEP.

Participants at a recent Shell Stakeholders Workshop, held in Warri in late February 2004, expressed interest in working together to improve the effectiveness of peace and development activities. While recognizing the increasing openness of Shell to listening to its stakeholders, they asked for future such workshops to be organized by either a group of companies, or a neutral body, such as NNPC or NDDC.

*For more information, please contact the Abuja and Port Harcourt offices of Academic Associates PeaceWorks.*

## 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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