



Entrepreneurship and Peace in Nigeria's Oil Region: Why Sustainable Development Matter

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a central pillar of Nigeria's peacebuilding program, which has contributed to the reduction of insurgent activities in the oil region while helping former insurgents to reintegrate into civilian society. However, entrepreneurship programs that are designed to facilitate peacebuilding are implemented in communities that continue to suffer the effects of decades of an oil industry that has polluted their lands, air, and waters, thereby reinforcing the importance of sustainable development as a critical component of peacebuilding. This article asks, can entrepreneurship contribute to sustainable peace in Nigeria's oil region without progress towards sustainable development? How can sustainable development receive greater priority and attention in the Niger Delta peace process? The study utilized a sequential mixed method design to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in two phases. In the quantitative phase, I administered a standardized questionnaire to ex-insurgents in three states: Akwa Ibom, Rivers, and Bayelsa. The result provided a statistical description of the respondents' opinions concerning the role that entrepreneurship plays in the peace process to generate themes for qualitative interviews with purposefully selected participants. The empirical evidence shows that the peacebuilding program has increased the number of small-scale entrepreneurs throughout the oil region. While this peacebuilding strategy is instrumental to the unwillingness of many ex-insurgents to return to criminal behavior, environmental degradation continues to exacerbate already present pathologies in the oil region. This raises critical concerns about the sustainability of the peacebuilding program and the importance of sustainable development as the pathway to lasting peace.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; peacebuilding; sustainable development; peace; insurgency; Niger Delta

Introduction

Oil extraction in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has increased the fortunes of energy corporations who operate with impunity while the local communities where these corporations operate are poor, mostly lacking access to social infrastructure, job opportunities, a healthy environment, and clean drinking water (Okoi, 2020; Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Okonta, 2005; Watts, 2008). The immediate direct suffering resulting from the cumulative deterioration of life chances and livelihoods that undermines prospects for sustainable development in the oil region has made violence an inevitable outcome of oil extraction (Chukwuemeka & Aghara, 2010; Idemudia, 2009; Ikelegbe, 2006; Okoi, 2021; Omeje, 2005). A study by Davis (2009) shows that at the peak of the insurgency between 2003 and 2008, Nigeria recorded significant losses in oil revenue as energy

corporations were forced to shut down production due to the activities of local insurgents who perpetrated unspeakable acts of violence targeting oil and gas infrastructure, including the kidnapping of migrant workers. The effect of surging oil prices in the international market and cuts in oil production due to insurgency forced the Nigerian government to implement a robust peacebuilding program to stabilize the oil region by disarming the insurgents, rehabilitating them through a range of psycho-social and educational processes, and building their capacity to reintegrate into civilian society through entrepreneurship training and economic empowerment. This article contributes to the peacebuilding debate by drawing empirical lessons from Nigeria's peacebuilding program to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship and peace.

Research on Nigeria's oil insurgency is rich and plentiful. So far, analytical attention has focused on the structural causes of insurgency (Idemudia, 2009; Idemiudia & Ite, 2006; Ikelegbe, 2006; Obi, 2010) and the weaknesses of the peacebuilding program which involves the government's mobilization of material resources to buy peace from insurgents in order to continue oil production (Ajayi & Adesote, 2013; Davidheiser & Nyiayaana, 2011; Obi, 2014; Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2016; Ushie, 2013). Although the relationship between business peace has been well established, the discussion has mostly emphasized the role that business corporations play in peacemaking (Idemudia, 2017; Forrer & Katsos, 2015; Joseph, Katsos & Daher, 2021). Although entrepreneurship is traditionally associated with self-employment (Brück, Naudé & Verwimp, 2013), the connection to peace has not been fully established in the peacebuilding literature. Scholarly efforts to investigate the role that entrepreneurship could play for local peace and development only lead to research that connects business and peace to ways of improving the lives of vulnerable populations in post-conflict societies (Miklain & Bickel, 2020). Miklain and Bickel (2020, p.677) have examined the relationship between business and peacebuilding and its implication for local economic development, pointing out how peacebuilding initiatives driven by business approaches "can also do more harm than good." This finding is consistent with the work of O'Connor and Labowitz (2017). In the context of Nigeria's peacebuilding program, there is limited empirical research examining the role of entrepreneurship in peacebuilding and how its success can constitute a central plank of sustainable development.

Drawing on empirical research with ex-insurgents this article argues that while entrepreneurship can raise the opportunity cost of violence by addressing the structural causes of oil insurgency, particularly in the local communities where the insurgents come from, this strategy has been less capable of translating into sustainable peace as it generally fails to address environmental injustices prevailing in the oil region that makes the goal of sustainable development difficult to achieve. The implication is that the structural tensions in the oil region and their manifestation in the suffering of local communities lacking access to economic opportunities will continue to raise the cost of peace. How entrepreneurship can meet the demand for peace and raise the living conditions of local populations deserves analytical attention.

Theorizing Entrepreneurship and Peace

Advocates of neoliberal peacebuilding have long dominated the debate on entrepreneurship and peacebuilding, emphasizing the use of private-sector assistance to facilitate ex-combatant re-

integration into post-conflict societies (Giustozzi, 2102). This debate emphasizes the importance of using economic incentives to reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian society by implementing a set of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration activities (Guistozzi, 2012). As Richmond (2013) noted, neoliberal peacebuilding accords greater privilege to market structures, which, as Marriage (2007) pointed out, gives less attention to the dynamics of armed groups. Neoliberal peacebuilding thus underlies the relationship between development and conflict. This understanding is important because, Ginty and Williams (2009) noted, economic interventions implemented in the context of post-war reconstruction have the potential to produce unintended consequences which can sustain a conflict. But, as Rogers and Ramsbotham (2009) pointed out, economic development will be meaningless when populations affected by conflict live in poverty. The likelihood of a post-conflict society relapsing into violence due to structural challenges (Junne & Verkoren, 2005; Okoi, 2021) means sustainable peace is possible only by creating conditions that would lead to stability of conflict-affected societies (Dunfee & Fort, 2003).

The theoretical connection between entrepreneurship and peacebuilding underlines the argument that reducing poverty can be a more effective strategy for achieving sustainable peace (Rogers & Ramsbotham, 1999; Kolade, 2018; Sümer & Joseph, 2019; Williams, 2008). This argument calls attention to the relationship between economic development and peacebuilding, indicating that entrepreneurship can contribute to peacebuilding when peacebuilding processes focus on conflict-sensitive poverty reduction initiatives (Abdelnour & Branzei, 2010; Desai, Acs & Weitzel, 2013). One way of understanding the complexity of Nigeria's peacebuilding program is through a political economy lens view. Such a perspective captures the economic injustices that manifest in conflict (Wennmann, 2011). As Selby (2008) noted, political economy issues have been known to be of crucial importance to the functioning of peace processes. At the heart of the political economy of peacebuilding is a radical shift away from the fundamental concerns of peacebuilders, such as criminality, poverty, and natural resources, to challenges arising from the unequal distribution of benefits and harms, including questions about who is being marginalized in the process (Selby, 2008, pp.11). These structural challenges are fundamental to the process and outcome of Nigeria's peacebuilding program where the exclusionary process of rewarding the ex-insurgents has punctuated progress toward sustainable peace (Okoi, 2021, pp.152). The dynamics of exclusion and how they play out in the politics of peacebuilding deserve analytical attention when contextualizing the relationship between entrepreneurship and peace in Nigeria's oil region and its implication for sustainable development.

Methodology

This study is based on a sequential mixed-method design that involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase (DeVellis, 1991; Creswell & Clark, 2007). The target population for this study includes the 30,000 registered ex-insurgent in Nigeria's peacebuilding database from the nine states of the Niger Delta region. I selected three states, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and the Rivers states for case comparison. My selection criteria took into consideration several variables including the percentage of oil production in each state, the geographic location of oil activities, the level of criminality and violence, and the spread of peacebuilding activities. For example, Akwa

Ibom contributes 20 percent of Nigeria's oil production in offshore locations with ExxonMobil as the dominant energy corporation, and the level of violence is relatively low due primarily to the absence of notorious insurgent groups. Bayelsa contributes 24 percent of oil production in both offshore and onshore locations with Shell as the major energy corporation, and the level of violence is high due to the presence of notorious insurgent groups, such as MEND and Egbesu Boys. Similarly, Rivers contributes 24 percent of Nigeria's oil production in both offshore and onshore locations with Shell as the major oil corporation, and the level of violence is high due to the presence of notorious militant groups such as MEND (Idemudia, 2014). Of the 30,000 registered participants in the peacebuilding database, 1.5% are from Akwa Ibom, 38% are from Bayelsa, and 23% are from Rivers. This population comprises 62.5% of the total number of registered ex-insurgents in the peacebuilding program.

I drew the survey participants from this sampling frame. I administered 396 questionnaires to ex-insurgents in the quantitative phase, representing 2% of the total population of ex-insurgents captured in the peacebuilding database from Akwa Ibom, Rivers, and Bayelsa states. Responses were received from all 396 participants, resulting in a 100% response rate. The quantitative results provided a statistical description of the respondents' opinions concerning entrepreneurship and peace. I used this result to generate themes for context-sensitive qualitative interviews with purposefully selected participants whose firsthand knowledge of the peacebuilding program and familiarity with the entrepreneurship activities undertaken by ex-insurgents in various communities could help answer my research question. As a sequential mixed method design, greater weight was given to the qualitative data while the quantitative data was used to complement the qualitative findings (Bryman, 2006).

In the qualitative phase, I conducted 45 semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected ex-insurgents who are directly involved in the peacebuilding program. The interviews provided an opportunity to work directly with the ex-insurgents in collecting qualitative data, and to ask follow-up questions where I needed to get more in-depth on the topic. The qualitative research questions were designed to elicit responses with regards to what participants think about the impact of entrepreneurship as a peacebuilding strategy as reflected in their personal experiences. The ex-insurgents I interviewed derived their experience from participating in various phases of the peacebuilding program which made them an invaluable source of information. This study, therefore, considered the importance of local context by ensuring the data was grounded in the lived experiences of ex-insurgents. Autesserre's (2010) research in Congo DRC highlighted the importance of seeking out actors who have in-depth knowledge of the peacebuilding program. Throughout the interviews, the key informants spoke on conditions of anonymity, and I used pseudonyms to represent their names to protect their identities.

Contextualizing the Entrepreneurship-Peacebuilding Landscape

Research on the Niger Delta peacebuilding program has mostly focused on the impact of peacebuilding on human capital development (Ajibola, 2005; Ebiede, Langer & Tosun, 2020) while marginalizing the range of entrepreneurship activities coordinated by the federal government through the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta (OSAPND)

to facilitate the economic reintegration of ex-insurgents into civilian society. For example, thousands of ex-insurgents benefitted from the Presidential Amnesty Scholarship to pursue higher education including a variety of vocational training programs locally and overseas. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, p.4) show that the Nigerian government has awarded a scholarship to 2,500 ex-insurgents to pursue tertiary education while 13,000 have received training in local and foreign training centers in 2014. The research community has hardly captured the experience of thousands of ex-insurgents who have received entrepreneurship training and start-up capital to create small enterprises as a reintegration strategy which will help us to better evaluate the role that entrepreneurship plays in peacebuilding through the lens of the ex-insurgents. As the descriptive statistics show, the most impactful reintegration strategies are education, entrepreneurship, and agriculture. I had firsthand experience with several ex-insurgents who identified the various ways the peacebuilding program has contributed to the growth of entrepreneurs in the oil region, selling retail commodities such as electronic gadgets and construction materials or operating fish farms, poultry farms, restaurants, and block molding factories.

I asked the ex-insurgents about their perception of the degree to which reintegration strategies such as entrepreneurship have been successful in reducing the risk of violence in the oil region. About 87.1% of the participants generally agree that entrepreneurship has been an effective strategy for building peace in the oil region because of its capacity to integrate the ex-insurgents into the local economy through the development of small-scale businesses (see Figure 1). To buttress this finding, 83.1% of the ex-insurgents agree that the peacebuilding program has increased the number of entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta (see Figure 2) while 26.3% perceived entrepreneurship as an impactful strategy for local economic development that can lead to violence reduction (see Figure 3). This result is important as 76.1% of the respondents indicated that entrepreneurship remains an effective strategy for addressing youth unemployment (see Figure 4). Some ex-insurgents were empowered with financial resources to establish small businesses while those who chose agriculture as an entrepreneurial vocation received training in poultry farming.

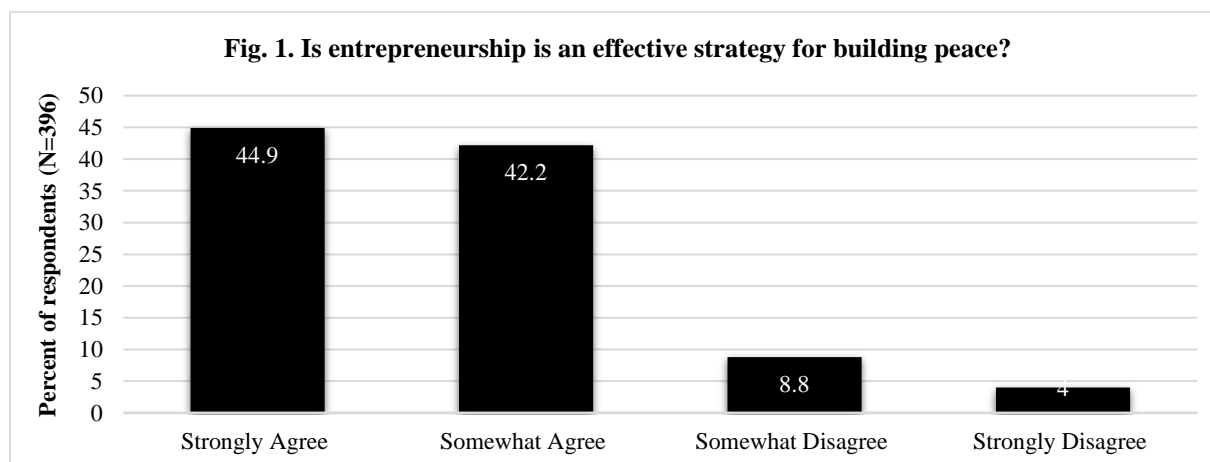


Fig. 2. Has the peace process increased the number of local entrepreneurs?

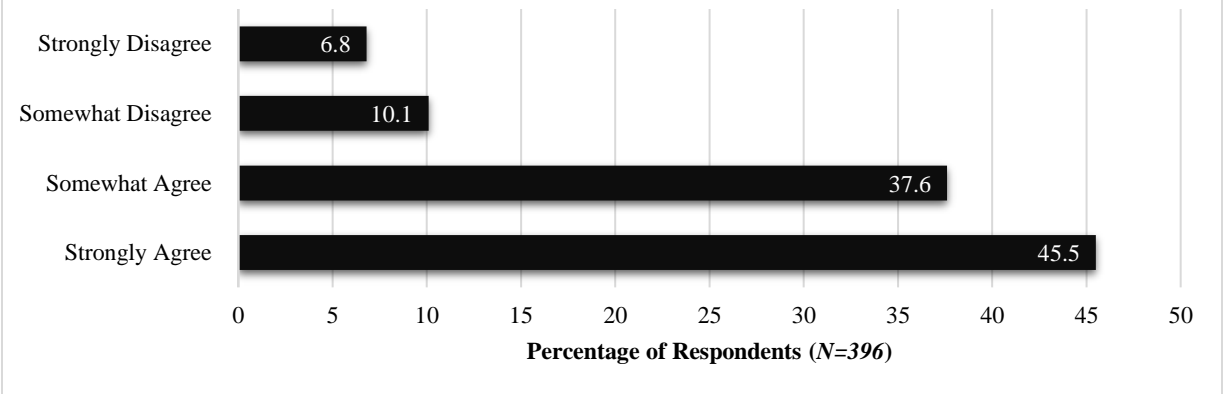


Fig. 3. Which peacebuilding strategies have greatly impacted the local economy?

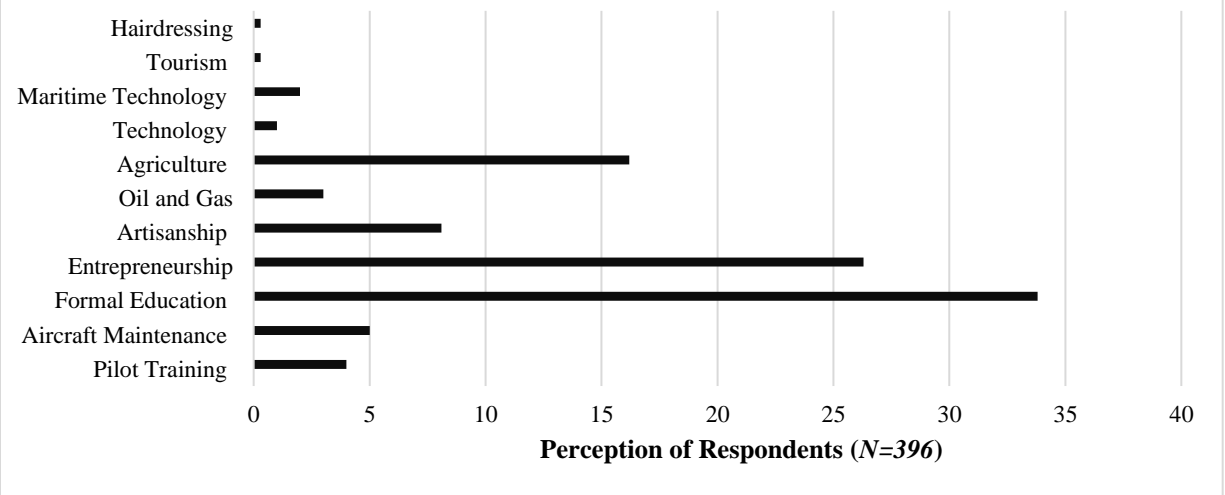
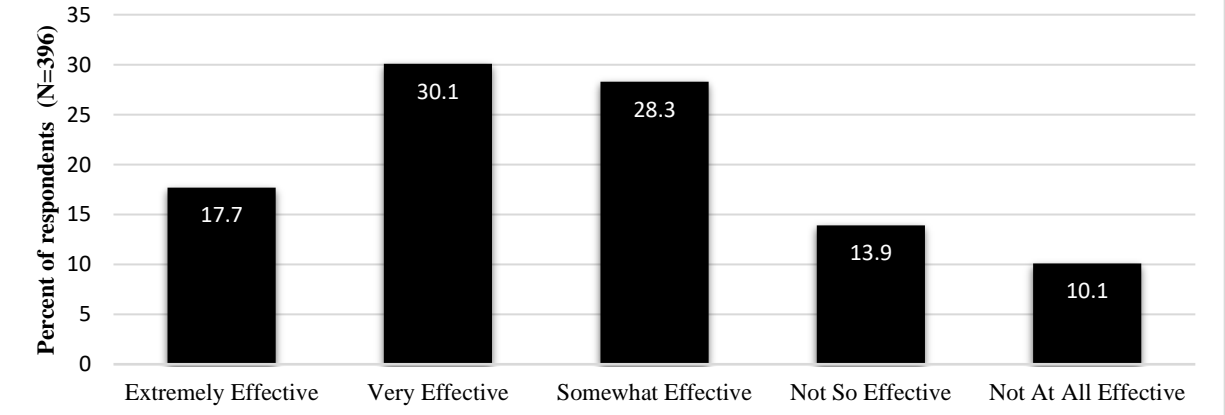


Fig. 4. How effective is entrepreneurship in addressing youth unemployment?



The statistical result shows that the perception of the ex-insurgents concerning the impact of the peacebuilding program on entrepreneurship development is positive. The result is consistent with the perspectives shared by the ex-insurgents I interviewed who told me the entrepreneurship training they received has alleviated their suffering, enabling them to integrate into their local economies while also contributing to peace in their communities. Pugel (2009) shows that in Liberia for example, ex-combatants who completed a course of reintegration training had more success reintegrating into civilian life. The conclusion drawn from the statistical analysis is that entrepreneurship development is a successful strategy for peacebuilding.

A cursory review of the literature reveals the complex challenges of establishing a theoretical connection between economic development and peace. However, a growing body of research has shown that economic development can play an important role in conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding (Nest, with Grignon & Kisangani, 2006; Smoljan, 2003; Vernon, 2016). As Bush (1996, pp.18) noted, “the challenge of rebuilding post-conflict societies is to nurture and create the social, economic and political space within which local actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources required to build a peaceful, just, and prosperous society.” This shows that development is a fundamental requirement for peace (Silwal, 2017). Research by Mahmoud and Makoond (2017) equally highlighted the importance of economic opportunities in preventing the outbreak of conflict as well as fostering peaceful societies. In Northern Ireland for example, economic empowerment was fundamental to sustainable conflict resolution (Byrne, 2010). While the Northern Ireland case study is such that economic empowerment was implemented in the context of external economic aid, it provides useful insights into the relationship between economic empowerment and sustainable peace in a post-conflict context.

I had firsthand experience with several ex-insurgents in Rivers and Bayelsa states narrated their experiences as former insurgents and how their participation in the entrepreneurship training enabled them to become business owners, overcome poverty, and refocus their minds away from violent behavior. The transformation of ex-insurgents into local entrepreneurs, while not an exhaustive strategy, suggests that engaging former insurgents in entrepreneurship activities that enable them to achieve economic independence can bring stability to the oil region. Since most conflicts are rooted in rural poverty (Lemus, 2014), business opportunities that focus on lifting rural populations out of poverty can contribute to peacebuilding (Miklian & Bickel, 2020). Business opportunities provide incentives to address the root causes of conflict and can contribute to peacebuilding through economic development. Humphreys and Weinstein (2009) observed that wealth creation was one of the most significant determinants of post-conflict reintegration in Sierra Leone. Therefore, the importance of entrepreneurship cannot be underestimated because, as Cusack & Malmstrom (2010) noted, investing in economic development programs can provide incentives in a highly distorted economic environment. The challenge, as Schoar (2010) pointed out, is that many of the entrepreneurial activities that contribute to economic development are undertaken by vulnerable populations working in the informal sector who create small enterprises to meet their basic income needs.

Okoi (2019) reinforces the potential of entrepreneurship as a practical strategy for engaging ex-insurgents in Nigeria’s oil region in economic activities that can lead to conflict transformation and

potentially redirect their attention away from criminal activities. For example, entrepreneurship training in Nigeria's oil region opened enormous opportunities for ex-insurgents to learn new skills and develop themselves as changemakers. The program transformed local tailors into professional fashion designers and local artisans into professional technicians who now trade their skills for income. This evidence illustrates the peacebuilding program's transformative capacity, particularly in reducing criminal kidnappings while helping former insurgents to rebrand their personalities as they reintegrate into civilian society. An ethnographic study by Ebiede (2016) shows that ex-insurgents who engaged in small-scale enterprises have been able to sustain their businesses. In other words, "sustained reintegration" occurs when ex-combatants transform into productive members of their communities (Knight, 2008, pp.29). In this context, conflict transformation is viewed as an approach to peacebuilding that enables ex-insurgents to be reflective on the consequences of violent behavior and to reimagine their role in community development through participation in productive economic activities as a means of rebuilding broken relationships with their communities (Okoi, 2019). For Lederach (1995, pp.18) conflict transformation is an approach to peacebuilding that involves changing destructive relationship patterns and seeking systemic change." At the heart of this long-term systemic change is the emphasis placed on reconciliation within society.

Implications for Sustainable Development Goals 15 and 16

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes sustainable development as the pathway to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, and provides access to justice, while building effective institutions at all levels. Goal 15 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) dubbed Life on Land, focuses on terrestrial biodiversity conservation and effort to halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss. Similarly, Goal 16 focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Nowhere are sustainable development goals 15 and 16 more relevant than in Nigeria's oil region where the extractive activities of energy corporations generate ecological risks that hinder socioeconomic progress, rendering local populations vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity, health hazards, and conflict. SDG 16 underlines the importance of strengthening social cohesion between citizens and the state, between communities and corporations, and between individuals within a society. But in Nigeria's oil region, declining trust between communities and the state and between communities and corporations due largely to land degradation has led to social, economic, and political polarization that threatens the fabric of peace.

Land degradation in Nigeria's oil region is a significant variable in sustainable development because it affects soil resources, due mostly to intensive oil extraction activities. Degraded land in vulnerable communities affects the lives of local populations who rely on this land for food production and water resources for sustainable livelihoods. Krauss (2022) argues that SDG fails to champion justice in a way that accords priority to human lives and livelihoods while targeting indicators that exacerbate inequalities and prevent social transformation. The key challenge is the failure of SDG 15 to acknowledge the "interdependencies and connections between

conservation and livelihoods and to prioritize justice” (Krauss 2022, p. 3). In a nation like Nigeria where national prosperity is tied to the rents of natural resource extraction, the path to peace is hard, and efforts to promote accountability in the extractive sector have proven difficult. Therefore, sustainable development remains an impossible dream for the inhabitants of many local communities in the oil region whose life chances are dominated by unconscionable levels of pollution while oil extraction continues to exacerbate already present pathologies in these communities.

In 2007 the Nigerian government commissioned the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to conduct an independent assessment of the environmental and public health impacts of oil exploration in Ogoniland and recommend viable options for remediation of the endangered ecosystem as a way of strengthening ongoing peacebuilding efforts. The UNEP Report included technical, regulatory, and emergency recommendations that provided invaluable baseline information on the complexity of the challenge and the responsibilities of government, corporate, and community stakeholders. While the report highlighted significant environmental impact in Ogoniland from oil pollution related to historical sources, the Nigerian government was to take the lead in coordinating the various stakeholders while the Shell Petroleum Development Corporation of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) was to implement the remediation of its endangered sites including undertaking emergency measures related to water supply, in collaboration with subnational governments. SPDC has carried out oil and gas exploration and production operations in the Niger Delta since the late 1950s until its operations ceased in Ogoniland in 1993 following a rise in communal violence that threatened its activities and the security of its foreign personnel. Concerns about environmental degradation in the oil region were initially expressed by scholars and environmental rights activists who were outraged by the role that energy corporations play in the region’s under-development. As such, their writings underlined the consequences of oil extraction on the ecological systems that support the livelihoods of vulnerable populations in the oil region (Jike, 2004; Okonta, 2005).

Thus, the UNEP report was an important step in the transformation of company-community relations in the oil region, particularly in Ogoniland. While the Report generated optimism about the prospects of environmental peacebuilding, achieving sustainable peace remains a daunting task due to the limited progress in environmental remediation. Grievances arising from the failure to implement the UNEP recommendations have the potential to cause regressions over time. As these structural factors continue unaddressed, they lead to what Okoi (2021) describes as *punctuated peace*, whereby a stable post-conflict society relapses into repeated cycles of violence due to structural issues that continue unaddressed. According to Lederach, (1995, 19) “conflict can move in destructive or constructive directions.” While SDG 16 promises efforts to end violence, promote the rule of law, strengthen institutions and increase access to justice, this goal remains an aspiration for millions of people in Nigeria’s oil region living in endangered environments that threatens their security and continue to be deprived of basic rights and opportunities. Natural resource extraction, therefore, acts as a threat multiplier that aggravates social, environmental, and political stressors, conditions that lead to the experience of structural violence. Under this condition, interventions focusing on entrepreneurship as a path to peace have been counterproductive.

Although this article has shown that peace can be sustained by meeting the economic needs of the ex-insurgents, the economic conception of peace ignores the widely shared perceptions of ex-insurgents who feel disempowered by their inability to maximize the quality of their lives. According to Adams (2008), people feel empowered when they can maximize the quality of their lives. But peacebuilding must not necessarily develop from the guarantee of a basic income for ex-insurgents without necessarily alleviating environmental inequities. For peacebuilding to be perceived as sustainable, it must be capable of addressing the structural roots of violence, while also engaging in deeper social transformation at all levels of the post-conflict society. This is important because local communities in the oil region are located amidst swamps, rivers, creeks, and mangrove forests while the inhabitants of these communities derive their sustainable livelihoods from the environment. As oil extraction continues to devastate their ecosystem, high concentrations of hydrocarbons from pollution have eroded sustainable sources of livelihood. The long-term consequences of oil extraction on local communities in the oil region include the loss of fisheries and other aquatic resources, destruction of farmlands, reduced agricultural productivity, population displacement, and the spread of water-borne diseases, which eventually translate to poverty, hunger, and diseases. (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009; UNDP, 2006). These concerns remain a central tenet of sustainable development that cannot be ignored in any peacebuilding process where environmental pollution plays a prominent role in driving conflict. The implication is that a peacebuilding program that focuses exclusively on entrepreneurship but gives little attention to environmental conditions prevailing in the oil region cannot be sustainable.

Importantly, sustainable peace would involve providing an environment for the achievement of healthy living conditions. Azar (1990) recognized the important connection between peace and development and argued for a wider conception of security by linking human needs to a broader understanding of “development”. Similarly, Azar (1985, pp. 69) noted that conflict resolution must be measured against the satisfactory removal of underdevelopment, while the state of peace is equated with the level of development. Therefore, sustainable peace will be difficult to achieve without addressing those human needs that can sustain development in their social, economic, and political contexts. Any attempt to suppress these needs would result in unsustainable development (Azar, 2003).

Conclusion

Nigeria’s peacebuilding program provides evidence of the important role that entrepreneurship plays in post-conflict peacebuilding processes. This approach to peacebuilding has increased the number of entrepreneurs throughout the oil region selling electronics, construction materials, groceries, or working as small-scale poultry farmers. These entrepreneurship activities have been instrumental to the economic reintegration of ex-insurgents. As such, many ex-insurgents have expressed their unwillingness to return to criminal behavior. But as oil and extraction continue to exacerbate already present pathologies in many local communities across the oil region, it raises critical concerns about the need to incorporate sustainable development goals 15 and 16 in peacebuilding programming. This renewed focus has become imperative to the extent that if we are to bring sustainable peace to the oil region, we cannot undermine the importance of transforming the ways that corporations conduct themselves and their relationship with the

environments where millions of people in local communities depend for their livelihoods. communities.

While entrepreneurship has addressed part of the problem, greater attention must be accorded to environmental conditions in the oil region and the well-being of local communities. This requires efforts to transform environmental risks arising from the unethical practices of energy corporations. This is especially where oil extraction or pipeline construction is carried out without adherence to international best practices. Although energy corporations have begun to realize the importance of conducting themselves as responsible actors by adopting corporate social responsibility principles as the cornerstone of peaceful engagements with communities, their dispositions to encourage a positive impact on the environment and communities mostly favor voluntary mechanisms over regulatory measures of accountability. Responsible corporate practices must move beyond palliative measures to include the implementation of the full scope of the UNEP recommendations, focussing especially on repairing endangered sites while also adopting appropriate technologies with minimal consequences on ecosystems that support life and health systems. There must be legislation that ensures the rights of communities are upheld to the highest degree of importance, that people can live in a society where their dignity is upheld, and where their deepest aspirations can flourish without the next generation inheriting these environmental challenges. Any peace process that ignores these dynamics is not likely to lead the post-conflict society toward sustainability. In other words, peacebuilding processes must be designed in a way that gives considerable attention to the well-being of local communities affected by oil pollution, to ensure they inhabit environments where their dignity is upheld, and where their deepest aspirations can flourish.

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