



2nd Niger Delta Youths Stakeholders Workshop, Warri. From Center, Dr Judith Asuni (ED AAPW), Engr Kupolokun (GMD NNPC), Dr Edmund Daukoru (Min. of State, Petroleum Resources)

Nearer to Peace

Tamuno Abaku, Admin Officer, Port Harcourt Office

The 2nd NNPC Niger Delta Youth Stakeholders meeting with the theme: "Niger Delta Youths a Commitment to rebuilding our Social Space" was held in Warri, Delta State November 24-26, 2005.

It was yet another gathering of stakeholders (youths, traditional rulers, representatives from the oil and gas industries, etc.) in the Niger Delta drawn from the nine oil producing states. As a yearly effort aimed at drawing together key players in Nigeria's oil and gas industry for the purpose of reevaluating the journey made so far and to reposition it for enhanced strategic strides, Nigeria's president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was ably represented by the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Dr Edmund Daukoru while the Group Managing Director of the NNPC, Engr. Funso Kupolokun graced the occasion himself. The Delta State Governor was also represented.

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2nd Karu Unity Festival: Partnering For Success

Mohammed Usman, AAPW, Abuja



Young Jarawa dancer performing during the 2nd Karu Unity Festival

A festival is usually a series of performances of music, plays, etc., often connected to an activity or idea such as celebrating a special event. In the same light, Karu Unity Festival is a special event celebrating the cultural diversity of Karu local government area. Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State has been identified as "The Economic Growth Engine" of the state, and given its proximity to the FCT, has also been described as "one of the fastest growing urban areas in the world". With a growth rate of 40% per year, with thousands of immigrants flooding into the area from all parts of the country, Karu can best be described as a "Mini Nigeria". Therefore, a second unity festival was seen as a best way to consolidate on the gains of the peace and development activities in Karu, encourage partnering among various stakeholders as well as celebrate

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Nearer to Peace: Contd

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These key players gathered in Warri, Delta State to parley on finding lasting solutions to the plaguing youth restiveness in the coastal region of the country.

In her opening remark Dr Judith Burdin Asuni expressed great joy over the high level of participation. Acknowledging the dividends of the workshop in Port Harcourt, the previous year, the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Dr Edmund Daukoru said that although there had been a steady decline of activities inimical to industry's wellbeing, much still needs to be done.

The workshop featured not only seminars, presentations and talkshows, but also practical discussion segments as well as an excursion to the site where victims who had lost their lives to various oil mishaps. This took place at Jesse where their bodies had been interred by mass burial. The core of the workshop highlighted by Dr Judith Asuni was to broaden the social space of youths in the Niger Delta, maximize their potentials to enable them work out their own peace and development and to clear the air of suspicion.

Engr. Funso Kupolokun, presented an all-encompassing paper titled: "A Commitment to Sustainable Peace and Development in the Niger Delta". The paper brought to bear the problems plaguing the region, intervention efforts, gain of the approach and areas requiring immediate attention. Miabiye Kuromiema bared his mind in "Youth take Centre Stage Conflict dynamics and demand for Accountable Governance".

Delta State governor, James Ibori thanked the organizers of the workshop and pledged his administration's support and commitment. In all about five hundred participants attended the workshop.

At the end, a colourful climax crowned it all as the facilitator, Dr Judith Burdin Asuni was glamorously conferred with the rare title, jealously guarded by the Ughelli people Omote Oyibo Rovie of Ughelli Kingdom, this was in recognition of what one participants summed up as her "invaluable resourcefulness in championing the cause of peace in the region and beyond.

2nd Karu Unity Festival: Contd

the cultural diversity of the local government and further build bridges of trust, and strengthen and unify the fabric of Karu multi-cultural society.

Thus, on December 14, 2005, the transformation within the compound of the Karu local government secretariat became evident as crew/team members concerned with final touches were on ground to ensure the stage was set for action, while sound check and final check of the space was conducted. As early as 10.a.m, troupes started arriving and taking their positions in the canopies provided for them as they continued charging the festival ground with dances and music. The guest followed suite



A Traditional Bowman during the 2nd Karu Unity Festival

and the festival ground soon in itself expressed the festival slogan; "Partnering 4 Success..." in the costumes of the various ethnic group.

What I find particularly interesting is the way the crew/team conducted the cultural census around the communities we visited in Karu Local Government Area. With the assistance of two staff from the Arts & Culture department of FCT, we rode through villages sometimes on motorbikes because vehicles could not use the roads! During the rehearsals, all performances were conducted in the communities the cultural troupes came from. This was done to ensure that they are comfortable within their surroundings. However on the final day of rehearsal, the cultural troupes were invited to the local government secretariat to have a feel of what the day would be like. The rehearsals were conducted in atmosphere of excitement with a lot of people drawn to the rehearsal arena because of the cacophony of music and dances.

The festival portrayed the diverse culture of the people of Karu. The performances were great and peculiar to each community within Karu. However, there were some colourful performances. Performances like that of the Fulani Cultural Group was actually a test of manhood for men who intended to marry. The Gwandara Kaka Mayawa performed by the Guruku people had a different 'flavor', because of the sacred nature it had formerly; masquerades which usually came out when an old person dies, now comes out yearly. There were some others like the Jarawa and Gbagyi who had similar performances usually done after the farming season or during harvest. Looking at this few out of the whole we can see the peculiarities they each have.

The festival was a success looking at it from the angle of participation and large turn out, more so, most people reacted saying that they wish it will be yearly, this meant that they liked it. But not only the people's yearnings gave me this insight, the enthusiasm of the participants and the dignitaries informed my

My AAPW Experience

Irene Ekeoma Nwagbara Admin Officer, AAPW Abuja

The name Academic Associates PeaceWorks on the peripheral connotes education, that is classroom learning and all that stuff! Wait a minute, though it has education within the framework of its Aims and Objectives which is to build awareness of the need and possibilities of peace in society, empower individuals and groups in building peace, through training and networking and also develop the framework for the peace process through action-oriented research and intervention in current or potential conflicts.

Nothing prepared me for the astonishing, breathtaking and educative experiences I have had since I joined the Abuja office of AAPW in December 2005. It was a coincidence that on December 14th 2005 which was the day of my job interview, I was whisked off to Nasarawa State to one of the most beautiful festival I have ever witnessed The Karu Unity Festival- so exciting that when the festival was declared over I still wanted some more the Oliver Twisty way! One unique thing that was very revealing is how nature placed people of diverse cultures together. This Festival has proved beyond reasonable doubt that appreciating one another's diversity in culture, language and tribe gives PEACE a chance and that there could be Unity in DIVERSITY.

Back to the office, the FACA Account to be attended to, sorry FACA stands for Federal Capital Action Committee on HIV/AIDS, AAPW did a Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) Survey and HIV Prevalence Among Youths (15-24 years) in three selected Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory: Abuja Municipal Area Council, Bwari Area Council and the Gwagwalada Area Council. It may interest you to know that AAPW report of these KAP survey is being used as a milestone in helping to shape policies laid down by FACA in issues concerning HIV/AIDS.

Also, AAPW organized the 2nd NNPC NIGER DELTA YOUTH STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP held in Warri in Delta State with the theme -Niger Delta Youths: A Commitment to Rebuilding Our Social Space. Followed closely was the Consultation forum held in Bayelsa State tagged NIGER DELTA CONSULTATIVE FORUM co-organized by the Bayelsa State Government and The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Facilitated by the Niger Delta Peace and Security Secretariat.

The realization that the sustainability of Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Development in the Niger Delta is not left to the Niger Delta people alone but also a great concern to well-meaning, peace-loving and great men and women of our times and dear country from various ethnic groups and races who murder sleep and work tirelessly through collaborating with Federal and State Governments, National and International bodies, interest groups, etc. in ensuring Peace and Security in the Delta

I have the privilege to work for/with an intellectual, effervescent, energy- full, multi facet female who has been molding me into a Logistician, Administrator, Personal Assistant and Account person. Watch out for me when she has finished the Brazen Work, do not say I didn't tell you.



Job Creation: What Is Happening In The Niger Delta

Sunny Kulutuye

Many countries, institutions, groups and individuals are presently talking and doing job creation activities. Developed countries like USA, Japan and others are developing strategies to reduce unemployment and one common language to all is "Job Creation". Before now, job creation has been part of sustainable development and livelihood programmes of many civil society organisations. But the challenge posed by the reality of unemployment facing both the youth and the old has occasioned the need to single out job creation. In the Niger Delta it has been pointed out by different reports either from the government, oil sector, individuals and NGOs that the main cause of the restiveness and incessant crises is as a result of mass unemployment of the youths. Meanwhile, it has been noted that several activities geared towards generating or creating jobs are going on in different parts of the Niger Delta. Dominant amongst these activities is the skills acquisition programmes, but job creation goes beyond skills acquisition. Job creation is providing opportunity for people to acquire "functional" skills, use the skills to make a living, and creating investment opportunities that get people employed or utilise the services of the trained persons.

Premise on this fact Academic Associate PeaceWorks (AAPW) is championing a strategy for the Niger Delta called Peace and Security Strategy (PaSS), a programme that is promoting peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta. A significant component of PaSS is Job creation and human capital development. The Rivers State Government, NNDC and other oil companies have made commitments to support this initiative. Precisely, the Rivers State Government has made significant donations to this end. In the pursuant of this strategy AAPW is partnering with UNDP to establish vocational skills centres in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states.

The first step in establishing these centres was a technical skills needs assessment conducted in March 2006 by AAPW. This study was designed to provide information on the state of existing technical skills centers and determine the relevance of the training courses provided in terms of their marketability in the Niger Delta. This is in order to be able to use the information generated as tool for guiding the setting up of the proposed UNDP vocational training centers.

These proposed UNDP vocational training centers would help generate self-employment and create wealth and ultimately help to promote peace and development in the Niger Delta.

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Supporting Change Towards Corporate Social Responsibility

Dakoru Atukpa

It has oftentimes been said that there is nothing permanent on earth except change. So every natural process and phenomenon passes through a process of change. Most times people place resistance to a change process either because of perceived denial of inherent benefits over the change or due to lack of understanding about the change itself. In some cases resistance to change brings about chaos and could breed the use of force. At other instances, those that refused to change are left behind to regret later. The phenomenons of the various revolutions experienced world over are clear manifestations of change processes.

Corporate Social Responsibility and the Oil Industry in the Niger Delta

The concept of corporate social responsibility was said to emanate in the twentieth century when business organisations were drawn to understand that their roles in the wider society go beyond making profit for their owners and giving security and comfort to their workforce. The concept was introduced by responsible corporations to create mutually beneficial business environments for their operations. It is a process where corporations went beyond the ordinary call of official obligation to secure an enhanced social license to operate through acts of unalloyed and unconditional charity to staff and society. Others took their commitment to being good beyond mere charity to an expression of stewardship by which commitment they felt obliged to return to society and its environment a due share of their profits and other benefits.

Within the Niger Delta environment where over 90% of oil and gas prospecting is carried out, the situation may be different. Nigeria has been rated as one of the top 10 highest risk nations for doing business and this may not be unconnected with the risks associated with the events experienced with oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta. The country's reputation is not an outcome of environmental politics alone but flows from a more complicated web of societal and governmental complexities. Since the early 1990s, protests by the Niger Delta people relating to environmental damages and neglect by multinational corporations and the federal government have escalated to unprecedented dimension. The breakdown of social structures in the communities resulting in restiveness have compounded corporate investments and placed corporate investors on the path of irresolute dilemma in the region. Why?

The answer to the why is the concern of the Corporate Practices under PaS. The Corporate Practices is concerned with business

risk reduction, primarily to promote more responsible corporate behaviour within the industry that has been widely criticized in the past. The strategic objective is to partner with the industry to build reputational risk towards ensuring that the doctrine of responsible environmental stewardship and socially responsible development are embedded as part of corporations' activities operating within the Niger Delta. PaS hopes to interface as a point for corporations to address some critical issues, act as a process of building trust and commitments to sustainability and partnership with communities in reducing conflicts and building lasting peace in the region.



Ikpakiaba community members waving goodbye during the needs assessment visit by AAPW

The Corporate Practices activity employs the tenets of dialogue, persuasion and advocacy for industry players

to adopt 'best practice models' in community relations activities that establish the philosophy of partnership, effective community engagement and stakeholder participation.

Corporate Commitment Towards Change

The Corporate Practices arm of PaS recognizes that though each corporate organization has its own corporate strategy and commitment towards its partner communities, however, it is imperative for the various companies to individually and collectively come to terms on effective and sustainable strategies to address some of the fundamental issues affecting their operations in the Niger Delta including;

- ? Disputes over land ownership and payment of compensation or claims of damage
- ? Employment of indigenes
- ? Award of contracts to indigenes,
- ? Responsibility for community projects
- ? Payment of allowances to community Chiefs
- ? Divide-and-rule in communities
- ? Sectional favouritism
- ? Refusal to honour traditional governance structures
- ? Lack of respect for community hierarchy
- ? Refusal to honour and implement MOUs,
- ? Use of security forces in intimidating communities

Ideally, some of these responsibilities may not be that of the corporations, but the beauty of corporate responsibility demands it so. Presently, the Corporate Practices has outlined several activities that will promote cordial relationships between the communities and corporations but we need the cooperation of both parties to enable us achieve the objective we have set for ourselves and we hope you won't fail us.

Demobilisation & Reintegration of Armed Groups in the Niger Delta

Kingsley Akeni
AAPW Field Office, Warri



Judy (2nd left) with the 3 Wise Men, JP, Casi and Olo

The need for the actualization of an effective process for the demobilization of non-state armed actors in the Niger Delta region cannot be over-emphasised. This is because, in recent years, the communities in the Niger Delta region practically play host to a multiplicity of armed groups, cults, confraternities and other social vices creating security concerns. Observers have however maintained that the situation is instigated and exacerbated by the presence of oil and gas activities that encourages the divide-and-rule policy that fuels conflicts in the region. They further emphasize that the emergence of warlords and militias in the area is a by-product of the need to gain local control and obtain the privileges from the oil companies in a particular locale.

This dimension which is indeed frightening and a threat to the regional stability have mandated the need for stakeholders to call for combative measures to stem the tide. Essentially, this is the focus of the Peace and Security Strategy (PaS)'s Demobilization component, which is co-coordinated by AAPW. Broadly, this thematic component relates to arms proliferation and escalation of violence which have threatened peace and security in the Niger Delta and undermined oil and gas business and of course development.

This component, under my co-ordination was started effectively in the last week of April, 2006 with a field research work designed to identify and collate armed groups with presence in the delta. These armed groups freely engage themselves in violent intra/inter communal clashes as well as armed struggle in pursuing their regional and ideological campaign against issues that border on regional self-determination. The entire PaS project is being implemented in five states Delta, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Ondo State.

Significantly, it must be emphasized that the Demobilization and Re-integration component entails the mobilization and

provision of youth re-orientation initiatives designed to effectively prepare communities and armed groups to take full advantage of institutional job creation/livelihood opportunities in the region. In other words, the Demobilization and Re-integration component is designed to enable demobilized youths fit into available regional economic livelihood initiatives. We hope to synchronize and detail a synergistic relationship between these two strategic components. Preliminary field research report indicates that stakeholders interviewed in the communities are enthusiastic about any positive policy initiatives that would assuage the feeling of marginalization of the people. This would provide incentives for armed groups to demobilize and ultimately curtail the restiveness in the region.

Hostage Taking In the Niger Delta

Franklin Ejoh

Hostage taking is a grievous and violent action for the expression of some group of people in the Niger Delta as a result marginalization. Hostage taking is also lack of constant awareness campaign that will broaden social space and the mainstreaming of youths in the Niger Delta area. Hostage taking is anyway not a legal means but intellectual engagement of non-violent process.

Often a time it leads to death of the kidnapped. These happens when the host communities feel that they are not being recognized being the source of wealth to the nation. Neglect by the oil/gas companies and federal government is the major cause. In a situation whereby the host community is being denied social amenities such as good roads, portable pipe-borne water, schools, scholarship, employment opportunities, electricity etc.

The companies are being influenced by the government regards jobs creation, for instance a community in the Niger Delta area has over five (5) oil/gas companies operating in the area and none of the community indigene happen to work there rather you will see other indigenes working in the key positions in the companies. In order to stop this, a true federalism should be implemented in the country whereby the state should control their resources. Also the youth cry for the provision of social amenities to the host communities like accessible roads, schools, scholarships, electricity and employment opportunities.

HIV/AIDS Action Research among Youths in 3 Area Councils of FCT

Kachollom C. S. Best (Mrs.)
Centre for Development Studies, University of Jos

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) applied for and received funding from the Federal Capital Action Committee on AIDS (FACA) to carry out some intervention activities in the multi-sectoral efforts at mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS in the FCT. FACA with assistance from the World Bank disbursed grants to NGOs and civil society groups and organizations working in different areas of HIV and AIDS prevention and management in the FCT.

Academic Associates PeaceWorks employed the services of a team of 3 consultants from the University of Jos, headed by Kachollom C. S. Best of the Centre for Development Studies of the University of Jos to conduct an action research among youths in the FCT. Youths were targeted for these activities due to their salience as the country's active productive and reproductive resource. Moreover, the HIV/Syphilis sero Sentinel Survey (HSS) conducted in 2003 reveal that in the North Central zone (where the FCT is located), prevalence was highest in the 20-24 age brackets (8.2%), followed by the 25-29 year group (7%) and closely followed by the 15-19 year olds (6.7%). Similarly, the prevalence among single people in the North Central region is 8.7 %, which is higher than the national average of 5.0%. Activities were therefore targeted at youths both in and out of school.

The FCT has a total of six Area Councils with an estimated population of 138,853 young people aged 12-24 years old. For this research, three Area Councils were sampled: Abuja Municipal Council, Gwagwalada and Bwari. 12 Field Assistants were selected and trained to administer interview schedules on youth both in and out of school in November 2005. The study lasted for 12 days (7th - 20th December 2005). A total of 1,000 youth (400 in school and 600 out of school) were sampled and interviewed. In addition, a total of 18 focus groups discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the communities. In addition, trained Counsellors and Laboratory Scientists were a vital part of the team who offered free Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT) to any of our respondents who were willing to be counseled and tested. Permission was however not received from the Secondary Education Board of the FCT to offer this in the public Schools. Some of the out of school youth and youth in some private schools declined the offer to be tested while others went ahead and were tested and counseled again before the disclosure of their results. The testing kit Determine, which is very portable and effective, was used for the exercise. Many people not included in our sample came with requests to be

tested but we had to decline as unfortunately, our budget could not support the purchase of all these testing kits.



Group Photograph of HIV/AIDS research team, led by Mrs. C. S. Best.

The whole exercise was a challenging but very rewarding experience for the team. The team would normally set off by 8.00am to the villages and return very late as the exercise of selecting respondents, convincing them to go for free VCCT took a long but rewarding time. The Area Councils and community leaders

all offered their support as they acknowledged the devastating impact of this pandemic in their communities and their commitment to efforts that would checkmate the spread of the virus in their communities.

The project is awaiting the final tranche of the grant to facilitate the analysis and production of the research report as well as the development of appropriate IEC messages.

Job Creation: Contd

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This study was carried out essentially in the three senatorial districts in each of the three target states. A total of 21 field staff were involved in this survey which lasted over two weeks. In each state, the research team was made up of seven persons comprising one state coordinator and six field officers. The six field officers worked in a team of two bringing the total numbers of teams in each state to three. The targets of the survey were the technical skills training providers (both public and private), beneficiaries of such training centres and potential consumers of the services (those who need/use the services of the beneficiaries). The beneficiaries include individuals and companies; however emphasis was placed on the companies which form the greater proportion of the users

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From Karu to Bradford & Back!

Kaneng Ja Gwong
AAPW Office, Abuja

Doing a Degree in Studies at University UK was a which I had first degree So, u can joy when came true through a f r o m have been Officer, Developm Local



Kaneng Ja in front of school Library building, Bradford, UK.

Masters Peace of Bradford, dream since my days in 1997. imagine the this dream for me sponsorship AAPW. I Project Peace and ent in Karu Governmen

t of Nasarawa State for several years. It was challenging and interesting working in Karu which records a 40% annual growth rate as a result of the movement of the Federal Capital of Nigeria (FCT) from Lagos to Abuja. The local government could be described as a classical example of urban sprawl with the potential of growth as well as conflict emerging from the limited resources of the local government area in comparison to the growing population.

It was against this background that AAPW embarked upon a proactive approach to building bridges of interdependence among the various groups in the population. We also believe that there is a close relationship between peace and development; therefore the Peace and Development Committee embarked on a number of farm projects to help the communities generate income for other development projects.

In sum, doing a post graduate in Peace Studies helps me to deal with issues which have the potential of turning into violent conflicts.

My first impression of the UK was that everything works! The people are very friendly and in fact I met a fellow student from the Gambia the moment I walked through the gates of the school and today she is one of my very good friends. There was enough information to help international students settle down to life in Bradford; this informed my decision to volunteer as a student helper during the 2005 welcome week for international students. The cost of living in Braford is relatively cheaper than other parts of the UK and it is famous for its curries. The school has students from over 100 countries. The course was hectic but very interesting. I was able to apply some of the theories I learnt using Karu as my case study for my dissertation. The lecturers were amazing and it was just fascinating learning from other people's cultures and the different methods of conflict resolution. The weather was cold as usual but summer came with lots of sunshine, activities and sights to visit. One culture of the English which I found very helpful is time management. I missed home so much but I was determined to get that degree so I stayed on till the end. I am happy to be back to lovely Abuja, my family and AAPW. Read more in the next edition of this newsletter on what I shall be doing with this newly acquired knowledge from the great University of Bradford.

The Gbarain Gas Project: Progress So Far

Eriye Tuaweri, John Waripamo & Weke Iwerumo
AAPW, Gbarain Ekpetiama Field Office

To be around from the beginning of a thing gives you an opportunity not only to write about the progress made but also talk about it. This is the kind of opportunity we have to write about the progress made so far in the gigantic gas gathering project in Gbarain/Ekpetiama Local Government Area (Bayelsa State) owned by SPDC. The project began with several problems ranging from the improper conduct of environment impact assessment, to land ownership, sharing of compensation money for land acquisition was not left out and Chieftaincy/Leadership tussle just to mention a few. All these problem at the time made it look nearly impossible for the project to come to reality, but kudos to all the stakeholders in this project who worked tirelessly to make progress, especially the Government and Civil Society groups who always created the atmosphere of peace through meetings, workshops and seminars that have brought about the level of sensitization the communities have enjoyed that has engendered the level of cordiality that exists between host communities, government and oil companies.

More thanks to Academic Associate Peaceworks that has been on ground to promote partnering in the Niger Delta. It is not to say there are not issues again but we must thank God for the progress made so far which includes setting up of PAC I (Project Advisory Committee) by government and its activities that have created the enabling environment for servicing/contracting companies to SPDC to enter site to begin preparation work for the real show. That is not just all; there had been skeletal provision of service (needs) to host communities but with the signing of the Global MOU between Communities, Government and SPDC, more progress will be made. The signing ceremony which took place at the Creek Haven (Government House) Yenagoa had the Deputy Governor of the State Mr. Peremobwei Ebebi signing on behalf of Bayelsa State Government. Others who took part were representatives of communities from Gbarain and Ekpetiama Clans with SPDC also having their representatives, the event took place on the 28th of April, 2006. At the end of the ceremony the two Royal Fathers representing the two clans applauded the exercise and prayed for the implementation of the MOU to the letter. Now that all this progress is made, it is left for the facilitator to genuinely bring together representatives of all interest groups to continue to work together to bring about the much needed development in the area, even when the project is completed and companies are gone. It then means that all hands must be on deck especially Multinationals to follow best corporate practices that cater for the peculiar challenges of host communities. With al these progress made, the Gbarain Ubie Gas gathering project has become a reality. Though we must not forget to resolve the cases in court and other legal issues to forestall any future occurrence of conflict in the area, at this point, we will like to conclude by saying the Gbarain Gas Project will enjoy the required level of peace.

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Chief Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni

The past six months have seen much activity at the Niger Delta Peace and Security Secretariat. After the inaugural meeting of the PaS Working Group in September 2005, we spent some months working on our action plan and budget. In early January 2006 we had an in-house workshop in which we went through the detailed action plan, which was then submitted to the 2nd meeting of the PaS Working Group in mid-January. Our

further activities were discussed at the 3rd meeting of the Working Group in April. In spite of some delays in promised funding actually reaching our account, we have gone ahead with 7 Nigerian and 4 international case studies of corporate practices and community conflict. This activity is headed by Dakoru Atukpa. We have also conducted a technical training needs assessment, as described by Sunny Kulutuye, and look forward to expansion of this work by mid-May. We are currently conducting a study of armed groups/militias/cults/drugs. From our previous work with the armed groups in Rivers State, we are now building and expanding our understanding of the youth and the issues.

This long-term interaction with Niger Delta youth certainly was useful in dealing with the hostage issues of January-March 2006. I personally had known a number of Ijaw youth leaders from our work on interethnic conflict in Warri, Delta State dating back to 1999. This has given us entry and credibility for helping the youth address their issues through legitimate and peace channels. Immediately following the release of the January hostages, we helped to organize a Special Niger Delta Consultation, in conjunction with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and the Bayelsa State Government.



Judy (center) with Kofo, Linney, Lizzy, J. P. & Olo on a boat ride to the creeks.

Hundreds of people, from top military officials to national legislators to N G O s to representatives of the hostage takers, debated for two days and came up with the Yenagoa Accord, which raises a number of fundamental issues. Unfortunately we were not able to implement this accord before parts of Warri Southwest Local Government

were attacked by the military, more hostages were seized and the vicious cycle of violence started again. The hostages have now been released and a new Presidential Council on economic and social development of the Niger Delta has been formed in mid-April.

As part of the Niger Delta Peace and Security activities on demobilization, urban youth and job creation, Academic Associates PeaceWorks staff are working on how members of armed groups can be identified, disarmed, demobilized, reoriented and reintegrated constructively in ways that allow them to have meaningful and economically (and legally!) productive roles in their own development.

I believe strongly in the inherent capability of the Niger Delta youth. One of the 3 Wise Men who work with me, JP (a former leader of a militant group) was part of the Rivers State Government contingent on pilgrimage to Jerusalem a few months ago. He brought me back a package of mustard seeds as a souvenir of the Holy Land. It reminded me that if we have the faith of a mustard seed, we can see and bring out the best in our fellow man.

Judy Asuni (Chief Dr.!)

Niger Delta Communities and the Challenges of Development

*Danjuma Sa'idu, Project Director
MacArthur Foundation/NDDC/Rivers State Funded Project in the Niger Delta*

Almost all communities in the Niger Delta region today face tremendous challenges as they fight to maintain their social and economic development while protecting their environment. Over the past 2 years, Academic Associates PeaceWorks has been working with various communities in 5 local government areas of 3 Niger Delta states through a MacArthur Foundation/NDDC/Rivers State funded project to promote partnering in the Niger Delta. The work of Academic Associates PeaceWorks in these communities is largely to show how most of the challenges of development can most effectively be addressed through partnerships between local people, donor agencies, business and voluntary organizations. The approach is to help communities to participate in finding sustainable solutions to their development needs.

However, the story is not as easy as it seems. First, due to long years of neglect and Environmental abuse and degradation, these communities find it difficult to even identify their needs and set their priorities and possibly find ways of bridging gaps in social services. Their priorities, Equity and justice, resource control, structural development, employment and empowerment, etc, etc, etc. Taking these priorities on their face value one can easily discern why it is becoming increasingly difficult for these communities to undertake a simple exercise such as identification of needs or setting of priorities! But the problem lies much deeper.

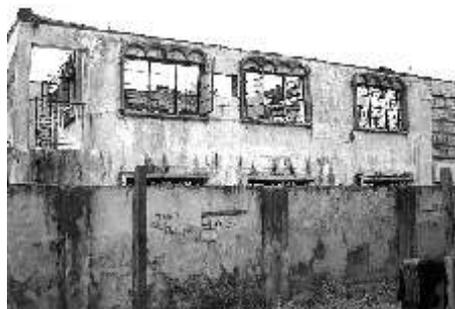
As mentioned in earlier edition of this newsletter, common problems of underdevelopment and intra and inter communal violent conflicts are more peculiar to the Niger Delta communities than anywhere else in Nigeria. Here, you find a growing concern over the last five years of crisis worsened by cult and cult related violence which has spilled over whole communities. Most youths in these areas have made their communities vulnerable to violence at the least disagreement or provocation. Very often, land and chieftaincy disputes or struggles for political offices has left most communities devastated and in near irreparable ruin. Tombia is a good example. It is widely believed that these youths



Destroyed Church building, Tombia



Another destroyed building, Tombia



Burnt building, Tombia

groups were armed and teleguided by faceless politicians to attack and intimidate their opponents. Hence the emergence of various armed groups with allegiance to their benefactors. Added to this dimension is the oil-related violence as a result of oil exploration and oil bunkering. Thus, armed gangs of youths, who hide out in creeks in the riverine communities, have attacked oil pipelines and platforms and kidnapped foreign oil labourers for ransom.

Communities had often claimed that oil pollution had left the environment depleted, endangered and unable to sustain the regular daily subsistence agricultural practices of the communities. Unfortunately, the oil companies have been unable to extricate themselves from the blame of employing divide and-

rule tactics in their management of the claims of the people for compensation in their overall community relations policies. They are accused of being too high-handed in dealing with cases of environmental degradation. Members of affected communities in the Niger Delta often equate the carrot-and-stick method of managing communal conflicts by government and oil companies arising from oil-related problems to the old Gun-Boat Diplomacy techniques of the colonial masters. Unfortunately too was the inability of the communities to hold

their local authorities accountable for their development. Huge amount of monthly allocations had continuously been sent to the treasuries of the local government authorities only to be diverted for personal use by the heads of these local government authorities. Most of the heads of the local councils operate from

their homes as they are afraid of going to their offices at the local government secretariat. Some are continuously on the run as they have been hunted by EFCC. Some have been impeached by their legislature for corruption and non performance. According to one observer, if only these armed youths will collaborate with their communities to demand for accountability from their local government authorities, elected representatives and other government officials and threaten them with kidnap, things would not have been the same in the Niger Delta.

Job Creation: Contd

◀ ● Continued from page 6



AAPW Needs Assessment Team on a boat ride to the creeks

of the technical skills. All the major towns and communities with commercial potentials to support, use or promote the development of technical skills were visited across the three senatorial districts in the three states

The research utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques in its findings. Through this survey it was discovered that there are quite numbers of skills training centres run/supported by private individuals/companies and government institutions like the LGAs, NDDC, UNDP, NGOs, oil companies, the state government etc. However it was discovered that Institutions like NDDC does not own any training centre but award contract to existing privately owned centres to run specific trainings for them. This is more of an ad-hoc approach than a permanent arrangement because, after a batch of training, such centres have no hope of getting more trainees from NDDC funding. More so, it was discovered that the privately run/or owned training centres are more effective than that of the government or its agencies.

It was discovered that lack of sustainability and poor funding of the centres was a major impediment to vocational training in the states. One of the key features of the government supported/owned training centres is that they do not have inbuilt sustainability strategies as well as long term plan. While most of the individually owned centres are effective but do not have financial strength for expansion. In addition, most proprietors of the individually owned centres lack managerial skills to enhance the growth of their businesses. It is necessary to consider funding a priority in the establishment of any training centre.

This survey reveals that quite a number of youths have been trained in various skills but majority of them are without job. This is significantly as a result of little or no job placement strategies adopted by any of the training centres. The beneficiaries of many of the training centres graduate without any conscious or formal efforts by the centres to get them self employed or working. This is partly contributing to the frustration of the youths in the area.

Again, the survey revealed that many of the youths who were trainees in one skill centre or the other do not have plans or understood why they were learning such skills. As a result, they do not make use of the skills acquired. Therefore, it is imperative that trainees are given proper orientation and discipline to fully appreciate the importance of the training that they are to undergo. The proposed skills training centres by UNDP should include career counseling and a kind of psycho-social programme for mind orientation. Also, it is very crucial to inculcate job placement as a core strategy into establishment of any skills training programme to enhance meaningful impact. This is very important because this survey revealed a very wide gap between the numbers of persons trained and numbers working or self-employed. Other key findings from this survey boarders on inadequacy and non-functionality of training facilities of most of the training providers

The findings also revealed that the economic opportunities and power of the local environment were not strong enough to employ the trained youths from these various vocational training centers. Meanwhile, majority of graduate trainees do not have the financial capacity to become self employed. This necessitated the recommendation that other job-creation initiatives that can economically engage beneficiaries should be explored by stakeholders.

Again, the research observed that the agricultural potentials of the states in terms of skills acquisition programmes that could be fashioned on agro-based training were completely overlooked putting to waste the fertile natural land available. This is important because it was observed that the oil and gas industry, although has a strong youth attraction but have very limited employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths that are being trained in the region.

The need to de-emphasize automatic employment of the youths in the oil and gas industry was also highlighted in the report. This was because it was observed that there seemed to be a huge disconnect between the expectation of the beneficiaries and the harsh reality of unemployment that they are faced with when they complete training.

Also highlighted was the need to support the vocational training centers with adequate modern facilities and equipment to meet up with what is operational in the industry.

Here & There

New Arrivals/Entrances, Exits, Weddings & Chieftaincy!!! **Danjuma Sa'idu**

Entrances

Kaneng Ja, our diminutive Project Officer in Karu LGA is back after an 18 months stint at the prestigious University of Bradford, UK. She's come back to pick up where she left off! Welcome back, Kaneng!

Guess who is also back in Nigeria again?! Rosemarie McBean. She's now working with IFES Abuja. Rose certainly likes coming back to Nigeria. We all wish her a pleasant stay.

Irene Ekeoma is our new hardworking Admin Officer in the Abuja office. She's taken over from Dora. Irene had worked with Medicins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) as Book Keeper & Human Resources Manager in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Hope she will enjoy her stay here in Abuja.



Irene, Dora and Bolanle during Karu Unity Festival

Usman Abdullahi is our new Youth Corps member serving at the Abuja office. He has shown commitment to whatever task he's assigned to in the 3 months he's here with us.

Exits

Remember Dora Payi? She's now in far away Denmark, as a student at the International Peoples College, Helsingor, Denmark. We certainly miss her, especially her vivaciousness and efficiency in carrying out her duties. We know she is itching to come back any time soon!

Yusuf Kazeem, 'Lekan Akinpelu, Busola Ogunsanya & Fatima Yakubu, our volunteer staff and Youth Corps members respectively, who had worked in both Karu project and the HIV/AIDS research have finished their stints and are no longer with us. We pray they are enjoying themselves wherever they are! Also Helen Osawe, formerly the Project Officer for Karu, has given the job back to Kaneng and obtained a good position at the British High Commission.



Fatima, Busola, Mohammed, Douglass, Yusuf and Lekan at Kabusu

Zara Goni, our Project Officer working in both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and HIV/AIDS research in FCT is now working with ActionAid, Nigeria. We will certainly miss Zara's enthusiasm.

Douglass Hansen was our intern from the U.S. He was here with us for six months. Douglass had to leave early to attend his grandmother's funeral in Germany. May her soul rest in peace. We are already missing Douglass' commitment to work and his uncanny ability to engage in intellectual discussion with people he met!

Wedding Bells!



Eriye Tuaweri, our Gbarain/Ekpetiama project officer bid farewell to bachelorhood when on December 17, 2005 he took Miss Ebikaboere Yeri as a wife at Christ Embassy Satellite Church, Old GRA Port Harcourt. We wish Eriye & Ebi a wonderful married life!



Iro Sam-Woruka also got married to her long-term sweetheart, Ibibia Altraide on April 22, 2006 at El-Shaddai Bible Church, Marine Base, Port Harcourt. May they find love and happiness as they take the journey through marital bliss!

New Arrival



Francisca Abulu, our project officer from Warri field office, recently gave birth to a beautiful baby girl on January 12, 2006. The baby, Queen Esther Miebi Ikporo, weighed 3.5 kg at birth. Mother and child are in excellent health and are looking forward to

the challenges the world brings to them.

Chieftaincy Title

November 25, 2005 will remain a memorable day in the annals of AAPW. It was the day that our Executive Director, Dr Judith B. Asuni was given a chieftaincy title of Omo-Toyibo Rovie of Ughelli Kingdom by His Royal Majesty (HRM), Oharisi III JP, Paramount Ruler of Ughelli Kingdom. She was formally presented with her staff of office during a colourful Thanks Giving Service at the palace of HRM on December 18, 2005.

The chieftaincy title was given to her in recognition of her tireless service to peace and development activities in the Niger Delta. All her 1000+ adopted children in the Niger Delta are saying "Long Live Our Mother, the Chief!!!"

Birthday

On April 17, 2006, the Executive Director of AAPW, Chief Dr. Judith B. Asuni, celebrated her 59th birthday with staff & well wishers at the popular Faye's Bush Bar.



Judy's Birthday celebration at Faye's Bush Bar, Port Harcourt

We wish her happy birthday and many more years to continue her good work in the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. Happy Birthday, Chief!!

AAPW Offices



AAPW Head Office, Abuja.



New AAPW Office, Port Harcourt, Rivers State



L-R: Omo-Toyibo Rovie of Ughelli Kingdom, Chief Dr Judith B. Asuni, His Royal Majesty (HRM), Oharisi III JP, Paramount Ruler of Ughelli Kingdom and his wife

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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Executive Director