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Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation and Instability in the Niger Delta: An Analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Process.

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acronyms | 03 |
| Resume | 04 |
| Abstract | 05 |
| Introduction | 06 |
| Conceptualizing the Usage of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation | 08 |
| The Causes of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation in the Niger Delta | 11 |
| Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons | 16 |
| An Analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process | 18 |
| Conclusion | 23 |
| References | 25 |

Acronyms

SALW

Small Arms and Light Weapons

DDR

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

AG

Action Group

NCNC

National Council of Nigeria and the

Cameroons/[National Council of Nigerian Citizens](#)

RCPC

Rivers Chiefs and People's Conference

NDBDA

Niger Delta Basin development Authority

JTF

Joint Task Force

JYC

Jaw Youths Congress

Resume

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Abstract

The issue of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation has been given widespread international focus in the post Cold War era. This is so because these weapons have become the primary tools of ethnic and internal conflicts in recent times. It has equally been observed that developing countries in the Third world, particularly in Africa are the most vulnerable. The African situation has to be understood from the context of the post independence political, economic and socio-cultural setting. This period witnessed the existence of a highly factionalized and fictionalized society, weak structures, sectoral dislocation exacerbated by foreign domination and vulnerability to the vagaries of cold war rivalry between the super powers of which Nigeria where the Niger Delta Region is situated is not an exception. The backlash of this development was widespread national, ethnic and communal conflicts giving rising to the excessive militarization of the continent. Hence, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) becomes the basis for settling scores within national societies of African nations.

As earlier stated the research of this paper is Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation in the Niger Delta: An Analysis of the (DDR) process. Our review of relevant literature on this research problem indicates the existence of a yawning gap that we feel a further research can help to fill. The objective of this paper is centered on the need to examine and analyze the extent to which the DDR process would help the existence of a lasting peace in the Niger Delta. As such the significance of this paper can hardly be overemphasized. This is based on the importance of the Niger Delta Region as the economic life wire of the Nigerian nation. We would resort to the usage of content analysis as the method of our source for data. It is our hypothetical stand in this paper that the DDR process would not ensure lasting peace in the Niger Delta, secondly that it is only a sufficient involvement of the local population and their buy in into the programme that would provide a lasting peace in the Niger Delta. In this paper we have resorted to the usage of systems theory for our analysis. In a political system such as ours, we need to bear in mind the fact that when there is crisis in the Niger Delta, Gbokoharam or Jos the entire political system is affected in one way or the other. We have therefore analyzed the crisis of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Niger Delta from that context. The paper is divided into six parts. The first part is the introduction which is followed by a look at some conceptual issues pertaining to (SALW). Thirdly, we look at the sources of these Arms and why these sources have become a bottomless pit. Fourthly, we have examined the origin of the usage of such arms in Africa and by extension the Niger Delta. Fifthly, we would analyze critically the DDR programme in the Niger Delta and the sixth is the conclusion.

Introduction

The issue of small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation has been given wide spread international focus in the post cold war era. This is because these weapons have become the primary tools of ethnic and internal conflicts in recent times. They have been the sources of violence, wars, conflicts and crimes. It has equally been observed that developing countries in the third world, particularly in Africa are the most vulnerable. The question is why are such conflicts persisting or why do they reoccur even after the end of such conflicts? Does it mean that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process has not been able to sufficiently address the problems that may have necessitated the occurrence of such conflicts? Answers to questions of these nature would go a long way in making us to understand the persistent instability in the Niger delta, made possible by SALW proliferation that has reached a crisis level, hence the topic of this paper Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation and instability in the Niger Delta, an analysis of the disarmament demobilization and reintegration process.

The Niger Delta an oil rich region in Nigeria is characterized by the existence of wide spread poverty, squalor and environmental degradation due to long period of neglect and marginalization by successive regimes both civil and military. Several efforts have been made through representations of traditional rulers, opinion leaders and public spirited individuals on behalf of the people. These moves have been met by successive regimes with disdain and draconian brute force. The small Arms and Light Weapons crisis we are witnessing currently in the Niger Delta is necessitated by such brute force, as the people had no alternative than resorting to violence. Though some disarmament, demobilization and disintegration programme was carried out by President Olusegun Obasanjo, they could not provide lasting solution to the crisis due to lack of genuine interest on the part of government. The question is how genuine is the current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme of Yar'Adua's government in ensuring a lasting solution to the Niger Delta crisis by making sure that those factors that necessitated the crisis are taken care of once and for all?

It is true that a lot has been written on the issue of small arms and light weapons proliferation and instability in the Niger Delta. But such writings have been focused largely on the aspects of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The real issues that really necessitated the wide spread usage of such weapons have not been sufficiently addressed. For instance, Bekoe Dorina in his strategies for peace in the Niger Delta was of the view that previous attempts at disarmament, demobilization and integration (DDR) programmes did not succeed due to the absence of a coordinating body and employment opportunities. He went further to say that “there is the need for comprehensive approach that will address the incentives of groups to hold arms, implement best practices from successful programmes, invite international observers to monitor disarmament processes and ensure coordination between disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts and also creating meaningful employment opportunities (Bekoe Dorina, 2009, p.7). In as much as one appreciates Dorina’s views, it is our contention in this paper that such views does not help to sufficiently address the problem of small Arms and Light weapons crisis in the Niger delta. This is predicated on the fact that, what is necessary at this point in time is the success of the post Amnesty peace building process. The concern of this paper therefore, is the extent to which the post amnesty peace building process can ensure the existence of a lasting peace considering the pernicious long term effects of the existence of small arms and light-weapons in a post conflict situation.

The paper starts with an introduction which is followed by a look at some conceptual issues, the third is an examination of the causes of small arms and light weapons proliferation, the fourth part looked at the sources of these arms, the fifth part is an analysis of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, while the last is the conclusion.

Conceptualizing the Usage of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation

In the prehistoric days man was said to be in a state of nature, a homo-sapiens and life was brutish, nasty and based on the survival of the fittest. Over time, man became humane, civilized and started living a communal life based on societal norms and values which were considered sacred. Violation of societal norms and values is often met with the exercise of legitimate coercive authority of the state, to enforce compliance and obedience. As time went on state elites began to misuse the legitimate coercive authority to suppress and violate the rights of the people who in actual sense handed over this power to them. Thus power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The instruments of coercion used either legitimately or arbitrarily are the small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Generally speaking, small arms are weapons designed for personal use, while light weapons are designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. Examples of small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns. Light weapons include heavy machine guns, some types of grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns and portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems. They are widely durable, highly portable, easily concealed, and possess legitimate military, police and civilian users. Small arms and light weapons are used both by government forces (military and police) and non state actors (guerrillas, ethnic militias war lords, brigands and so on engaged in low intensity conflicts (Klare, 2009, p.3). In an era of Oligarchic rule, who says power says Oligarchy. As posited by elitist theory, the elites a small category of well organized few knows the importance of power which when acquired is more often made arbitrary use of that is inimical and detrimental to the interests of the majority of the people.

It is a known fact that the principles of national sovereignty set no boundaries to the violence in which domestic conflict can be conducted. When polarization occurs along communal cleavages, the conflict situation describes entire collectivities as enemies. Such confrontation is intense in its mobilization effect and swiftly escalates fears to a level where the very physical survival of a collectivity may appear to be at stake. Taking into consideration the extent to which American's

“Melting Pot theory was challenged, it is understandable why certain factors such as urbanization, industrialization and secularization can hardly work in multinational society, even if the total authority and coercive means available to the state were launched to a coherent strategy of assimilation (Young, 1993, p.7). Again the American experience makes one to realize that the viability of the assimilation paradigm came under growing attack in the 1960s, as evidence began to accumulate that ethnicity was far more persistent than the melting pot theory would permit. For the fact that change and process are central we need to pay particular heed to the social vectors which alter identity patterns and to the political arenas which define their saliency (Ibid., p.11).

In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the identity of circumstances, the fluidity of groups and pace of change offer a view of the entire range of human experience of cultural pluralism. Since sub-national cleavages will endure it must be endured. The American racial situation might serve as a useful example, poverty and being Black closely correlates; Black anger derives in part from the myriad social obstacles which have kept the bulk of the black population at the bottom end of the economic ladder (Ibid., p. 40). Here in Nigeria, the people of Niger delta have right from the inception of the country as a sovereign nation been systematically and persistently marginalized, impoverished and dispossessed of their natural resources. One therefore agrees with Kegley in his assertion that,

when valuable natural resources are discovered in a particular region of a country, the people living in such localities suddenly have economic incentives to secede violently if necessary.....conflict is also more likely in countries that depend heavily on natural resources as rebel groups can extort the gains from this trade to finance their operations. (Kegley, 2007, p. 23)

The situation in the Niger Delta can be seen from the above assertion. However, the point of difference is that Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro’s attempt at secession in his 12 days revolution in 1967 was due to the long period of marginalization and neglect of the people of this area. It is also true that militant groups resorted to oil bunkering activities to finance their operations. Again the point of difference with Kegley’s assertion is that they were doing it in collaboration and involvement of high level government officials.

According to the United Nations, some 359 million people (of 578 million who belongs to groups that face some form of cultural exclusion) are disadvantaged or discriminated against relative to others in following their beliefs and frustration, anger often erupts in violence (Ibid., p.42-3). When people's expectations of what they deserve rise more rapidly than their material rewards, the probability of conflict grows. That of course applies to most of the countries in the global south, where the distribution of wealth and opportunities is highly unequal. This is the essence of relative deprivation as a cause of internal violence as people who feel they have been denied the resources they deserve are often inclined to use force in acts of rebellion (Ibid., p. 428).

The Causes of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation in the Niger Delta

The root of the Niger delta crisis which reached an alarming proportion in recent times could be traced to the prevailing circumstances during the colonial era which were not taken care of as at the time of independence. In other words, these problems were carried over to the independence era and persisted over time. One such problem was the coming into existence of ethnic politics by virtue of the proliferation of ethnic identity groupings. These groups include the Ogbé Omo Oduduwa, Ibo cultural union and Jamiyar Arewa all of which later metamorphosed into political parties. This period constituted watershed in the annals of Nigeria's political history. It was also an eye opener to the leaders of the Niger Delta. Reference to one or two of such issues might help to buttress our point. In order to establish their dominance at the centre, the major political parties, particularly those of the West and East led by Chief Awolowo and Dr. Azikiwe tried to balkanize the minorities in their regions. Any effort aimed at establishing their identity was crushed by the leadership of these parties. A case in point is the issue of representation at the 1956 London conference aimed at preparing the nation for independence.

This issue was highly politicized by AG and NCNC in order to incorporate the minorities of these regions into themselves without representation and identity at the conference. This was strongly opposed by the leaders of the Niger Delta. Prominent among which was the Chief Harold Dappa Biriye's led Rivers Chiefs and People's Conference (RCPC) which dissociated itself from the position of the two parties. What the RCPC did was to fall back on the treaties signed by chiefs of Oil Rivers with Her Majesty's government which were recognized by the colonial government as at that time. Another thorny issue is the problem of comey subsidy.....port dues collected by Ijo Chiefs and peoples from ships that berthed in Ijo territories in the Niger Delta. That Awolowo succeeded in doing that tend to encourage Azikiwe to do same in the East. This was strongly opposed by the Rivers congress led by Hon John A Nsirim as President and Chief Biriye as secretary.

The rational behind Awolowo and Azikiwe's actions was to have complete control over the minorities without any identity with a view to achieve their ambition of becoming either

president or prime minister at the national level. Akobo's position on this issue is instructive he said, that, "it must not be forgotten however that each of these three parties came to power at a time when their respective leaders appeared committed to the cultural, economic and political survival and supremacy of the three major tribal groups concerned to commit large resources of the people's treasury to the creation of a qualitative and quantitative leadership of their various tribes". Again Ayotamuno's view on this issue is in line with the assertion of Akobo when he said that, "In the case of Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the love of a huge population was a primary consideration. Dr. Azikiwe's position was propelled by the desire to control the oil rich endowments of the Rivers province", for Awolowo Mazi S.G Ikoku an ideologue of AG's views captures Awolowo's position; "he was merely going through the motions that would help him put together the arithmetical problem of getting members to be the president. He was not doing it because he had sat down and believed in it. He was doing it as part of his political strategy to get into power."

It is true that the Willink's Commission was set up to address and take care of fears expressed by the minorities. But the Commission's report only gave palliatives that did not address the problems of the Niger Delta. Rather it recommended the setting up of the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDDBA) which was just a mere symbolic representation of the governments' intension to douse the tension that arose as a result of the agitations of the people. This was so mainly because of the collaborative complicity of both the colonial authorities and the leaders of the majority parties in Nigeria as at that time. Therefore the root cause of the instability in the Niger Delta could be traced to the time of colonial era when the structural imbalances that are bedeviling the nation and indeed the Niger Delta started.

One would have thought that the political leaders may have learnt their lessons in the post independence era, by way of introducing measures through policies to take care of these problems once and for all, but the reverse was the case. Rather the leadership was unable to transform inherited structures to meet popular aspirations for security and peaceful transfer of power. Instead these institutions were grafted onto and grow apart from traditional structures, thus creating fatal fault lines in the architecture of the new state (Abdel, p.4). To the extent that the minorities in the Niger Delta do not see themselves as stakeholders in the nation building

project, the state in Nigeria has lacked popular legitimacy and remained a shell state. The preoccupation with assuring personal power and regime security blocked any moves towards democratic institution building. The state building project was effectively replaced by rent seeking arrangements, based on personal loyalty and the denial of security to the majority. This is why the French Africanist scholar J. F. Bayart objected to the use of such terminologies like prebendalism and beyond or in the final analysis patrimonialism or neo-patrimonial in describing the nature of the state in Africa, preferring instead to conceive of the state in Africa, as, “*la politique du ventre-sheer Kleptocracy*” glamorized and elevated as a system of government (Akindele Ace, 2001, p.195).

While the degree of prebendalism and beyond or patrimonialism and neo- patrimonialism is relative from one state to another, the out comes are significant for all the states concerned. The control of the state becomes the foremost stake in national politics and to achieve this end every means is justified. According to Crawford Young, “Many of the civil wars in Africa such as Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda and Zaire which have become clear threat to security started as manifest group reaction to political exclusion and marginalization which the authoritarian State has entrenched” (Akindele and Ate, p. 195).

In spite of the existence of this gloomy situation in the country generally, that of the minorities in the Niger Delta became worse due to the reactionary policies of the Eastern regional leadership which perceived the resistance of the Niger Delta people as an affront that need to be crushed at all cost. There was a systematic exclusion of the people in virtually all segments of Eastern Regional government. The frustration and anger this situation created culminated into the first attempt at succession and the usage of small arms in the 12 days revolution led by Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro in 1967. It is true that Gowon created 12 states in 1967 out of which was Rivers State, which tend to assuage the feeling of the people. But Gowon’s establishment of the petroleum Act in 1969 can be described as giving with one hand and taking back with another. As if that action of Gowon was not enough, Obasanjo’s military government introduced the land use decree in 1978, thereby dispossessing the people of their God given land and its natural resources. What came out of this development was collaboration between successive military governments and the oil multinational corporations in the systematic exploitation of the

resources. The irony of the situation is the brazen manner in which the resources were exploited, without the slightest regard or resort to standard environmental practices. The result of this was the degradation of the environment which affected the ecosystem and the depletion of the flora and fauna which is the people's source of livelihood. Chief Dappa Biriye's views on this issue are important he said,

The country's gratitude to our loyalty was to exercise all offshore royalties from coastal states in the time of Gowon through the petroleum Act of 1969. That is a paradox of qualitative excellence and undermined by its very beneficiaries.

With this development what the people needed and requested for was the protection of their environment and the provision of basic amenities for their sustenance. This was met with brute force by successive military regimes. One of such brutal actions of government was the killing of Ken Sarowiwa and eight other Ogoni activists by Abachas military government. When people's popular and legitimate aspiration for self actualization and preservation are met with brute force, the result is resistance at all costs regardless of what might be the likely consequences. It is in this context that one need to appreciate and understand the issue of small arms and light Weapons proliferation in the Niger Delta.

However, the most recent violence in the Niger Delta grew out of the political campaign in 2003. As they competed for office, politicians in Rivers State, a focal point of violence in 2003 manipulated the Niger Delta Vigilantes led by Ateke Tom, and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo (Bekoe, 2009, p.5). Exacerbating rivalries, political candidates used these groups to advance their aspirations often rewarding gang members to commit acts of political violence and intimidation against their opponents. The conclusion of the 2003 elections did not end the violence. The Niger Delta Vigilantes and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force continued to fight each other through out 2004. The hostilities peaked when over 300 commanders of the Ijaw ethnic group announced that if the government did not change conditions in the Niger Delta, they would take action against both the government and the oil installations (Ibid.). This was the turning point when arms originally meant and used for political violence ended up being used as instruments of militancy for Niger Delta struggle. This development may well be an after thought or a face saving devise on the part of the so called militants when their services were no longer required by the politicians at the end of the

elections. It need to be pointed out however, that this after thought or face saving devise would not have been possible if the prevailing circumstances in the Niger Delta where any thing to the contrary. In other words, if the government and the oil multinationals operating in the area had done what is expected, the loopholes that necessitated this turning point would not have arisen. Going by the pedigree of these youths who had no education or skill except gunmanship, taking advantage of the existing situation was necessary for their sustenance. According to the Hard Truth a militant who called himself marine Scorpion said,

Our commanders and by extension our field officers were used in the 2003 elections. Shortly after we were abandoned. A man armed without a regular paying job, has to find way to make ends meet with the gun he was given in the first instance.(The Hard Truth, 2007, p.2).

Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The sources of SALW proliferation are many and varied. A major pipeline of SALW remains the stockpiles that were pumped into Africa in the 1970s and 1980s by the ex-soviet Union, the USA and their allies to fan proxy inter state wars. These left over weapons have found their way through clandestine networks, involving rogue arms brokers, private military companies, shady air lines companies and local smugglers to exacerbate on going conflicts and facilitate the commencement of new ones in the continent (Abdel Fatau, p. 2). What this has given rise to is that Africa has become the port of call for a huge labor pool of potential security entrepreneurs, mercenaries and arms merchants which have been created particularly in south Africa, Eastern and central Europe. Besides, these weapons industries have become the most important aspects of these countries economies in the post cold war era. These developments have made it possible for the process of production getting into private entrepreneurs. These multifaceted production centers involving both the state and private individuals, brought about the existence of surplus arms that eventually find their way into conflict zones, through roque brokers thereby adding to the already, existing sizeable cold war stockpiles. Ultimately, the end point of these weapons is Africa where the roque arms merchants' team up with the foreign extracting companies and the corrupt state elites to pacify violent resource enslaves for illegitimate exploitation of resources.

It could therefore be said that the character of small arms and light weapons proliferation is not state centric. Thus the line between legal and illegal sources is blurred. This is applicable to both the external and the internal. External has to be understood within the context of what flows to Africa from Europe and other parts of the World and the clandestine networks of passage of arms from trouble areas to other parts of the continent that had relative peace and stability. For instance, most weapons that find their way into West Africa came from the conflict zones of the Great Lakes, the greater Horn into the Mano River Vertex (Ibid.). The existence of these sources not withstanding; there is the existence of emerging arms industries in countries such as Nigeria. While the existence of porous borders and lack of meantime domain awareness tend to accelerates external sources, poor remuneration results into low morale of the security personnel constitutes yet another illegal sources of arms transfer. The evidence of proliferation gives a cause for concern. Out of the 639 million SALW circulating globally, some estimated 7 million

are in West Africa, and 77,000 small arms are in the hands of major West African insurgent groups (International Alert, p. 10).

What really gives a cause for concern is the fact that ethnic militia groups, private security companies, arms smugglers, criminal gangs, bandits, mercenaries and vigilante groups are playing more important role in the proliferation of SALW in West Africa. For instance, Nigeria's estimated population of over 150 million is about half of the entire West African population estimated to more than 230 million people. At the 2001 UN Small Arms conference, the Nigerian Minister of Defence confirmed that Nigeria is home to a million of SALW estimated to be circulating in the West African sub-region. Nigeria is also the bridge to central Africa, a zone of conflict from where many weapons have been smuggled into West Africa using the Congo River as a vital water way. Another striking feature of the Small Arms proliferation in West Africa is its trans-national character involving the citizens of various member states in a collaborative criminal network (Ibid., p.12).

An Analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process

Disarmament has been an issue of great concern to the international community generally and individual nations as well in view of the carnage that is caused by small arms and light weapons. As such disarmament efforts are often made at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels. However, disarmament efforts have been affected already by certain factors. Much of the initiative to reduce and control small arms and light weapons has been left to the poor countries themselves, with little help from international governments or agencies. One of the causes behind the inaction of some of the world's wealthiest states is domestic politics and economic self-interest. On the political front, not all governments in a position to donate funds towards small arms control recognize civilian ownership of arms as a problem. In terms of economic self interest, a number of governments are also reluctant to be involved in initiatives which seek to reduce armed violence by restraining local market in small arms. The value of the legal global trade in small arms is estimated at four billion US dollar per year. The estimated value of the illegal global trade in small arms is an additional one billion US dollars (file: IIE/Small Arms, p.11-3).

In 2001, the UN Conference on the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects was held in New York. Resulting from this conference was the programme of Action to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (Ebo, p.142). It is true that this normative document has emerged as the only consensus authoritative international statement of the nature of the problem and the proposed solution. It is a politically binding document which has become the central global instrument for preventing and reducing trafficking and proliferation of SALW. In as much as one appreciates this development, this programme of action focuses only in illegal trade in small arms despite the fact that most illegally sold arms initially came from legal sources. This is in addition to the fact that despite official proclamations to the contrary, various governments have undermined the efficacy of the moratorium by working against it. Thousands of weapons have been collected and destroyed by government agencies, but statistics are silent on how many weapons remains in illegal hands.

We however, need to bear in mind the fact that in the after math of violent conflict large numbers of Small Arms and Light Weapons often remain in the hands of government forces, warring parties and civilians. The flow of illicit arms contributes to an atmosphere of insecurity which further increases the demand for arms. Ex-combatants and criminals also take advantage of the lack of effective and functional security institutions to perpetuate crime and revenge attacks. The result is a cycle of violence which is a direct legacy of conflict, which presents significant challenges for post conflict peace building (Ibid., p. 137). The removal of weapons from circulation is a necessary though not sufficient condition for successful post conflict peace building. From a peace building perspective, combating proliferation extends beyond the state which in post conflict context is hardly existent. The challenge of addressing proliferation after conflict is therefore one of governance rather than government, reflecting a multiplicity of actors levels and mechanisms. The challenges posed by small arms to peace building reflect and are complicated by fragmentation of political authority and the emergence of new actors in small arms issue (Ibid., p. 138). The state has become an increasingly insufficient albeit crucial actor in addressing small arms proliferation, particularly after conflict when state capacity is weak. The fight against small arms proliferation has grown beyond the sole responsibility of government institutions, structures and processes, and the number and profile of non – state actors involved in addressing what should be described as the small arms crisis has increased considerably in recent times (Ibid., p.142).

That previous attempts or efforts geared towards disarmament, demobilization and reintegration did not work because so many factors were not taken into consideration. For instance, in September 2004, when the Niger delta crisis reached its peak certain measures aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration were carried out by President Obasanjo and Governor Peter Odili. The Duo invited Ateke Tom and Alhaji Dokubo to Abuja where talks were held between the two warring factions. The outcome of the peace talks was the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the warring groups. Over 3000 weapons were handed over by the militants which were publicly destroyed. The repented militants attended a thanks giving church service, asking God to forgive their sins. They openly embraced each other as a mark of new beginning not only for themselves, but for the entire society. Camps were opened for their training and at least 2000 youths were given technical skills even though they were not given

jobs (Dorina, 2009, p. 5). Even if they were given jobs, considering what they were gaining from oil bunkering activities, they would have still resorted to violence for the fact that government has really failed to address the factors that necessitated the violent struggle in the first place. The position of the Hard Truth on this issue is important,

The public has been noted to have so much misgiving about this alleged sundering of arms by Ateke Tom and other major and deadly groups. And to confirm their fears, it appears a lot more effort needs to be put in as it were going by what is still obtainable in the society today. The public has argued that general insecurity still prevails. (The Hard Truth, August 5-11, 2004, p.4).

In view of the outcome of past efforts at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the Niger Delta there is every need for government to change its tactics if the present exercise it to provide lasting peace and stability in the Niger Delta. Of great concern is the bureaucratic ineptitude and complicity of the military personnel of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the disarmament exercise currently going on in the Niger Delta? Allegations of complicity were leveled at the JTF by the Director-General and Commandant of Nigerian Merchant Navy Sea Farers Maritime and Petroleum Security and Safety Corps, Commando Allen Benson Edema he said,

Many people were feeding from the Niger Delta crisis, and do not want a resolution to it. He specifically fingered the Nigerian Navy and NIMASA which is under the Ministry of Transport as some of the organizations benefiting from illegal activities in the Niger Delta. But today based on the crisis in the Niger Delta which a lot of them have been involved in escalating it, they don't want the President to find lasting solution because they all dine with the militants and are sponsoring them. (Ibid., June 18 – 24, 2009, p.3).

Apart from their involvement in illegal activities in the Creeks such as oil bunkering and acting as conduit pipes for illegal transfer of arms across the region, they unleash terror and mayhem on innocent citizens of the area. To them everybody in the Niger Delta has to be treated either as a militant or a criminal in disguise. As such fishermen, market women and people generally moving from either Port Harcourt or Yenagoa to their communities has to raise their hands several kilometers before getting to where this military occupation forces are stationed. The slightest provocation is met with brutality. The personal experiences of one or two persons can be used as concrete examples. For instance, Mr. Igoniderigha a sand dealer who was shot by an army officer of the JTF stationed at Chino Décor site Ovom Yenagoa for marching of ground fee

is a case in point. That an able young man going about his daily bread is made disabled by a trigger happy soldier of the JTF is a clear testimony of what the people of the area are suffering in the so called disarmament exercise that is being carried out by government (Ibid., March 5-11, 2009, p.2).

Again the experience of the President of Jaw Youths Congress (JYC) is worthy of note. Dr. Ekiyor the IYC President said he also suffered a similar faith. He was short by members of the JTF at about the same time Igoniderigha had his own experience. He said,

he was not opposed to government carrying out its responsibility to secure lives and property; it should not be done through the use of force. This he believes hardens the recalcitrant as well as scares the trouble shooters thereby hampering government efforts at reaching out to people of the region. Now the IYC President is reluctant to go to the creeks for fear of what may be fall him on the way. And this has implications for peace and confidence building in the region. When the people in the creeks hear about these things they became recalcitrant to turning a new leaf. They will say if those of you who are telling us to shun violence cannot walk freely on the streets of Yenagoa and Port Harcourt and you are being harassed, somebody is slapping you, or shooting you, and then those of us in the Creeks cannot come to town we better stay back here with our guns and fight to death. (Ibid.)

It is not surprising why many foreign governments and international agencies involved in aiding conflict prevention incorporate security sector reform in their dealings with societies in conflict, and for good reason. The enduring image of the military in the conscience of the ordinary people is one of brutality and impunity (Abdel Fatau, 2002, p. 248). The preconditions for sustainable security and peace in region remain the production and equitable distribution of public goods. In other words, government has to do everything possible to ensure that the factors that necessitated or brought about the crisis are taken care of and not the usage of brute military force. Tony Uranta, local facilitator of the commission of Nobel laureates to the Niger Delta and member of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta said

One of the ways government can improve the quality of lives of the Niger Delta people is to withdraw the JTF back to the barracks as a standby force to be deployed only in an emergency. He added that this should go hand in hand with visible efforts on the part of the Federal Government to develop the Niger Delta Region. Whatever steps are taken, the parties involved should take into consideration the ordinary people in the region (The Hard Truth, March 5-11, 2009, pg. 3).

It is therefore our position in this paper, that unless and until post Amnesty peace building process is bought by the people of the area, thereby making them to be adequately involved by making necessary inputs with the conviction that the issues that gave rise to the crisis are addressed once and for all, it would amount to an exercise in futility. The relative peace that exists presently as a result of the Amnesty programme is an uneasy calm that may go the way of past exercises if what is expected is not done.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion we have been made to understand the fact that small arms and light Weapons proliferation in Niger Delta has been made possible due to long period of neglect and marginalization of the people of this oil rich region by successive governments in Nigeria. Representations to government made by traditional rulers and opinion leaders of the area to address these problems are often met by brute force on the part of a government. The frustration and anger of the people resulted into the first armed revolution and the attempt at secession in the 12 days revolution carried out by Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro in 1967. In spite of this development, successive governments in the country not only resorted to the neglect and marginalization, but also carried out state legislations that brought about enactments that completely dispossessed the people of their God given natural resources. The result was a joint exploitation of the people's resources by the government and the multinational oil cooperation's. The irony of the situation was the brazen manner in which these resources were exploited without the slightest regard to standard environmental practices required in the exploitation of such resources. The devastation of the environment affected the ecosystem and the depletion of the flora and fauna being the people's main source of livelihood.

Again the people's demand for the protection of their environment and the provision of certain basic amenities was met with brute force as shown in the killing of Ken Saro-wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists. The struggle to emancipate the people of the Niger Delta from what is currently being seen as internal colonization was hijacked by the youths who were armed by politicians in 2003 general elections. Be that as it may, if government had genuine interest to resolve the crisis once and for all we would not have found ourselves in the present level of small arms and light weapons crisis. The genuine interest and concern on the part of late President Musa Yar'Adua, has brought in relative peace in the area, though an uneasy one. If the relative peace currently being experienced in the region is to be sustained the following steps are necessary. The operators of the SALW pipelines into the sub-region cash – trapped rogue exporting states mainly from Eastern Europe and central Europe, clandestine western suppliers, brokers and private military entrepreneurs as well as the recyclers and transhippers within the sub-region itself must be exposed and sanctioned. There is a need to combine weapons elimination from

society with effective measures to diffuse societal tensions. The long-term and sustainable path to addressing the small arms crisis lies in addressing those factors which drive the demand for small arms such as socio-economic and political exclusion. This would require rebuilding the nation so that all segments of society have a sense of ownership and belonging (Abdel Fatau, 2002, p. 247). The problem of bureaucratic ineptitude has to be reduced to the barest minimum. The joint task force has to be removed and kept in their barracks only to be called in during emergency periods, government should involve all stakeholders i.e. traditional rulers, opinion leaders, youths, the operating companies etc so that the out come of the discussion is not just that of a government imposition but a buy in by people of the area. This is predicated on the fact that nobody seeks to destroy what he calls his own.

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