

Niger Delta Dialogue



RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES for Nation Building

And NDD Related Technical Sessions

April 9-10, 2019

Atrium Event Centre, Port Harcourt



Academic Associates PeaceWorks

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A World of Peace



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**ACADEMIC ASSOCIATES PEACEWORKS
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Introduction/Background



Cross Section of Participants at the 12th NDD

The 12th Niger Delta Dialogue was a spontaneous response to action taken by women in Okrika and Ogu/Bolo Local Governments during the 2019 elections. These actions were so dramatic and effective that we decided to seize the moment and use them as a learning experience for others on raising women's voices. This report covers three meetings in which the women's experiences were shared. The first, held on March 21, brought together women from Rivers and Bayelsa States. The second, held on April 9-10, brought women from the six states of the Niger Delta, and the third, held on April 17, brought the women of Okrika and Ogu/Bolo to share election experiences with the youth leaders who were part of the 11th Niger Delta Dialogue.

Women in the two Rivers local governments became energized as a result of intimidation during the presidential election on February 23, 2019 when the military seized electoral materials from 4 wards in Okrika Local Government. Governor Wike had set up female youth structures in all wards of the local governments. In the days leading up to the gubernatorial/state level elections on March 9, the female youth leaders visited the various kings in Okrika. They were literally on their way to visit HRM King Ateke Tom, when they heard that the military had ransacked his palace. It was at this point that the women decided to protect the upcoming election. They staged a sit in at the election headquarters, not leaving for 3 days and 3 nights until the votes were counted. The women of neighbouring Ogu/Bolo Local Government took

similar action. The result of the women's brave actions was that elections were successfully held in these local governments.

Academic Associates PeaceWorks organized a meeting on March 21, co-sponsored by the European Union and PIND (the latter had sponsored AAPW's separate Nonviolent Election project) that brought together women from Rivers and Bayelsa states to share their experiences on protecting the governance process. A second, larger 12th Niger Delta Dialogue was held on April 9-10, 2019 with women from the six states of the South South zone. A third meeting was held on April 17, which brought the Okrika and Ogu/Bolo women together with the ethnic youth leaders (almost all of whom were men) to again share ideas.

All three meetings were chaired by HRM Obi Martha Dunkwu, the Omu of Anioma Kingdom. Obi Martha's sharing of her insights and wisdom is always inspiring, not only to women but also to men, not only to the young but also to the old.

The result of all of these events has been that there is a high level of excitement about the action of the women. The story made the front page of Vanguard newspaper, the leading paper in the Niger Delta which is read on-line around the world. It was covered in the traditional media and also social media posts, including the blog of the Council on Foreign Relations, in Washington, DC. At a time when unusually few women were elected to political office in the recent Nigerian elections, UN Women and other organizations are citing the Rivers women as a success story. The ethnic youth leaders were also excited to learn how the women protected their electoral process and have expressed the desire to work with them in the future. We plan to support women and youth working together in the upcoming Bayelsa election, scheduled for November 16.

The lessons learned from the Rivers women are applicable to not only elections in Nigeria, but also to larger issues of governance, both in Nigeria and around the world.

Who Are We? Why Are We Here? What Is Our Goal? How Will We Achieve It?



Sophia Sonime with Lolo Hailsham and Elfredah Alerechi

Lolo Hailsham explained that the reason for the women's gathering was to advance necessary discussions on the role of women in nation building. The importance of women contributing to peace building, particularly in the Niger Delta cannot be over emphasized as they are the direct recipients of the effect of militancy and military invasions. Women are beginning to rise above intimidations and the non-inclusion of women in decision making processes. Having realized that we live in a failed state, there is need for women to come together to seek ways to amplify women's voices for nation building; hence the 12th NDD is organized exclusively for women in the Niger Delta.

Experience Sharing

The 12th Niger Delta Dialogue provided an excellent opportunity for activists from Rivers and Bayelsa States to share experiences. The women of Ogu/Bolo and Okrika Local Governments in Rivers State talked about their nonviolent resistance during the 2019 elections, and the Ondewari women of Bayelsa State described how they had addressed a governance issue in their area.

The Gallant 5 – Ogu/Bolo Local Government, Rivers State

Barrister Christiana Tamunoberetoan-ari explained that the Gallant 5 is a group made up of five ladies; Tammy Ibibofo, Racheal Walter, Blessing Derefaka, Christiana Tamunobereton-ari and Dorcas Asiberebganika, in Ogu/Bolo local government area, Rivers State. The ladies identified women platforms in the community to reach out to women for increased mentorship, capacity building

How do we achieve this?

- Women supporting women – Lolo expressed frustration over the inability of women to support fellow women. She recalled how women agreed to support her political ambition during the campaigns but refused to vote for her on the day of election. She stressed the need for women to support other women to the top, adding that such mutual support will engender increased participation of women in decision making processes.
- Women learning from experiences of other women- She encouraged participants to learn from the experiences of other women to build themselves. It is important to understand processes other women have gone through rather than just the end results.
- Women keeping focus on the big picture - “you can think globally but act locally” were her motivating words. In conclusion, she encouraged the women to begin the process of mentoring so as to build up their close relations and associates.

on peace building as well as increased women participation in decision making process for the development of other women.

The Gallant 5, popularly known as the G5, mobilized women of Ogu/Bolo to resist the military from hijacking electoral materials during the March 9th governorship and House of Assembly elections. The action of the women became necessary following alleged intimidation by the military and other irregularities that trailed the presidential and national assembly elections on February 23rd, 2019. Barrister Christiana Tamunobereton-ari, the appointed Vice Chairman of the local government, who spoke on behalf of the group, noted that the G5 mobilized women in the community following an information that a woman from a particular political party was being aided by the military to cart away collated results.

They formed chains at the collation centre when the military arrived in several vans. The officers had



Tammy Ibibofori, Rachael Walter, Blessing Derefaka, Christiana Tamunobereton-ari, Dorcas Asiberegbanika

threatened to run over the women just to gain access into the collation center but the women resisted every move, while sending videos of what was going to social media platforms. In the end, the military could not carry out their intentions as the women refused to give way. To further ensure the safety of the results, the women escorted the results to the state office of INEC.

An incident that caught international attention was when the women were face-to-face with the military and neither side would move. Barr Christy took off her heavily soaked menstrual pad and squeezed blood on the bonnet of the army vehicle. It would not start. She then took gin, washed off the blood, the vehicle started and the soldiers quickly left.

Meanwhile, the women had stayed up two nights preceding the elections to protect the electoral materials. They did not leave the venue to eat or have their baths from Thursday 21-Sunday 24 March as their goal was to keep a close mark on the process. Instead community members supplied them with food and water, and they took turns leaving to vote, feed their children, etc. Some children were even part of the sit-in.

The G5 emphasized the importance of older women mentoring the younger ones, saying that those in leadership positions should identify with the grassroots for easy mobilization when the need arises. They also called for increased women's participation in decision making process, adding that women should pursue education as that is a step to finding their bearing in society.

The story of the G5 also demonstrates the unique role of women in the Niger Delta, where they are considered semi-sacred. No respectable man will

manhandle a woman, especially another man's wife. Coming into contact with menstrual blood is taboo for most men, so using it as a weapon of reverse intimidation is an interesting innovation. We are considering how women's special status and power can be used positively to improve the governance of the Niger Delta.

Mobilization Techniques

Started with a circle of friends called G5 -Christiana Tamunobereton-ari, Tammy Ibiofori, Dorcas Asibere, Blessing Derefaka, and Rachael Walter, long before the elections came.

- Identified female existing groups in the local government
- Capacity building for women-recognizing their self-worth.
- We familiarised our vision with the girls
- We called on other female groups in Ogu/Bolo when we perceived that a lady from a particular party was coming with the aid of the military to hijack results already collated.
- Women quickly responded to the call to prevent the military from hijacking the process irrespective of the political party they belong
- We stayed to watch over the materials and thereafter, the results for three days without bathing
- We formed a chain and locked ourselves in front of the gate so the military could have no access into the secretariat.
- The G5 raised funds to the women before the older women from communities across stated brought in food.

Okrika Women, Rivers State

The Okrika Female Youths, is a group led by Ibiwari Iyama with Mina Mathew, Sobere Rachael, Gladys Tom, Belema Ogan, Josephine Fiberesima, Grace Tamunokuro, Nene Apollos and Julie Ikisa as team members. Ibiwari had been chosen as Okrika female youth leader in October 2018. Gov. Wike adopted this model in January 2019 and the state government organized

a tour of the female youth leaders to each of the 23 local governments in Rivers State.

During the presidential and national assembly elections of February 23, 2019 some wards in Okrika experienced delay in the distribution of electoral materials and materials were diverted from four wards. The women decided to not allow a repeat of this in the state level election on March 9. Okrika local government has 12 wards and 151 polling units. Consequently, the group identified 12 leaders to supervise the 151 polling units in the local government to protect the electoral process.

The days before the governorship and state house of assembly elections saw the female youths taking protest to the palaces of traditional rulers, INEC office, local government council, demanding the prompt distribution of electoral materials to the wards and units. The traditional rulers assured the female youths of prompt release of material, adding that the palaces are in constant communication with INEC to do the needful for peace to prevail.

However, the women were on their way to the palace of King Ateke Tom of Okochiri, when they learned that his palace was at that moment being ransacked by the military. The women decided to prevent a repeat of the February 23 experience, so they mobilized to the local government INEC office. Julie Ikisa stated that the female youths were at INEC office from Thursday 7th - Saturday 9th, resisting the



Ibiwari Iyama (Speaking)

military from entering the premises to take the materials away as in the presidential and national assembly elections. The women were able to secure the materials until the time that they were distributed. Rachel was among the RAC agents the military forcefully took to the creeks. She said the agents were forced to thumbprint all the ballot papers

themselves, adding that the soldiers also asked them to share the ballots between AAC, PDP and other parties. The results were written in favour of AAC as demanded by the military even before the agents shared the ballots between the parties.

Julie Ikisa, representing Wakrike women congress in Okrika, narrated the story. "We were there at INEC centre from Thursday till Friday night and the army captain asked why we were there, demanding that we leave." According to her, they insisted that this time they must vote because during the presidential elections, the materials were hijacked. They told their men not to come out, that the women will keep vigil. The army leader called her inside, threatening to arrest her but she told them they cannot arrest her because she is not afraid of their guns.

Friday night at about 15 minutes to midnight, army vans drove into the compound. They demanded to go inside but the women resisted. There were about 75 women that night, who stood in between the cars, asking them to run over them. "We told them that if it is done, the whole world will hear how the Army in Nigeria killed innocent women; we were there amidst their threats of shooting us." In her direct words, she said "We were singing songs of praises to God and prayers. After an hour and half, they left but were still lurking around from a distance. They thought we will get tired and leave but were there till dawn of Saturday. The youths eventually joined us to strengthen us. They brought in more reinforcement of 3 vans full of soldiers. They were threatening to arrest us for challenging them but we were not moved."

"The youths eventually joined us to strengthen us. They brought in more reinforcement of 3 vans full of soldiers. They were threatening to arrest us for challenging them but we were not moved. After voting, we all came back; this time more than 2,000 women were present. They arrested some of our boys. They started flogging some of the women, some fainting".

She narrated that they laid on the floor holding their legs and some crying. At that point, some of the men and youths were getting agitated but were told to stay off because the army will not be soft with them. "The woman is there to quench down every kind of fire and that is the power God has given to the woman" she hinted. In conclusion,

she told the women not to be afraid of anything but be courageous. She affirmed that “this nation needs a woman as head for the country to achieve meaningful development”.

The Okrika women stayed in the local government headquarters for three days and three nights, dancing and singing, sometimes sitting or lying down as a human barricade to prevent the soldiers from stealing the election materials. Videos of the nonviolent protest went viral and soon people around the world saw the women of Okrika and Ogu/Bolo confronting the military and protecting their electoral process. The technique worked, and the election of March 9 was held successfully.

Mobilization techniques for Okirika Women.

- We identify 12 wards leaders
- The 12 ward leaders were directed to supervise 151 units.
- We enrolled them so we could keep track of their membership and commitment.
- We engaged individuals who are not exposed to politics.

The Ondewari Women Of Southern Ijaw

The Ondewari Women is a group comprising of women from different local government of Bayelsa state. Members of the group include Philomina Kinere from Southern Ijaw, Caroline Siasia from Sagbama, Ebi Jacob from Nembe, Juliet Seminary from Yenagoa and Clara Otutru from Brass among

brothers and several others. According to Philomina, the state government had tried to resolve the crisis to no fruitful end.

The group galvanized the support of other women and started a reconciliatory move to end the conflict. The women saw the need to resolve the crisis before the 2019 general elections as some politicians had leverage on the crisis by engaging some of the youths to perpetrate violence in previous elections. The women, being self-funded, met with the different groups in different locations trying to understand the issues.

In the end, the two parties were brought together and reunited. Many of the youths who fled the community in the heat of the crisis came for the reconciliation ceremony. During the reconciliation ceremony, the youths pleaded with the facilitators to ensure the settlement of the persons displaced as a result of the crisis. Many houses and properties worth millions were burned down during the crisis. They also called on the women to bring parents of the warring youths together as they were also impacted by the activities of their children while the crisis was on. Following the call, the women brought together parents, particularly mothers to redirect their minds to be role models for their children. The parents were encouraged to be pillars of peaceful coexistence in the community rather than agents of division. They were also charged by the wife of the state governor to be responsible for their children, saying that the mothers should be able to



The Ondewari Women Of Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa State

others. The women facilitated the reconciliation of two factions in an age long crisis in Ondewari Community, Bayelsa state. In 2017, there was a clash between the two factions as a result of oil-related issues. The crisis led to the death of four

tell the whereabouts of their children at any given time.

Siasia Caroline stated that it took several months to build confidence as the youths said they would rather allow the conflict to linger, saying that some persons saw the crisis as an

opportunity to make money from donors who were interested in resolving the issues. She further stated that when they finally gained their trust, the boys lead way to resolving the crisis by mentioning names of critical stakeholders whom

the women must engage if they truly want to make peace. She concluded by saying that in dealing with armed groups, transparency is key, adding that the confidence the youths have in the women made it possible for them to report cases of politicians wanting to buy them over during the 2019 elections.

“Finally, we succeeded in bringing those 2 groups together in a day for peace to reign.

Prior to this day of reconciliation, some politicians had already started to engage these boys in their usual manner. They had started buying arms for them, giving them money and because of the level of trust we had built over time, whatever thing they did with those politicians they will tell us. We worked with them until finally they agreed not to kill each other again but work together to help build the community. The reconciliation continued until even the one who was amputated was begged and apologized to and there were hugs and tears of emotional moment that day”. “That is the power of a woman, what the government could not do, we did even without money”.

To further prove how bad they were, a night to the elections, a politician came into the community to cause commotion by pouring bags/sacks full of money

in the community just to lure the boys. When we saw the desperation of the political class, we had to engage in fasting and prayers to God to intervene. Eventually God helped us, because they took the money but didn't fight each other and didn't vote for that politician.

Philomina's advice for others: “Wherever I am called to give talks, I advise parents to be responsible for their children, by giving birth to only the ones they can take care of”. She continued that when parents are not able to take care of their children, they go into streets to fend for themselves and learn how to engage in all kinds of vices that are bad. She cautioned that mothers have more roles to play more than the fathers because the children spend more time with them than the fathers and those moments are time to mould and build the characters of these children.

Although the group is currently called Ondewari Women it includes women from other areas such as the secretary Caroline Siasia from Sagbama Local Government. It is being renamed Phil Peace Building Foundation.

Syndicate Groups – Lessons learned from the Shared Experiences

The following were some of the lessons the women learnt from the experiences shared by the Gallant 5 from Ogu/Bolo, the Okrika women and the Ondewari women:

1. Value re-orientation of young men and women from the home
2. Women should support women
3. Cohesion and unity in purpose among women
4. Women should make sacrifices and should be bold
5. Develop programs to forestall election violence – capacity building on peace building
6. Build rural clusters for information sharing, knowledge building and to conscientize more women towards nation building
7. Early warning signs of conflict and election violence
8. Advocate for politicians to stop using youths as political thugs
9. Advocate for alternative livelihood
10. Women should have integrity in politics
11. Mentorship and spiritual guidance for young people

12. Women should build synergy among themselves even when in power
13. Love and commitment for societal change
14. Increased sensitization on women



Syndicate Groups

Raising Women's Voices towards Nation Building Presentation by Amb Nkoyo Toyo



Amb. Nkoyo Toyo

Introduction and Context - Understanding the Context- Nigeria, Niger delta, Women's Power and Democracy

In the last decade and a half particularly, Nigeria has experienced a plethora of human rights violations with the capacity of the state and its institutions to respond being called to question. Consequently, when the country was approaching another season of elections, there were palpable fears about a possible breakdown in law and order within several states of the country. Election-related violence is not unknown and the escalation of impunity using state organs and institutions to pursue outcomes has remained a now and present reality. The situation is complicated by the added stories of state failure to arrest the mindless killings and destruction of lives and properties across Nigeria. There are many comparisons with other countries with weak state capacity, threats to the sovereignty of the nation and questions about the legitimacy of government to act in the face of upheavals. In the Niger Delta region where we are focused, the soundtrack of gunshots, military and security confrontations and other forms of rights invasions are not new. Even for women, their actions have been captured in a 2009 piece of research carried out on state violence in the Niger Delta by Sokari Ekiné. The women of the region are no strangers to resistance and instances exist. For instance, between June and August 2002, thousands of women occupied no less than 8 oil facilities belonging to Chevron/Texaco and Shell Petroleum's main oil terminal at Escravos in Delta State. These series of direct action by women in the Niger Delta was unprecedented and well organized.

Another was the case of Choba rape involving an Ikwerre community in Rivers State which also served as the headquarters of a pipeline construction company called Wilbros Nigeria Ltd (a subsidiary of Wilbros Group, US). In June 1999, the youth of Choba began a series of demonstrations and sit-ins in front of the company. On 28 October, the mobile police invaded Choba and once again unleashed murder, destruction of property and rape of women. The rapes were captured on tape by a journalist and published in the Nigerian dailies. This gave rise to demonstrations by women and youth across the community. In another account, during the invasion of Odi, many of the elderly women remained in the community and reported of the horror of shooting, burning, and looting by soldiers, including of their own homes. Elderly women narrated how soldiers broke the doors of their houses and started packing their personal property and this forced them to engage the soldiers, urging them to respect their age and sweat of the old. As we can see, the history of rebellion and resistance are entrenched in the chronicles of women's activism in the region.

Women in the Niger Delta have used and continue to use a variety of forms of collective action to resist including dancing and singing, demonstrations and strikes, testimonies, silence, and invoking culturally specific responses such as pouring liberation and stripping naked. They have also refused to alter their work routines and habits which could mean the defiant opening of the market stalls, collecting water, participating in women's meetings and other actions even when there are attempts to prevent them. These acts of resistance are well understood within the local cultures and also have socioeconomic and political implications.

Democracy and the Rivers State Context

Previous election cycles in Rivers have been closely contested and marred by violence, especially during gubernatorial and local elections. In 2015, Rivers saw the most election violence fatalities of any state, largely due to increasing competition between the ruling PDP and the APC. The elections were affected by the zero-sum relationship of the APC and PDP nationally, and the personal rivalry between current Governor Ezenwo Nyesom Wike of the PDP and his rival Former Governor Rotimi Amaechi, (formerly PDP and now of

the APC). Four years later, the 2019 elections appear to be even more deeply and violently contested than 2015. Accounts by international observers attest to this fact and some of the views are captured below-

- *Incidents of violence and intimidation, and widespread voter apathy undoubtedly drove low voter turnout," stated John Tomaszewski of the joint National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute (NDI/IRI) mission. "Moreover, a heavy military presence and vote buying in some locations, as well as irregularities in the vote counting and collation process served to undermine the integrity of the elections in those locations."*
- *The EU's observer mission concurred, saying: "Observers, including EU observers, were denied access to collation centres in Rivers, apparently by military personnel. This lack of access for observers compromises transparency and trust in the process... there is no doubt that the electoral process there was severely compromised."*
- *The UK government also expressed its concerns over the military interference in the election process in Rivers State, as reported by its observers. In response to this military interference; there was another positive development. It was the mobilization by women to counter election irregularities, push back against voter intimidation, block the stealing of election materials and weaken the intimidation, especially by the army and military.*

Understanding The Concept- Voice, Agency And Nation Building



Rivers Women

In response to the militarization of the Rivers state elections, women within some communities rose up to repel the election day aggression of armed men and defended the sanctity of the voting process. What propelled them to undertake such a risky venture has become a matter of much conjecture and interest.

Whatever the incentives behind their action, it clearly demonstrated the power of collective action and citizen's agency in making their voices count in nation building.

Participation through group action is now widespread in development practice (Hickey, S et al. 2004) but the form of women's collective action, the conditions under which it emerges and how successful is it in boosting outcomes and enhancing agency for change in societies is something which requires close examination? If such actions were to happen again, what are the most effective strategies for promoting and supporting successful collective action by and for women? Writing on the subject of citizen's participation, John Gaventa asserts that there has been a proliferation of spaces for citizen participation, but increased participation alone does not necessarily alter power relations, nor bestow more power on citizens. Similar work by the World Bank on Voice and Agency -empowering women and girls for shared prosperity suggests that while collective action can be effective, context is critically important in determining its outcomes and that changes in social norms arising from such action often follow a slow, nonlinear trajectory. This means there are no silver bullets, but treated flexibility and within context, collective action processes are a vital contributor to efforts to promote agency and empowerment for nation-building. Gaventa's research looks into how new spaces emerge (similar to what happened when the women in Rivers took to the streets to defend their votes) and concluded that such spaces could have transformative potentials-being themselves new democratic spaces and open to various forms of interpretation and engagement. When these spaces present themselves, Gaventa explains that effective pro-citizen actions could take other forms. For instance, those who are not usually interested in the elections may want to participate, or legally constituted agencies of the state may react in

ways that are more accountable and even citizens themselves may seize the momentum to seek for more substantive changes in the rules or practice.

This ND Dialogue is about how the collective action of everyday women in the region has become a vital force for good and how their actions can be used to challenge the military and other state organs to become accountable for their actions. Furthermore, their action is a pointer to what can happen when women are engaged in pressing directly for legal and regulatory compliance. Such action potentially produces new role models and leaders who can inspire and construct a much broader movement for social change and towards positive nation-building. However, if these isolated actions are to lead to wider social change and nation-building, there is a need for direct investment by international partners in making them national best practices which receive legal and moral acknowledgment as tools for escalating the power of women from below.



Women and men Resist some of Trump's anti-women policies in the US

This NDD is convened to reflect on what happened and to share those experiences with women from across the states of the Niger Delta Region. It is a means of tackling a wider normative framework which fosters violence and lack of participation and inclusion of women as legitimate citizens. The protest actions have their legitimacy from the fact that they are advancing democracy and seeking the development of the country and its democratic institutions in ways that are more equitable and equal. Challenging the normative framework, both formal and informal, is often a prerequisite for more transformative change and this requires a number of reinforcing changes that build over time, both inside the community (state, Region) and beyond. Participation in collective action can bring important intrinsic and material benefits but as a

standalone, it is not a sufficient condition for enhancing women's agency for change.



The women in Ecuador oppose mining operations permitted by the government, which they say are threatening tests, water, and land where they live.

The experience of Self Employed Women Association (SEWA) in India illustrates how collective actions that begin with seeking norm changes in one domain, through protesting against discriminatory labour standards, led to collective action in other domains which also affected women's agency resulting in demands for political representation and improved laws on domestic violence and affirmative action. Collective actions that start out responding to a specific institutional failure can, over a period of time, evolve into actions that tackle the norms and behaviours that shape broader political and societal participation. This can be done formally through legislative change and increased political visibility and representation, and informally through the everyday struggles of women's groups lobbying for social change. As outlined in the preceding discussion, collective action is an important demonstration of agency and it can lead to progress in other areas of women's lives. It is fundamentally about mobilizing around common or shared concerns. Mobilization can take a number of forms. It can be routine or sporadic and take place through an organization, government structure or entirely outside formal structures. It can be localized or transnational; it can focus on the articulation of rights or delivery of services; it can be induced from outside or it can evolve organically. There is a long history of collective action for and by women. We find that collective action is important in the development process but it is not always enough on its own to transform discriminatory social norms or

fundamentally increase women's agency and gender equality.

The 2019 Elections and the Rise of Alternative Voices -What Next?

The experiences of the Palestine youth growing in a generation where the language of resistance has been (watered down) normalized and compromises of rights reached on account of the "two-state option" and a plethora of legal terms are instructive. It is easy to moving forward for those who have 'benefited' from the struggles of women to ignore the gains of this moment for women in the Niger Delta Region. That has been the bane of the women's movement in Nigeria which has been be-devilled by incurable suspicion, planted into its very DNA by opportunism within the leadership. As a result, what are we going to do differently? How do we after exploring the different accounts of women's bravery and courage in this last elections, design either community or social accountability programmes enabled by a careful reading of the local incentives that work for, and often against, inclusive action in support of women's agency. Here are some recommendations for the consideration of this Dialogue.

1. These actions taken by women are too important to be left to local actors alone, we need to take account of the long term, non-linear process of social change that their example can bring to the communities involved and begin to work with such communities to map and plot their social evolution. Although the context of elections are different and things may not always play out in predictable ways, we need to focus on deep-seated and slow to change normative frameworks.

2. Actions are needed at a number of levels and each level should reinforce one another to build lasting change. Just as women's agency is multifaceted, so are routes for getting lasting change multiple. Identifying that multiple entry points are needed to support collective efforts that address key local problems of communities and the politics of the Niger Delta, there have to be many ways of asking questions from below. How do we see more accountability in the communities where these women operated from over the next four years? This calls for consistent work either with the LGA, the political parties or the state agencies.

3. A specific entry point could be how these women are used as agents for the reconciliation of their communities following the bitterly contested elections in the state. Is this a role that women can play or are they tainted by partisanship?

4. Another effort could be how do we use this case to show that top-down and local actions are both needed to bring about transformative change and as such the region as a whole needs to stay open to external influences. External engagements such as showing younger women how cities (communities) are reforming and creating hope for its youthful citizens. An urban renewal approach to Port Harcourt is needed dearly. So we need a campaign behind the storyline of these women's political resistance. It also about, resistance for what?

5. Efforts to create or induce group-based action to fill public goods gaps or solve accountability problems can be problematic unless gender norms and institutions are well understood. More iterative and facilitative approaches such as the engagement with Governor Wike on pathways to social change by women. Is there an opportunity here for indirect and enabling environment reforms that tackle inequities enshrined in law, the regulatory framework or the political system? It's time to find ways to get the listening Governor Wike to show the region that functioning state institutions are key, and the nature of the state and its relationships with citizens and communities deeply affects the extent to which individual and collective agency can thrive.

1. <https://www.pambazuka.org/gender-minorities/women%E2%80%99s-responses-state-violence-niger-delta>.

2. <https://www.theafricareport.com/10209/high-stakes-rivers-state-vote-ends-in-violence/>

3. Blog Post by John Campbell Africa in Transition.

4. <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Evans%20and%20Nambiar%202013.%20Collective%20action%20and%20women's%20agency.%20Dec%2017.pdf>

5. <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Evans%20and%20Nambiar%202013.%20Collective%20action%20and%20women's%20agency.%20Dec%2017.pdf>

6. <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/Evans%20and%20Nambiar%202013.%20Collective%20action%20and%20women's%20agency.%20Dec%2017.pdf>

Raising Women's Voices In The Political Sphere, Chaired By Amb. Hon. Nkoyo Toyo



Sen. Stella Omu with HRM Obi Martha Dunkwu

The crux of this session was to share experiences and strategies used by the panelists to achieve results in the political space. With the intention was to motivate the women for increased participation in decision making processes.

The panelists included: Senator Stella Omu, Ann Kio Briggs, Lolo Hailsham, Patience Uche, Hon. Victoria Nyeche and Patience Aselemi.

The panelists opined that truthfulness, self-control, good sense of judgement, among other virtues, are the fundamental principles for sustained leadership, particularly those in elective positions. Women were advised to harness their inner strengths towards good governance for economic and national development.

Speaking, **Senator Stella Omu** admonished women aspiring to be politicians in the Niger Delta, not to abuse trust, adding that education, focus, humility, self-confidence and I-can-do-it spirit can help women gain prominence in the political space. **Ann Kio Briggs** said she had always stood against injustice from childhood, adding that her first experience with injustice was Ken Saro Wiwa's murder which was what

began the resistance within her. She noted that her concern for the Niger Delta environment, among other issues, drives the spirit of activism in her. Lamenting the relegation of women to occupying seats at the stadium during campaigns and being pushed aside when the real business of governance begins, she warned women against accepting the notion that women's participation in governance is a favour from the male folks.

Lolo Hailsham, Patience Uche, Hon Victoria Nyeche and Patience Aselemi, also stressed the need for women to familiarize themselves with the constitution, while saying that there is need to understand governance issues in the region so as to contribute meaningfully. They also stressed the need for transparency when they find themselves in leadership positions.

In conclusion, women were advised to mentor younger women, aspire for elective positions as well as support their fellow women to increase participation in the political space. The panelists also admonished other women in politics to interact with the grassroots, understand the needs of the peoples and fight for programmes/ projects that will benefit the masses.



Ankio Briggs, Lolo Hailsham, Victoria Nyeche, Patience Uche, Sen. Stella Omu, Patience Aselemi, Amb. Nkoyo Toyo

Raising Women Voices In The Civil Sphere- Anchored By Sophia Sonime



Sophia Sonime, Inyingi Irimagha, Elfreda Aleruchi, Kate Okoh, Atim Ita, Rita Ehita

The session focused experiences of civil society actors with regards to work done, lessons learned, challenges and results achieved. The panelists for this session included Rita Ehita, Inyingi Irimaghan, Kate Okoh Onah, Dr. Mrs Atim Ita and Elfreda Kelvin Aleruchi. Rita Ehita of Girls Power Initiative in Delta State, stated that in her work with girls and youths, emphasis is on building the capacity of young people for quality leadership. She explained that the girls are trained on leadership skills and encouraged to take leadership positions in their schools and communities. Emphasis is also on building confidence and self-esteem of young people to enable them communicate as change agents in their environments. She urged women to contribute towards increasing women participation through mentorship and leadership trainings in their local communities, adding that raising women's voices for nation building should begin at the grassroots. She concluded by saying that so far, her team has been able to increase female participation in the resolution of conflicts in schools and the communities where they work, adding that 'catching them young' is their ultimate goal.

Inyingi Irimaghan of GADA Port Harcourt, drew the attention of the women to a critical issue which according to her, has not been given prominence in discussions about issues affecting women - violence against women in politics. She explained that Gender and Development Action (GADA) has made efforts in creating safe spaces for increased women participation in politics for women in the south-south states of the country. However, she maintained that one major challenge that has affected women's participation

in politics is the presence of economic hardship, which she refers to as a strategy by the male folk to keep women from running for elective positions as they do not have the money to do so. According to her, some level of results can be achieved through strategic mobilization of women by women. She urged women to begin preparations for 2023 regardless of the economic situation, adding that women can be a source of resource on their own.

Kate Okoh Onah decried the situations with which women are faced in markets across the states. She stated that commercial banks and other financial institutions have made it difficult for women to grow their businesses as a result of the harsh conditions given by the institutions. Women have at several points, mobilized against such demands, particularly the inflation of dues in the markets by local authorities. Interesting, as the president of the market women association in Delta State, she mobilized the women to galvanize support of other women to vote her as a counselor in her ward. Her desire to alleviate the plight of women through participation in decision processes is the driving force behind her decision to contest the office. Through the support of the women, she won. She called for women supporting women to attain political leadership as that will help to address issues affecting women from the top to bottom. Also, women in such positions should not neglect the well-being of the women but must fight for women at all levels. Dr Atim Ita, a religious leader from Akwa Ibom State, also called on women to always seek God in prayers, saying that women should strive to be united irrespective of their religious and political differences.

Elfredah Kelvin Alerechi who spoke as a media practitioner, stated that women should not be too shy to discuss issues affecting them on social media platforms. She encouraged the women to be bold and confident at all times, adding that one way to amplify the voices of women is through the media

Niger Delta Dialogue With Ethnic Youth Leaders And Women Activists April 17, 2019. Port Harcourt



Ibiwari Iyama (Standing)

In November 2018, youth leaders from the 30 ethnic groups across the 9 states of the Niger Delta came together in Warri, Delta State to ponder the question “Election Violence: Who Wins?” Participants shared experiences and contemplated the unique characteristics of each state, resulting in an action plan for each state. Subsequently state level meetings were organized by some of these leaders in Akwa Ibom, Delta and Rivers. These meetings are covered in the report of the 11th Niger Delta Dialogue.

The meeting on April 17 brought these youth leaders together again to give feedback on the 2019 elections and to ponder the question “Stopping Election Violence: What Worked?”. It also highlighted efforts made by the ethnic youth leaders in stopping election violence as well as sharing challenges and lessons learned. The youths also had the opportunity of learning about what each person is doing to engage their youths in terms of job creation.

Next Steps/Conclusions

The 12th Niger Delta Dialogue reviewed the implications of electoral violence and women's attempt to raise and sustain a voice for public good. It noted the absence of a strong regional body to mediate conflicts and address the intertwined history of states such as Bayelsa and Rivers, where violence in one reinforced restiveness in the other. Both states share a lot, and even militant leaders tend to cooperate across state lines, thus further

The general consensus was that the 2019 elections saw less violence by youth than the previous elections. However, the unexpected development was the high level of military intimidation, especially in Rivers State. This is a possibility that must be considered in planning future election work.

Several women from Okrika and Ogu/Bolo came to address their male counterparts on their activities during the 2019 election. The male youth leaders drew inspiration from the bold steps taken by the Okrika and Ogu/ Bolo women as they realized what enormous results they can achieve if they work with their female counterparts.

For example, Bristol Emmanuel of Bonny LGA commended the Ogu/Bolo women who resisted the military, adding that the power of the social media actually prevented the military from being hard on the women. However, he noted that such resistance may not be the way to go in future as the military may mask up to conceal their identity so as to accomplish their mission and that might include shooting at anything at sight. Again, the military may not participate in future elections due to the international embarrassment the women action has on the military. Nevertheless, he feels that the boys (thugs) will be aided to accomplish the biddings of whoever is involved, regardless of the social media power.

Most importantly, the youth leaders feel that the gains of the 11th NDD in stopping election violence in the Niger Delta region are overwhelming.

accentuating the region's peculiarity, making it difficult for external parties to help.

To achieve lasting peace and security in states of the region, the relations between the states of the region need to be further explored as a regional enterprise... Not limiting it to one state or the other. This explains why the 12th NDD brought women from across the region. Our approach, using the



Barr. Agatha Osieke Yusuf (Standing)

case studies of the women in Rivers, was more about how we strengthen positive influences and examples while dissociating from the negatives, and highlighting the huge gap created by mistrust between state organs, governments and their citizens.

For the activism of women to prevail, it has to be linked to the strong commitment of leaders to address the issue of residual mistrust (and to do this in the context of elections in Bayelsa and a post mortem of the 2019 elections), an ND Dialogue looking at the question of mistrust is needed. Which are the common threads on which mistrust plays out as insecurity and why is trust a necessary ingredient for finding peace? At a Thanksgiving service by the Rivers State Government, Gov. Wike commented on the role of governors and significant others from the region who worked against his bid to return. Consequently, while our sharing of experiences will lead to confidence-building, other mechanisms to bolster unity in a fragmented and often times weak institutional arrangement will be to get women to weave themes of association together.

This is by systematically bringing women, youth and men into their spaces for the purpose of

influencing their agenda and bearing in mind that such spaces could be used differently. (refer to the keynote address on the three ways they can influence the agenda of the region). In particular, addressing the absence of a strong unifying regional body, which is also a result of a lack of political will, women have to firstly create conducive conditions that will allow for a dialogue between the government and the opposition. This requires full respect for human rights of all sides and the opening of political space for discussion. Second, the dialogue has to produce a Peace Agreement to remain the basis of action in a context of conflict (including the threat of herdsmen and bandits who are also involved in kidnaping, etc.). Third, it will be important to find ways to bring all the destructive stakeholders to the table to enable dialogue on how they see the path towards peaceful, credible and inclusive elections and resolution of postelection conflicts.

Ultimately, the dialogue envisages more engagement cutting across different constituencies and interests. There is need for an intersection of peoples and ideas to arrive at a peace architecture infused with women's voices and directed at challenging the areas of resistance and obstinacy towards building peace in the region and during successive elections.



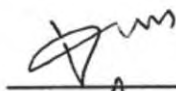

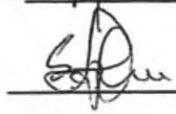
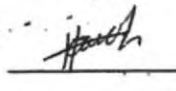

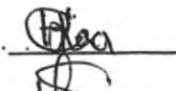

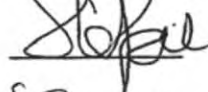
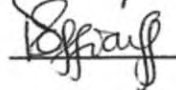
A communique reached at the end of a 1-day roundtable meeting for Niger Delta Women on election violence held at Pearl Hall, The Atrium Event Centre, Stadium Road, Port Harcourt on Thursday, March 21, 2019

Elections in the Niger Delta have been fraught with high level of violence. The situation was not different during the 2019 election process which had the worst cases of violence resulting in killings, intimidation, and further militarization of the region. Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta and Akwa-Ibom states were most affected by incidences of electoral violence. The quest for political power, underpinned by the need for control and appropriation of resources of the region for mainly personal gain/ interest has contributed to making election a do or die affair.

Based on the foregoing, 100 concerned women drawn from Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta states met at a 1-day roundtable meeting to tease out the roles women can play to reduce election violence and also forestall reprisal attacks in the post election period. The women condemned in strongest terms the killings in Abonnema, Khana, Emohua, and other parts of Rivers State during the 2019 General Election and the subsequent hijacking of materials by politicians guarded by men in military gears which has created tension and insecurity in the state. The women identified and commended the role the women of Ogu/Bolo, Okrika and Abonnema in Rivers State, and Odenwari in Bayelsa State played in preventing election violence and resisting the hijacking of materials in their respective local government areas

The meeting came up with the following recommendations:

1. Mobilize and organize women across political and ethnic divide to form alliances and build capacity for preventing electoral and other forms of violence in communities of the Niger Delta
2. Set up a committee of women under the leadership of HRM Obi Martha Dunkwu and AA Peace Works, to strategically engage traditional rulers and political leaders in all the states to put an end to violence in the Niger Delta region
3. There should be an immediate cease fire on all politically motivated violence, hate speeches, inciting statements, and sponsorship of violence in the region. Anyone contravening this cease fire will be named and shamed by Niger Delta women
4. A panel of enquiry should be immediately setup by both Federal Government and the International community to identify and prosecute the sponsors and perpetrators of violence during the 2019 elections in the Niger Delta, more especially the role of the military during the elections
5. Government and stakeholders should take steps to carryout disarmament, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration of youths and those that have been affected by violence during the elections
6. Build the capacity of women to fully understand their civic and constitutional rights to enable them speak up against violence and intimidation
7. Women should be bold to seek for offices in political parties and governments at all levels and also be engaged in decision making machineries of government
8. Communities of the Niger Delta should stop celebrating people known for violence, rather those that have contributed positively to the development of the region should be identified and celebrated
9. There should be a medium and long term plan stopping violence against women
10. AA Peace Works and other organizations should organize regular fora for bringing woman together to share experience and re-strategize for peace and development in communities of Niger Delta.

HRM Obi Martha Dunkwu	<i>Omu of Anioma Kingdom</i>		21/03/19
Lolo Hailsham	<i>Bonny Kingdom, Rivers State</i>		21 March 2019
Sophia Daniel-Sonime	<i>Kalabari, Rivers State</i>		21/03/19
Caroline Siasia	<i>Odenwari, Bayelsa State</i>		21/03/19
Barr. Christiana Tamunobereton-ari	<i>Ogu/Bolo, Rivers State</i>		21/03/19
Helen Sira Nkpankpan	<i>Ogoni, Rivers State</i>		21/03/19
Ibiwari Iyama	<i>Okrika, Rivers State</i>		21/03/2019
Loretta Ahuokpeme	<i>Civil Society</i>		21/3/19
Barr. Deborah Effiong	<i>Civil Society</i>		21/3/2019



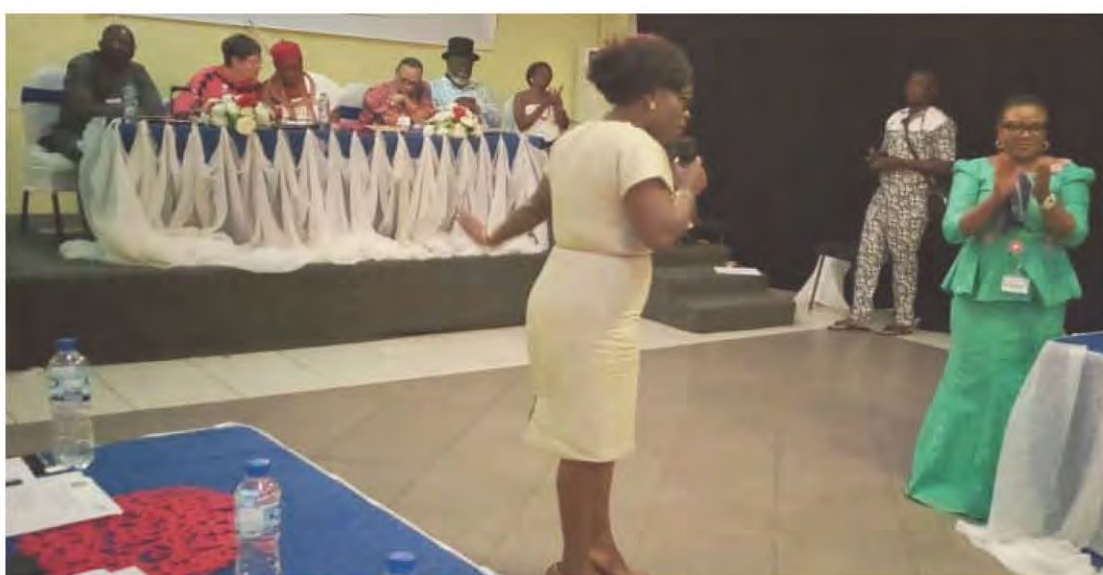
March 21st, 2019 Meeting with Rivers and Bayelsa Women

**List of Attendance at 12th NDD held 9-10 April, 2019
at the Atrium Event Centre Port Harcourt**

Ogieva Helen Ighodaro	Edo State	0805 662 1941
Omoigui Vivian Misau	Edo State	0810 745 4291
Hon Potoki Victoria	Edo State	0803 519 2659
Jegede Mary Bosede	Edo	0806 464 1056
Princess Meriam Osikhomo M	Edo	0705 675 4534
Cynthia B. Bright	Edo	0813 124 4431
Agatha Osieke Yusuf	Edo	0703 393 1313
Obakina Ese Grace	Edo	0818 384 5003
Kadiri E. Mariam	Edo	0806 732 4254
Ayibanegiyefa Egba	Bayelsa	0803 887 2058
Dorcas Asiberegbanka	Rivers	0803 243 7907
Nemi Ogan Barile	Rivers	0803 643 1374
Patience A. Nwenne	Rivers	0803 670 0868
Lady Chief Emily Ede	Rivers	0803 340 6478
Oboh Patience Sunday	Rivers	0706 377 7267
Hon Patience Aselemi	Rivers	0805 611 6282
Nwafor Lele Ododobari Tessy	Rivers	0806 925 6968
Barr. Winnie Omuboba	Rivers	0803 352 5264
Ayo Odunaweru	Rivers	0803 888 3112
Legalu Rhoda	Rivers	0803 197 7320
Barr. Christiana Tamunorbereton	Rivers	0805 529 5910
Bruce Umarani	Rivers	0810 572 8545
Nwibasi Biabeke	Rivers	0703 716 9982
Elfredah Alerechi	Media, Rivers	0812 464 3277
Joy Oyaghiri Fagbemi	Rivers	0810 758 2782
Ogbeifun Osadolor	Delta	0803 551 5049
Sobere Rachael	Okrika	0809 378 0848
Honour M. Loveth	Rivers	0903 819 7237
Binta Frank	Rivers	0817 738 7879
Don Pedro Ibiba	Port Harcourt	0803 727 9489
Obarijima Wawah	Rivers	0903 460 5648
Irimagha Inyingi	GADA	0806 743 2036
Edward- Odoi Bidemi	Abua/ Odual	0703 905 2729
Gladys Tom	Okrika	0803 275 7533
Nene Appollos	Okrika	0806 504 9977
Confort Ndene	Rivers	0803 080 1918
Julie Ikisa	Okrika	0816 877 0183
Hon Victoria Nyeche	Rivers	0809 999 8263
Ibiwari Iyama	Okrika	0809 154 5341
Ann Abdulsaleem	Obiekpor	0803 534 6531
Racheal Walter	Rivers	0803 264 5316
Blessing Derefaka	Rivers	0806 023 5473
Ibibofori Tamuno D.	Rivers	0803 254 9047
Ann Kio Briggs	Rivers	0809 911 1152
Louisa B. Feme	Gokana	0805 630 0708
Ikpae Najite Gloria	Khana	0803 408 1353

Honour M. Loveth	Rivers	0903 819 7237
Binta Frank	Rivers	0817 738 7879
Loretta Ahuokpem	Rivers	0703 087 9963
Sophia Daniel Sonime	Rivers	0809 773 3742
Dorcas Asiberegbanka	Rivers	0803 243 7907
Nemi Ogan Barile	Rivers	0803 643 1374
Patience A. Nwenne	Rivers	0803 670 0868
Pepple Khadeejah	Rivers	0805 561 4407
Bruce Umarani	Rivers	0810 572 8545
Lolo Hailsham	Rivers	0803 338 8549
Bethlehem Onisojukume	Rivers	0813 271 4813
Joy Oyaghiri Fagbemi	Rivers	0810 758 2782
Nwanze Rita	Okpanam, Delta State, Delta	0806 304 3885
Akerejola Doris	Delta State	0703 671 5154
Onifeaju G. Chizoba	Delta	0803 742 6771
Kate Okoh	Delta	0806 274 9931
Ehita Ikoghode	Delta	0803 633 5215
Senator Stella Omu	Delta	0803 307 4229
Ogeh Helen	Delta	0807 880 0190
Ogbeifun Osadolor	Delta	0803 551 5049
Nwaze Rita	Delta	0806 304 3885
Patrick Ochei	Media Delta	0703 050 6047
Sam Jibunor	Political Adviser to Omu of Anioma Nation, Delta	0803 350 9494
Gita Tari Ere J.K	Yenagoa, Bayelsa State	0806 343 5635
Amina O. James	Bayelsa State	0803 675 6195
Dise Sheila Ogoise	Bayelsa	0703 544 0060
Dr Josephine Ebhesi Matthew	Bayelsa	0803 339 3527
Barr Biobaragha M	Bayelsa	0703 982 6564
Amananaghan Maureen Tare	Bayelsa	0803 268 0454
Clara Otutru	Bayelsa	0803 706 6054
Siasia Caroline	Bayelsa	0803 663 6032
Ayibanegiyefa Egba	Bayelsa	0803 887 2058
Ebiteinye Jacob	Bayelsa	0803 374 9124
Philomina Kinere Lafiegha	Bayelsa	0803 493 4570
Ekaette Anwawa Esq	Akwa Ibom	0806 768 4444
Philomina N. Okon	Akwa Ibom	0803 074 5911
INI Adiakpan	Akwa Ibom	0802 353 6382
Umoh Efiok Ituk	Akwa Ibom	0806 122 6486
Carol Archibong	Akwa Ibom	0806 331 8473
Abigail Edohoekeh	Akwa Ibom	0806 738 1599
Felicia Robert	Akwa Ibom	0803 282 9210
Francisca Effiom	Cross River	0803 711 3652
Winifred Oma Eyo	Cross River	0803 713 4747
Bassey Duke	Cross River	0803 338 0511
Rev. Dr. Atim Ita	Cross River	0803 394 5401
Annah Baesv	Cross River	0703 338 1363
Magdalene Eyoma	Cross River	0803 504 9490
Uta Bassey	Cross River	0818 248 8273
Amaugo Praise	Cross River	0703 464 1428

Young Barbara Omo	Cross River	0803 055 5992
Emma Amaize	Media	0803 293 3616
Franklin Nelson	Rapporteur	0806 496 9889
Amb Nkoyo Tovo	NDD Facilitator	
Livingstone Membere	AAPW	
Ken Omas	AAPW	
Emuobo Ebivwie	AAPW	
Googluck Agbor	AAPW	
Tega Edeki	AAPW	
Utavie Jeremiah	AAPW	
Chief Lucky Duumaa	AAPW	



Caroline Siasia with Mc. Lizzy Jarikre



HRM. Obi Martha Dunkwu, Omu of Anioma Nation



Niger Delta Dialogue

A World of Peace

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Academic Associates PeaceWorks
12 Friday Ani Str., Effurun GRA, Delta State.
aapeaceworksng@gmail.com
www.aapeaceworks.org.ng



Academic Associates PeaceWorks