

**ECOWAS AND ARMS CONTROL IN WEST AFRICA; A
FOCUS ON THE NIGER-DELTA AMNESTY**

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UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

MARCH, 201

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that this project has been approved by the Department of Political Science University of Nigeria Nsukka.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for saving throughout my study at Nsukka and also to loving parents Sir and Lady S.C CHUKWU for their support and encouragement throughout my study

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I have encountered many people and in many places in the course of this study to whom I owe a lot of gratitude. First to the Almighty God who granted me the opportunity of staying alive to see the completion of the work.

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Chukwu Bruno Emeka
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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest challenges facing ECOWAS member states and Nigeria in particular is arms proliferation. It has stoked ethnic clashes and simmering unrest in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It is against this background that the ECOWAS Moratorium and subsequently the ECOWAS Convention on small arms and light weapons (SALW) was adopted by member states. Such as the Amnesty programme organized by the Yar'dua's administration in Nigeria. The study has been designed to critically appraise the 2009 Amnesty programme in Nigeria as an arms control measure. To achieve this aim, the study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. To analyse the issues generated, we predicated analyses on the Relative Deprivation theory. The theory x-rays what has continuously fuelled armed struggle in the Niger Delta in spite of the Amnesty programme. Our research design was non experimental and we relied on primary and secondary sources of data. After a detailed analysis of relevant data, the study revealed that even though it is too early to appraise the Amnesty programme in Nigeria, recent armed occurrences in the region has not even given the programme a step in the right direction. The study therefore, concludes that addressing the general poverty of the region can stem the tide of armed conflict instead of a massive rehabilitation of militants that surrendered their arms.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The crisis in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is increasingly attracting international attention due both to the growing security threat it portends for the Nigerian state and, particularly, due to its impact on international oil prices. Although the Niger Delta problem has been around for several decades, the emergence of organized and militant pressure groups in the 1990s has added a new dimension to the crisis. Protests and the threat of outright rebellion against the state are now ubiquitous. Environmental activism and militancy are a direct response to the impunity, human rights violations, and perceived neglect of the region by the Nigerian state on the one hand and through sustained environmental hazards imposed on local Niger Delta communities as a result of the oil production activities of multinational oil companies on the other.

From a contemporary global perspective, the dramatic upsurge in violent confrontation and protest against the state and oil multinationals in the 1990s coincided with the end of the Cold War. In essence, ‘soft’ issues such as the environment, gender equity and equality, human rights, democracy and good governance have attained primacy on the international agenda. International concern over the crisis in the Niger Delta, including its attendant social and humanitarian implications, should be viewed within the context of this global attitudinal shift (Ojakorotu, 2009).

The internationalization of the Niger Delta crisis derives partly from the systematic publicity and struggle of the environmentalist, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. Saro-Wiwa not only succeeded in directing the attention of the international community to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta but also – through his

advocacy – paved the way for robust international/civil society engagement with the issues at the core of the crisis in the region (Ojakorotu, 2009).

Amnesty International (2009), states that, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed, along with eight other members of the Ogoni people, by the Nigerian State in 1995. The executions alerted the world to the devastating impact of the oil industry in the Niger Delta, including how the environmental damage caused by the oil industry was damaging the health and livelihoods of the Ogoni people. Ken Saro-Wiwa was a leading figure in the 500,000-strong Ogoni community in Rivers State and played a key role in drafting the 1990 Ogoni Bill of Rights, which highlighted the lack of political representation, pipe-borne water, electricity, job opportunities and federal development projects for communities in the area. He was a founder and president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which demanded that oil companies and the government clean up the environment and pay adequate compensation and royalties to the oil-producing regions.

International Crisis Group, ICG, (2006: i) argued that a “potent cocktail of poverty, crime and corruption is fuelling a militant threat to Nigeria’s reliability as a major oil producer”, and one might add, the banality of state power in the country.

Prior to the 1990s, Niger Delta communities articulated their grievances within the framework of a peaceful but assertive demand for greater political and administrative autonomy, devolution of power and state creation. They believed these to be the best routes to bringing government closer to the people and setting the stage for sustainable political, economic and social development. Although there is still a strong undercurrent of politically defined agitations, the tactic has changed to that of a vociferous demand for greater fiscal allocations based on a reworked revenue allocation formula granting oil communities larger shares of oil revenue, and to resource control, i.e. the right of communities to own oil wealth while paying rent and

royalty to the state. There are, of course, some justifiable grounds for these increasingly assertive demands. For instance, Ukeje (nd:6-7) noted that:

After almost five decades of oil exploration and production, the oil communities have become miserably impoverished far more than other parts of the federation. ...host oil communities have watched as huge revenues accruing from crude oil went disproportionately towards the physical development of other regions, and caused reckless squandering by other regional elites, and their own too. That years of unregulated and irresponsible oil production have left many communities in irreversible ruins, even as their access to basic subsistence opportunities is undermined. And that oil communities' argued with justification that prior to the advent of crude oil, the different regions developed on the basis of generous annual fiscal allocations based on the principle of derivation. But with oil displacing other commodities, the revenue allocation formula has steadily nosedived: from 100% to 50% and presently, 13% (Ukeje, nd:6-7).

It is a curious irony that communities hosting the oil and gas industry in many weak and developing countries often lived in abject poverty, unemployment, poor health, etc . Idemudia and Ite (2006: 402) believed that the paradox of oil wealth is the by-product of structural deficiencies inherent in the Nigerian State.

In Nigeria, the culture of impunity and the easy availability of small arms diminish people's capacity to be open and be tolerant with each other. The possibility of conflict is intensified by the oil exploitation in Niger Delta region, where underdevelopment is caused by environmental damage and the inequitable sharing of petro-dollars. Not even the Federal Government that should mediate conflicts has demonstrated any neutrality. It dispenses more violence invoking the bogey of "national security". This undermines humanitarian principles and poses a challenge

for governance, threatening the stability of the country. Peace and security is a *sine qua non* for sustainable development in any society. Thus in the Niger Delta region, where there is a large influx of small arms and where peace and security are noticeably absent, there is a need for concerted analysis and action.

1.1 Statement of problem

Oil is the life blood of modern economies. The significance of oil to the contemporary world, with its unrestrained consumption (Roberts, 2004), explains why the oil-rich Niger Delta has become Nigeria's economic heart (Darah, 2001: 99), the focus of big business and naked politics (Feyide, 1986). Since the 1970s, the importance of agriculture has been replaced by oil. From 5,100 barrels per day (bpd) in 1958, Nigeria's production quota has oscillated between 2.45 million and 2.6 million bpd since 2006 (*The Punch, August 2, 2005:1*), although the closure of several oil platforms in the region due to a wave of attacks by militants, which has reached an all-time high since the second quarter of 2006, has led to a loss of 600,000 bpd, representing \$4.4 billion

(<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6245137.stm>).

The country's rentier linkage with oil receipts also reveals that while the mineral resource accounts for 50% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 85% of national budgetary revenue and 95% of foreign exchange earnings, the states and communities from which the oil is derived have remained wretched areas of the federation. For instance, despite the huge revenue the Niger Delta contributes to Nigerian treasury through oil and gas, statistics of the socio-economic conditions of the people in the region tell of a crisis of governance. This has best been described as the paradox of plenty (Karl, 1997). With a per capita Gross National Product that is less than the national average of US\$280, 72% of the households in the region are

within the poverty bracket, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank statistics reveal that only 27% and 30% of the region's households had access to safe-drinking water and electricity, respectively; both indicators are below the national average of 32% and 34% respectively (Garuba, 2006). In 1991, the population of patients per doctor in the region was estimated at some 132,600:1, nearly 100,000 above the national average of 39,455:1 (see CDD Niger Delta Project, 2002). There is the poor state of infrastructural development in terms of schools for the region's population density of 100 persons per sq. km.; poor transportation, especially for communities in the riverine arteries; and inadequate or complete absence of medical facilities. Primary schools enrolment is about 30% below national average of 76%, while housing and general poverty levels are highly exacerbated and worse in areas such as Rivers and Bayelsa States (Fubara 2002:19).

The inextricable link between the socio-economic impacts associated with oil production and the control of the huge money accruing from it has precipitated varied and far-reaching conflicts in which the widespread use and proliferation of small arms now represents a major problem. The Niger Delta conflict, within the broader rubrics of the struggle for power and control of oil, is particularly instructive in that it has prompted arms brokers and governments to push small arms into the hands of non-state actors for personal gains, thereby granting impetus to the global surge in small arms trade.

The Niger Delta region is at the epicentre of the numerous violent conflicts that are destabilising Nigeria today. From 1990s to the present, the manifestation of these conflicts, which have reached crisis proportions, is a culmination of long years of neglect and of unstructured and unpredicted struggles that started in the 1960s and continued to the 1980s. From the despair of peaceful protests, petitioning against conditions of poverty, blockading oil platforms, and occasional disruption of oil production, the struggles in the Niger Delta have risen, since the execution of Ken

Saro-Wiwa in 1995, to the point of a rebellion in which small arms flow easily through the region's labyrinthine network of creeks and rivers (Hutchful & Aning, 2004:212). The violent character of the rebellion now includes the complete shut down of oil installations and platforms, cross-killing and maiming of militants, state security forces and innocent citizens, and the unprecedented practice of hostage-taking and illegal bunkering (a euphemism for oil theft), which has become big business in recent times.

While the Nigerian state has been primarily concerned with regime security, the youth militias involved in the struggle are competing with the state for the control of the resource. The determination of the militants is driven by the relative deprivation occasioned by the gap between expectation and actualisation. Having suffered a lot of deprivation and unprecedented repression at the hands of the Nigerian State which, apart from being a captive of external forces to whom the country's high quality crude is part of a grand strategic energy calculation, has its economic security "fused with its capacity to protect oil multinationals and the creation of oil rents" (Obi 1997:17) – the militants in the Niger Delta "have demonstrated increasing willingness to resort to armed violence using available weaponry" (Hutchful & Aning 2004:212). The growth of armed militancy in the Delta region is predicated on the emergence of a more generalised phenomenon of private and community militias such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys and similar groups which are often sponsored by highly powerful and influential elements in the society. The widespread nature of the violent activities of these ethnic militias is revealed in Musah's (2002) estimation that Nigeria is home to one million private small arms.

The unfettered and unlimited access of the Niger Delta youth militias to stockpiles of highly sophisticated and sturdy weapons, largely small arms, suggests their backing by networks of powerful and relatively rich elements. While frantic

efforts to uncover the identity of these financiers have not yielded any success, there is nevertheless a consensus about their existence. This is particularly evident in their ability to undermine the (supposed) security mechanism in place as well as the laws regulating the possession and use of firearms in Nigeria (Garuba, 2005). The latter makes it unlawful for anybody to possess or operate a wide range of explosives, lethal weapons and ammunition without certification (Okezie, 2004:23; Firearms Act CAP 146, 1959).

A critical look at the problem of small arms around the world makes one wonders if they are not the real weapons of mass destruction. From the conditions that precipitate their demand to the abuses that their availability facilitate, small arms have proved a fundamental challenge to several nations since the demise of the Cold War (Milmo & Holt, 2006). Although they do not in themselves cause conflict, but have the potential to fuel underlying tensions, deepens the sense of crisis, raising the number of casualties and generating more insecurity (Ero & Ndinga-Muvumba, 2004: 223). Small arms are cheap, readily available, easy to transport and difficult to monitor. Their portability and simplicity allow them to be used even by ill-trained people (including children). They have become the instruments of modern day violence all over the world, causing over half a million deaths a year, including 300,000 in armed conflicts and another 200,000 in suicides and homicides (Brown 2003: iii; Boivin 2005: 468). Beyond being an everyday phenomenon, the complete out-of-control status the proliferation of small arms has assumed around the world has further exacerbated poverty and underdevelopment in countries where they constitute a menace. There are 640 to 650 million small arms circulating in the world today and every year about 8 million new guns and 14 billion units of ammunition are manufactured by 1,249 companies in 92 countries – with the United States and the European Union producing about 75 percent (Milmo & Holt, 2006; Jackson et al,

2005:52). Kofi Annan (2000:52) appreciated the magnitude of the human mortality of small arms when he remarked that:

The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems – and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as “weapons of mass destruction”. Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread (Annan, 2000:52).

Added to the foregoing is the fact that a significant proportion of the global trade in small arms is conducted in secrecy. Besides being part of a wider trade that incorporates more lethal weaponry, the existing lack of control of the trend has not only caused the diversion of legally traded small arms into the illegal sector, it has also reinforced an environment in which corruption and the black market thrive (Alpers et al, 2003:98). Thus from the hotbeds of wars in the West African states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d’Ivoire to the low intensity violence arenas of Niger, Mali and Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta region, the record of internal conflicts sustained by easy access to small arms continues to pose serious challenges and vulnerabilities. This is the context in which the Niger Delta situation constitutes a special case.

In the light of the above, attempt is made, therefore, to critically examine the impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well as effort made to take them out of circulation. Thus, in our explanation and elucidation of the consequences, the understated research questions will guide the study:

- (1) Does relative deprivation of the Niger Delta region implicated in the endemic arms proliferation in the regions?
- (2) Was the 2009 Amnesty programme effective in curbing arms proliferation in the Niger-Delta.

1.2 Objective of Study

In Nigeria, the rate of proliferation of small arms is increasing exponentially. The balances of small arms traded are the remnants of arsenals of ethnic militias and political thugs, as well as licensed weapons being stolen or lost. These small arms have played a major role in exacerbating crimes and armed conflicts; thus making Nigeria a viable market for illegal arms dealers , as well as a growing producer of local arms. This phenomenon poses a major threat to political stability, democratic consolidation and security in the country, which are necessary conditions for sustainable development.

The general objective of the study is to interrogate the rationale behind the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta especially as it concerns threat to socio-economic and political development. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- (1) 1. To ascertain whether there is a link between relative deprivation and endemic arms proliferation in the Niger-Delta.
- (2) To find out Whether the 2009 amnesty programme was effective in curbing out the arm proliferation in Niger-Delta

1.3 Significance of the study

This research work has both theoretical and practical significance. Scientific knowledge is cumulative. Hence, on a theoretical level, the study shall synchronize with the existing works already done on the subject. Put differently, this study, by clarifying issues and facilitating understanding, will be a further contribution to

knowledge and a source for further research and inquiries. It will not only enrich the pools of literature in the subject area but shall chart a new intellectual course in the strategic study of small arms proliferation in Nigeria.

Practically, the study will be of interest and immense importance to the Nigerian government, the organs of the Africa Union, ECOWAS and other organizations and groups interested in the dynamics of arms proliferation and the inherent perils it portrays in this 21st century. The issues will also help to enhance understanding, provide valuable information/data that will assist global actors in articulating potent policies that will help to address the problems of SALW.

Finally, the study by addressing the research questions and stimulating enlightened

intellectual discourse will definitely benefit students interested in conducting inquiries in sensitive areas of national security and hence reduce areas of conflict between the government and any dissident/aggrieved group.

1.4 Literature Review

Relative deprivation and arms proliferation in Niger Delta.

There is no doubt that scholars have oriented their intellectual energies towards explaining that relative deprivation engenders small arms proliferation.

In light of the above we review the works of John et al (ed 423) Osakwe 2006, Heinrich (2006, Muggah (2003) Jonah (1997), Nnoli (1989) Hughes (1972) and Oche (2005). etc.

According to John et al (nd:423), underdevelopment and enormous economic disparity within Nigeria have been the driving factors behind the use of SALW. They observe that Nigeria is the 6th leading oil producer in the world, few have benefited from this resources. Almost 70% of Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day and the average life expectancy is 48 years. This paradox is epitomized by the Niger Delta

region, where one of the indigenous groups, the Ogoni people, have struggled to obtain basic social services and to resist the destruction of their local environment. To this end, Osakwe (2006) argued that women suffer disproportionately from firearms violence either directly or indirectly. According to him women suffer through displacement, molestation and sexual violence, also becoming breadwinner at the death of husbands, lost sons, daughter and loved ones, and being killed, injured or maimed for life, all which have lasting psychological and physical impacts on their lives; sometimes resulting in women being compelled to take up arms and support armed conflict, beyond being victims.

In her contribution, Heinrich (2006) contends that small arms and light weapons are of particular importance, their effects on public health, human rights, social and economic development make them primarily an issue of human security rather than of national or military security. Their uncontrolled spread and widespread availability undermine human security more than any other kind of conventional weapon. He also observed that Sub-Saharan Africa is most adversely affected by armed violence and poverty, and the connection between the misuse of illicit SALW and underdevelopment seems to be more evident in Africa than in any other regions of the world. She contends further that conflict and social violence, including armed crime, are major causes of the persistence of poverty, underdevelopment and the denial of human rights, which in turn are root causes of conflict and increased demand for small arms and light weapons.

Muggah (2003) considers some of the relationships between small arms misuse and development. He noted that half a million people are killed through the misuse of small arms. Millions more are crippled. He opined that with poverty providing an ideal breeding ground for small arms proliferation, African countries are currently the worst hit by a global epidemic of armed conflict that threaten the safety and wellbeing of people in developed and developing countries alike. He also noted that the human costs of small arms misuse have social and economic consequences affecting the

opportunities and productivity of poor communities further still. He also observed that research has shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa, scarce household resources are being devoted to the treatment and care of victims of conflict, as well as to internal and unregulated forms of security – such as Para militarism and vigilantism. He went further to say, that small arms misuse is strongly associated with the increasing lethality of criminality, forced migration, the deterioration of investment and trade, as well as obstruction of aid delivery and assistance. He concluded that, just as poverty and conflict are intertwined, small arms misuse directly or indirectly; undermine the quality and quantity of development in poor countries.

In establishing the nexus between small arms and underdevelopment, Annan in his “2000 millennium declaration” observed that the proliferation of small arms is not only a security issue but also a human rights and development issue. The proliferation of small arms, he maintained, supports and aggravates armed conflicts; they put in danger, agents, for the maintenance of peace and humanitarian workers; they fragilize the respect of international humanitarian law and they put in danger, the legitimacy of weak governments and profit terrorists and organized crime syndicates.

World Bank (nd) studies confirm that the risk of armed violence correlates with poverty and economic underdevelopment, inequality and failed political institutions. Small arms related violence, especially during armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, undermines human security and development at the micro – level as well as social and economic development at the macro-level.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report (2005) conflict disrupts or destroys food production systems and contributes to hunger and malnutrition. It undermines progress in health services or lead to the destruction of social facilities. In addition, it noted that the shift in the allocation of public resources towards security and military expenditure generally leads to a downsizing of the public health and education sectors, as well as food subsidies. It further maintain that in countries

affected by civil war, 18% of annual production is spent on military expenditures, sometimes amounting to more than health and education expenditures combined.

In his contribution on the macroeconomic level effect of small arms proliferation and underdevelopment, Collier (1999) affirms that the reduction of physical and human capital, accompanied by a fall in private and public investment resulting from reduced profitability and increased security expenditure, severely undermines economic growth. Accordingly, Collier (1999) noted that "the extent of this problem is underlined by the fact that investment – to -- GDP ratios in war zones are at least 50% lower than the average for countries that had no civil war".

In corroborating the foregoing, World Bank Statistics, establish that conflict affected economy declines by around 2.2% per annum relative to its underlying growth path, which means that after a decade of war a society will have an income 20% lower than it would have had under peaceful conditions. According to John et al (nd: 423), underdevelopment and enormous economic disparity within Nigeria have been the driving factors behind the use of SALW. They observe that Nigeria is the 6th leading oil producing country resources. Almost 70% of Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day and the average life expectancy is 48 years. This paradox is epitomized by the Niger Delta, Region where one of the indigenous groups, the Ogoni people, have struggled to obtain basis destruction of their local environment. To this and Osakwe (2006) argued that women suffer disproportionately from firearms violence either directly or indirectly. According to him women suffer through displacement, molestation and sexual violence, also becoming breadwinner at the death of husbands, lost sons, daughter and loved ones, and being killed, injured or maimed for life, all which have lasting psychological and physical impacts on their lives; sometimes resulting in women being compelled to take up arms and support armed conflict, beyond being victims.

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Muggah (2003) considers some of the relationships between small arms misuses and development. He noted that half a million people are killed through the misuse of small arms. Millions more are crippled. He opined that with poverty providing an ideal breeding ground for small arms proliferation, African countries are currently the worst hit by a global epidemic of armed conflict that threaten the safety and well-being of people in developed and developing countries alike. He also noted that the human cost of small arms misuse have social and economic consequences effecting the opportunities and productivity of poor communities further still. He also observed that research has shown that in sub-Saharan African, scarce household resources are being devoted to the treatment and care of victims of conflicts, as well as to internal and unregulated forms of security- such as Paramilitarism and vigilantism. He went further to say, that small arms misuse is strongly associated with the increasing lethality of criminality, forced migration, the deterioration of investment and trade, as well as obstruction of aid delivery and assistance. He concluded that just as relative deprivation and conflict are intertwined, small arms misuse directly or indirectly, undermine the quality and quantity of development in poor countries.

In establishing the Nexus between small arms and underdevelopment, Annan in his 2000 minimums declaration “observed that the proliferation of small arms is not only a security issue but also a human rights and development issue. The proliferation of small arms, he maintained, supports and aggravates armed conflicts; they put in danger, agents, for the maintenance of peace and humanitarian workers; they fragilize the respect of international humanitarian law and they put in danger the legitimacy of weak governments and profit terrorist and organized crime syndicates.

World Bank (nd) studies conform that the risk of armed violence correlates with poverty and economic underdevelopment, inequality and failed political institutions. Small arms related violence, especially during armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, undermines human security and development at the micro-level as well as social and economic development at the macro-level.

Dolard et al (1939) observed that interference with goal directed behaviour crates frustration which inurn, leads to aggressive response usually directed against the disrepute frustrating agent and that a psychological variable, relative deprivation, is the basic precondition for political violence of any kind and that the more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of violence in one form or another. As observed, in social life men come to value many things. Wealth, status, power, security, equality, freedom, the nation etc. When they cannot achieve these values important to it, then, it has considerable potential for collective violence. If a group feels that collective violence is a legitimate response to its anger, and that violence is the only means to alleviate discontent, then the likelihood of violence is greater.

Whether or not deprivation. Most people at some time experience deprivation of one sort of anther, but this rarely leads to collective violence. The deprivation then must be sufficiently intense and experienced by a sufficiently broad sector or a strategically located section of the society in order to create a potential for political

violence. Nnoli (1989) has argued that Nigerian politics has presented an image of a struggle among the various ethnic groups. He further explained that most Nigerians have come to believe that unless their own men are in government they will not be able to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government. As Jonah (1997) observed that in an environment of mass poverty the simple way to elbow yourselves to the front is through the seizures of state power, what it implies that you will be born a gain and wish off your sins of poverty, by this how can you achieve it is through violence and arms proliferation.

According to the UNDP Human development report (2005) conflict disrupts or destroys food production system and contribution to hunger services or lead to the destruction of social facilities. In addition, it noted that the shift in the allocation of public resources towards security and military expenditure generally lead to a downsizing of the public health and education sectors, as well as food subsidies. It further maintains that in countries affected by civil war, 18% of annual production is spent on military expenditures, some times amounting to more than health and education expenditures combined. In his contribution on the macroeconomic level affect of small arms proliferation and underdevelopment

Concept of Proliferation

Proliferation is defined as the sudden increase in the number or amount of an entity. Used in various contexts, it implies rapid expansion, abundance or multiplication. When used in relation to SALW, it describes the spread of the weapons, generally, from one country to another. Proliferation of weapons can be defined as their spread from one group or owners or users to another. This can be horizontal, which refers to the acquisition of weapons systems by states not previously possessing them, or vertical, which refers to increases in the arsenals weapons.

Proliferation, as a mode of arms spread or multiplication, is facilitated by certain intermediaries in response to both legal and illegal demands. The graduate institute of international studies, Geneva, observes that

SALW do not proliferate by themselves- the are old, resold, perhaps stolen, diverted, and maybe legally or illegally transferred several more times.. At reach junction in this complex chain of legal and illicit transfer, people-brokers, insurgents, and / or organized groups are active participants in the process.

The UN acknowledges that massive acquisition and accumulation of arms by state could enhanced proliferation. It however, qualifies the accumulation with such terms as “exclusives” and destabilizing” under certain conditions. It is noted in the report by the panel of government experts on small Arms that:

The mere accumulation of weapons is not a sufficient criterion by which to define an accumulation of weapons as excessive or destabilizing, since large numbers of weapons that are under the strict and effective control of a responsible state do not necessarily lead to violence. conversely, a small number of weapons can be destabilizing under certain conditions.

Proliferation in this study refers to the excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have a destabilizing effect on states. Those in government armories meant for use by the security forces for the defence of the state and maintenance of security constitute legal holdings.

There are three established and conventional models of arms transfer of arms in conformity with all legal formalities, usually from one state actor to another or their accredited agents. The second involves what has been dubbed “gray channels” of transfer. Gray channels, in the worlds of Frederic pearson,

government officials look the other way as their agencies arrange for arms to be sent to foreign groups and countries for profit strategic calculations or both.

This third model is that of black market transfers, involving “unlawful

TRANSFERS BY PRIVATE ARMS DEALERS AND SMUGGLERS

The cold war era witnessed a lot of arms build-up, particularly small arms, which were not intended for the direct use of the superpowers, but were generously supplied to their surrogates particularly in Niger-Delta, to fight proxy war. Covert transfers of arms to foreign insurgent groups and freedom fighters were also a frequent feature of the cold war era. As Lora Lumpe observed that the complexities arising from these interactions between illegal markets, and the transformation of arms from a licit to an illicit status or vice versa, constitute a major difficulty in dealing with the problems associated with the proliferation of SALW.

SALW proliferation enhances criminality thereby undermining national security. In Guatemala, for example, the relatively easy availability of SALW has led to the prevalence of violent crimes. Commenting on the situation in that country, E. J. Laurence notes that “the increase in lethality and firepower that comes with military style weapons has emboldened criminals, who often are better armed than police or military forces.” He also observed that almost eight out of ten crimes in Guatemala are committed with firearms: In many parts of Africa the situation is not particularly different as trivial issues, which could be resolved through dialogue, now increasingly tend to be resolved violently. Examples of this include the numerous conflicts that have taken place in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in recent years, the plateau state crises and the cross-border banditry that is rife in northwestern and northeastern Nigeria to mention but a few. It can be deduced therefore, that a relationship exists between SALW proliferation and widespread availability of SALW constitute a direct threat to the values of the state and its citizens and challenges, or even undermines, the ability of the state to provide security. Collier (1999) affirms that the reduction of

physical and human capital, accompanied by a fall in private and public investment resulting from reduced profitability and increased security expenditure, severely undermines economic growth. Accordingly, Collier (1999) noted that “the extent of this problem is underlined by the fact that investment –to-GDP ratios in war zones are at least 50% lower than the averages for countries that had no civil war.”

In the view of Oche (2005:20-21), the consequences of conflict is fuelled by the spread of light weapons and the burgeoning population of displaced persons. He also maintains that apart from the refugee flows, there is the possibility of refugee camps being used to conceal SALW and the likelihood of the refugees waiting to security. He went further to ascertain that, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons to ensure access to an undisturbed supply of lootable resources such as conflict diamonds and gold which are the major factors behind protracted conflicts such as the wars in Liberia sierra leone and DRC.

In a similar vein, Heinrich (2008:9) upholds that the misuse of small arms in the context of armed conflicts also hold a negative impact on environmental security. They are often used as investments to organize the illegal exploitation and destruction of natural resources. The looting of mineral assets as well as of precious renewable natural resources helps the rebels to finance their war efforts.

Fleishman (2001:4) attributed the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa to structural breakdown and weak institutions that have long-standing pervasive political and social ills. He argues further that poor governance, corruption, the breakdown of law and order, and collapsing economies have led to the diversion of large quantities of arms from government armories and security forces into the hands of civilians, warlord and criminal enterprises. He further noted that the inability of many African states to provide basic security for their people is a key factor in propelling the demand for arms.

Egeland (1999:673) noted that the massive influx of weapons into already unstable region, where they are some times sold for a pittance, justifies grave doubts

about respect for humanitarian standards. He argued that proliferation of arms sets in motion a vicious circle in which people arm themselves out of fear for their safety, which destabilizing the situation, and soon governed by the law of the jungle. He further attributed that all standards are ignored the result tension, unrest, violence, even armed conflict, all of which is extremely detrimental to any effort to foster respect for international humanitarian law.

in a presentation to the U . S congressional human rights caucus in 2004, Rachael Stohl noted that the human cost of small arm proliferation is immeasurable, that small arms are a class of weapon responsible for an estimated 500, 00 deaths and thousands more injury each year:-

Accordingly Stohl writes.

The number of small arms in west Africa is estimated at 7-8 million, with a minimum of 77,000 in the hands of west Africa insurgents groups Guinea Bisau... is estimated to have 25,000 weapons in circulation and Nigeria, at least 1 million relic small arms. These weapons are not new to the region, as recirculation of weapons have left a dramatic legacy on the people and countries of west Africa (Stohl, 2004).

The report of the UN panel of governmental experts on small Arm (1997) established that irregular forces such as guerillas and terrorist groups not only possess little regard for the norms of international law but also do not distinguish between combatant and non-combatants. As a result, vulnerable groups such as women and children are increasingly becoming targets. Another finding of the report is that conflict in 25 countries that been fuelled by light weapons had, as of 1988, drawn the involvement of not less than 200,000 children under the age of 16. Ever since the situation has worsened in continents such as Africa.

THE 2009 AMNESTY (WEAPONS COLLECTION PROGRAMME)

The recent amnesty programme to Niger Delta militants could be adjudged a partial success, where some of the major militant warlords held disarmament

ceremonies, bringing about “Ten thousand” of their followers and stalking guns high in public.

The big militant led the way-Victor Ebikabowei Ben, the self-styled “General Boy loaf” Government Tompolo, Farah Dagogo, and Ateke Tom, to name a few. Duffield of BBC news/africa stated that:

They certainly have not given up their entire arsenals-but the quantities of weapons dumped are significant, raising hopes of an end to the unrest which has severely curtailed oil production output for one of the world’s biggest exports (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm).

And yet there are many questions about the Niger Delta’s “peace process”. The lack of independent monitors verifying what happened to the weapons provoked concern from some quarters. There were no neutral observers collating the serial numbers of guns, for example, or formally witnessing weapons being put beyond use. Instead the job was done by officials of local government (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm).

The Nigerian government states that it does not need to stick to the international standards for decommissioning seen in other peace process, said Timi Alaibe, the presidential adviser on the amnesty. He continued, “we have our own way of doing things here...As to whether we have the international standards for collection of those arms, we don’t do them here. We don’t know about them” (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa.stm).

Critics of the Yar’ Adua’s administration fret about the failure to observe international standards for decommissioning of repentant militants . In the past other amnesty programmes have been abused. Corrupt officials have sold weapons on and guns have found their way back into the hands of criminal gangs. But Mr Alaibe insist it will not end like that this time around. According to him, “those weapons will not find their way back. The Nigerian military have the structures in place to destroy them”.

Already there had been street protests in Yenogoa, in Bayelsa state, by youths angry at not receiving money they had been promised in return for dumping guns. (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm). “They haven't collected their money, that is what is bringing the problem now,” said one of the men, Paul Innocent, brandishing a photo ID showing he had accepted amnesty. Behind him, youths shouted warnings they would return to the creeks. www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11). About 200 rebels in Bayelsa's state capital Yenogoa took to the street in a protest after the government failed to pay them for handing over their weapons, marching from their small hotel to a sprawling state government compound where their leaders were being housed in mansions (www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11). Fabi (2009) believe that an amnesty programme in Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta risks failing if the government does not back up its offer with serious peace talks and concrete proposals to develop the impoverished region (www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11).

MEND, one of the most active Niger Delta military groups, after announcing a 60-days cease fire amongst other issues, demanded the withdrawal of the army and the Joint Task Force (JTF) from the Gbaramatu area of the Delta. In addition, it demanded that processes be put in place that can facilitate discussions and dialogue on the main issues that gave rise to armed militia activities in the first instance. In response to these demands, the Nigerias Defense Minister, Godwin Abey stated that, “they cannot give conditions to government. The government will make decision on the effective deployment of troops when the conditionjs become ripe enough. And when law and order is comfortably established”

(www.socialistworld.net/eng/2009/09/0101.html).

Within this context the amnesty package is simply a devise to dodge the major issues at stake and not tackle them. Also evident from this is the fact that government is not prepared to relent from its strategy of using military force to have its way in the Niger Delta region (www.socialistworld.net/eng/2009/09/0101.html).

In its editorial statement on 30th July, 2009, Vanguard newspaper made the following submission:

Amnesty for the militants is a good idea. However, the Federal Government must have the political will to muster resources for development of the area. The government so easily finds funds for peripheral matter in the Niger Delta and not the core issues (*Vanguard*, July,4 2009).

An eight-man panel that was set up to review the post-amnesty deals for repentant militants of the Niger Delta, has roundly faulted the rehabilitation and training programmes of the Presidential Committee on Amnesty (PCA). On Sunday January 10, 2010, ex-militants, youth leaders in the oil and gas region as well as a sub-committee of the PCA on the Rehabilitation of the militants met in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, to review the workplan which had been drawn up by the PCA headed by Defence Minister, Major General Godwin Abbey (rtd). The eight-man panel which was headed by Patterson Ogon, the founding Director of the Ijaw Council for Human Rights (ICHR), in their report said that 80% of the estimated cost for the running of the program is going to consultants and contractors, leaving the beneficiaries (ex-militants) with just 20%. The Panel which also had Nollywood star and actress, Hilda Dokubo as Secretary, claimed that the plan had not taken into consideration those who have been directly affected and traumatised by the crisis; especially those who have lost their sources of livelihood and major breadwinners. These includes:mothers of dead militants, wives, children and siblings (www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm).

The Ogon panel stated that “in spite of the amnesty, a great number of Niger Delta agitators are still in detention. This shows a double standard position of peace and war”. According to the panel:

The status of institution for falls for short of acceptable standards, as they are neither certified nor can award acceptable certificates. Most of them have inadequate facilities for proper impartation of knowledge and skills

(www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm)

The panel is pushing for training and training institutions in key sectors like maritime, oil and gas, which they claimed were left out by the PCA . For information communication technology they opted for NIIT And APTECH. For the entertainment industry, they said institutions such as the Centre for Creative Arts Education and PEFTI are preferable, while for entrepreneurship training, they recommended Quantum, and for sports, sports academies

(www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm). According to the panel, the number of 20,000 ex-militants recorded by the PCA is over bloated. “We therefore suggest that the team meticulously review this number and ensure that leaders of key agitating militant groups be contacted as they have complained of not being carried along in any of the processes including the raising of the number to 20,000.

Moves by the PCA to grant loans to the ex-militants was by the Ogon panel. According to them, “this is unacceptable. In its place we suggest a development grant and the establishment of incubation centres”. Continuing they said the sum of N50 million allegedly earmarked by the PCA for the training of trainers “gives us reason to question the capacity of the trainers who need to be retrained. They pointed out that all the militants who were involve in the armed struggle, “took up arms with the full knowledge of its implication and have since after the amnesty and disarmament returned successfully and continued with normal life. So, the suggestion of psychiatrists is a direct abuse on the mental, emotional and psychological state of the ex-militants **www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm**). It could be observed

from the foregoing that the amnesty package, no doubt is an avenue to enrich the pockets of some few persons that are highly placed in the Nigerian society and not to address the major cause of the Niger Delta.

THE RECENT WARRI BOMB BLAST

The Post Amnesty Peace Talks conference had just started with a welcome address by the chairman of the occasion, a former Chief of Defense Staff, General Andrew Owei Azazi (rtd) and the Chairman/Publisher of Vanguard Media Limited, Mr. Sam Amuka was explaining the reason for the Vanguard initiative when the first bomb was detonated. The second bomb, reportedly planted inside a car across the road on Effurun-Nigeria Ports Authority Expressway near the Government House, Warri exploded 30 minutes later, forcing the stakeholders to leave the hall (*Vanguard* March 16, 2010). MEND later claimed responsibility for the explosions and in fact sent out electronic mail statements before they were detonated.

These are the words of Jomo Gbomo, the spoke person of MEND, one of the most active militant groups in the Niger Delta after the blast.

MEND salutes all its operatives who at great risk, successfully planted and detonated two car bombs at the venue of the Vanguard Post Amnesty conference in Warri, Delta state. Three such bombs of varying strength were planted at this venue. It was unnecessary to detonate the third and the most powerful bomb as our operatives noticed the participants at this jamboree fled towards the direction of the last bomb. Any attempt to detonate this bomb would have resulted in great loss of life. This bomb is been preserved for future use. All who participated in this operation, safely returned to their respective bases

(www.saharareporters.com/news/5512).

From the above statement it can be deduced that as long as the Nigerian State refuses to give full attention to the problems of the Niger Delta it should get ready to contend fully with the forces of MEND and other groups and splinter groups that may spring up subsequently.

THE NIGERIAN SALW CONTROL SYSTEM

In Nigeria, the national legislation related to SALW dates from 1959 and has therefore become obsolete, despite considerable participation and involvement in the major international and regional initiatives. The National Committee, the main structure responsible for devising the national strategy on SALW control implementation, remains weak and lacks substantial institutional and structural capacities.

Summary of the Review

In all the literature so far reviewed in this work, none of the writers specifically articulated the efforts that have been made to collect illicit weapons from the hands of unauthorized persons in the Niger Delta as well as the whether 2009 was effective in curbing out arms proliferation in Niger-delta. It is this lacuna in the literature that this work sets out to fill.

1.5 Theoretical framework

For an in-depth explanation and understanding of the rationale behind the proliferation and widespread use of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria's Niger Delta we shall predicate our analysis on the theoretical perspective of relative deprivation as popularized by Robert Ted Gurr.

The theory explores why people engage in political violence such as riots, rebellion, coups and how regimes respond. The idea of relative deprivation has been used either to measure fairness, inequality or social justice.

The primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism. Frustration does not necessarily lead to violence, and violence for some men is motivated by expectations of gain. The anger induced by frustration, however, is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities. If frustrations are sufficiently prolonged or

sharply felt, aggression is quite likely to occur. Men who are frustrated have an innate disposition to do violence to its source in proportion to the intensity of their frustrations (Gurr, 1970:36-37).

To comprehend this assumed connection between frustration and relative deprivation, we must look at Gurr's definitions. Relative deprivation is defined as "actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities". It is the gap between that "to which people believe they are rightfully entitled" and that which "they think they are capable of getting and keeping" (Gurr, 1970: 24).

In explaining the Niger Delta imbroglio with the theory of relative deprivation, it helps us to understand that the more people are deprived of what they consider their due, against what their compatriots are getting, the more they are likely to rebel. Gurr's "relative deprivation" is a perceived discrepancy between man's value expectation and his value capabilities. By value expectation Gurr means "the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightly entitled". Value capabilities refer to the goods and conditions of life they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining given the social means available to them. The import of Gurr's theory of relative deprivation here is that when the Niger Delta people compare the goods and conditions of life to which they are rightly entitled to the other ethnic groups in Nigeria they see factual indicators of deprivation, that cause a lot of angst among them. For example when they compare the available infrastructure in the region to those in other parts of the north they have reasons to cry "injustice!" And when they also compare the number of contracts awarded to non-indigenes they have reasons to cry "foul!"

This is predicated on the nature of the struggle by ethnic minorities/militias in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta for the right to control their natural resources particularly the petroleum mined from under their lands and waters. Five decades of oil exploration have left the people severely marginalized, impoverished and

lobomized, facing a life of alienation, dispossession and as the lands are taken up and their fragile ecosystem is polluted by the operation of the oil industry.

In response, they have since the 1990s waged a local and international struggle to reclaim their right to the land and the resources under it. Predictably the oil companies have allied with the state in its attempt to crush local resistance through violence. In response, the resistance have armed themselves with dangerous and sophisticated weapons in order to over-run the federal might. This has made the Niger Delta an epicenter for armed conflict and arms brokers seized the opportunity to import small arms and light weapons to the region, hence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region and Nigeria as a whole.

It is within this context that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta is understood.

1.6 Hypothesis

The understated hypothesis guided the study:

1. There is a positive link between relative deprivation and the endemic arms proliferation in the Niger Delta.
2. The 2009 amnesty programme is not effective in curbing out arms proliferation in Niger-delta

1.7 Method of data collection

To generate relevant data for this study, we shall adopt observation technique. Defined as a purposefully planned and systematically executed act of watching or looking at the occurrence of events, activities and behaviour which constitute the subject of focus of research or study (Obasi, 1999:169). The relevance of observation method to this study is obvious since it yield data that pertain directly to typical behavioral situations; assuming, of course, that they are applied to such situations (Selltiz et al, 1977:201). Through observation of political phenomena, accurate descriptions and better explanations of such phenomena are achieved (Ikeagwu,

1998:172). The implication of this is that through observation, accurate explanation of the variables under study can be made. However, given the nature of this study especially the type of data required to interrogate our hypotheses, we will utilize secondary sources of data. Secondary sources of data refer to a set of data gathered or authored by another person, usually information from the available data, archives, either in the form of document or survey results and code books collected for a purpose other than the present one (White, 1983:233; Ikeagwu, 1998: 211; Asika, 2006: 27). As articulated by Selltitz et al, (1977: 317), the advantages of secondary sources of data lie in the obvious fact that information of this sort is collected periodically. This makes the establishment of trends and consistent patterns over time possible. Again, the gathering of information from such sources does not require the cooperation or assistance of the individual about whom information is being sought.

Consequently, the study will depend on institutional and official documents like the reports of the UNDP, International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), International Crisis Group (ICG), Human Rights Watch and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Again, information will be sourced from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Library and Center for American Studies (CAST) University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The aforementioned institutional and official documents will be supported by data from other sources such as textbooks, journals and magazines, articles and other written works that border on the proliferation of small arms and the consequent impact on Nigeria.

Finally, this study will extensively utilize materials sourced from the internet that borders on the same subject matter.

Method of Data Analysis

For the analysis of data, we will rely on qualitative descriptive analysis. Asika (2006:118), defines qualitative descriptive analysis to mean summarizing the information generated in the research verbally so as to further discover relationships

among variables. The adoption of the foregoing analytical method becomes necessary since the study will rely principally on secondary sources of data.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The study examined the link between poverty and armed conflict, and the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study investigated whether efforts towards the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme has been effective. To this effect, research question directing the study was formulated, objective of the study outlined and empirical significance of the study articulated. Furthermore, we embarked on the review of the extant literature relevant to the study to establish whether the data inquiries have addressed the research questions we raised. The review created a gap which the study addressed. To do this, we formulated a hypothesis that was linked in consistent manner to research question and objective of study. We also relied on the relative deprivation as our theoretical framework to provide philosophical justification for our hypothesis. To get information for the study, we utilized observation technique to generate relevant secondary data for the study. And for data analysis, we adopted qualitative descriptive analysis.

The result of data analysis confirmed our hypothesis. The findings reveal that there is a positive link between poverty and armed conflict and that efforts towards the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme to mop up small arms have not been effective. If there is anything to go by, this ineffectiveness has allowed more weapons to find their way into the hands of unauthorized persons.

Conclusion

On the strength of data generated through secondary sources, we tested and validated our hypotheses. Hence, it has been empirically established that there is a

positive link between relative deprivation and the endemic arms proliferation, and that there are weak efforts and laws towards the implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme. This is why small arms are still proliferating and will continue to prolong armed conflict in the Niger Delta.

Therefore, the root cause of armed conflict in the Delta region is inadequate development project compare to the degree of resources which the region churns out for the Nigerian economy. As long as the Nigeria government is not ready to bring about meaningful development to the region, it should get ready to contend with the militant forces as well as subsequent splinter militant groups that may arise as well. Based on the foregoing we are arrived at the following finding:

- That relative deprivation which is the major cause of the disturbances in the Niger Delta is yet to be seriously addressed. The Nigerian state has continued to drag its foot towards bringing about meaningful development in the region that “lays the golden egg”. This is because the interest (oil) of the Federal government in the Niger Delta has not being completely truncated.
- That the 2009 amnesty programme was not effective in curbing arms proliferation in Niger-Delta.

Recommendations

Resources are a major factor in the conflicts and threats of war in any society. Limited access and inequitable distribution often create patterns and feelings of marginalization. For a society that is used to settling even the most minor dispute with small arms, it should be expected that natural resources would spawn and sustain major conflicts. This is obvious in the case of Nigeria’s Delta region where the legal but unjust exploitation of crude oil has generated an on-going problem made worse by unregulated use and easy access to small arms. It makes no sense to call them “small” arms given the scale of the evil they perpetrate.

The foregoing notwithstanding, there are opportunities for the realisation of a Niger Delta that is free from the proliferation and use of small arms:

First, the government should create the necessary conditions for the genuine dialogue required for the resolution of the parlous state of underdevelopment which led to the violence in the region. Although the present civilian administration has made some major policy interventions in the Niger Delta imbroglio (especially the quarterly Presidential Forum on the Niger Delta) such efforts have become “a hollow, time-wasting, television show, where serious contributions are ridiculed and participants are harangued and shouted down by an all-knowing and comical moderator” as personified by former President Obasanjo.

Second, the government should demonstrate genuine commitment to stop the flow of small arms in the Niger Delta. For instance, while it is true that Nigeria has established a national committee on the implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Small Arms, indications are that the efforts made so far lack strategic coordination and consistent implementation. Thus, beyond the mere signing of the ECOWAS principle not to allow importation, exportation and manufacturing of small arms, the government should strengthen its control over arms in its armoury and work out necessary measures that would guarantee border security with its neighbours.

Third, it is necessary to ensure that only the police are deployed to the Niger Delta to keep peace. Even then, it should be the duty of government to ensure that those that are so deployed act professionally and in accordance with international standards.

Fourth, there is a need to ensure that concrete steps are taken to get oil companies to operate within the framework of international best practices in their

prospecting for oil by protecting the Niger Delta environment and to promote community development projects following the principles of corporate social responsibility. Such efforts should include a comprehensive road network that would open up the region and promote agro-allied industry and infrastructural transformation.

Finally, as a matter of urgency, there is a need for job creation to guarantee the socio-economic security of the vast army of jobless youth in the Niger Delta. This step, apart from helping to give the desired sense of belonging and partnership to the Nigerian project, would also help to anchor the Niger Delta policy in a political process that stresses human capital development and security rather than the one that attempts to foist dubious law and order upon the population. As the country talks about local content in the oil sector, the principle should be taken to a level that provides training in oil industry-related skills and enables these youth to find relevance in the fight against the proliferation and use of small arms and that finally allows the Niger Delta region to achieve its full potential.

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CHAPTER TWO

ARMS PROLIFERATION IN NIGER DELTA AND NIGERIA

With an estimated one to three million small arms in circulation in Nigeria, these weapons pose a significant challenge to law and order and a high risk to personal security. The majority of these small arms are illegally possessed, due to highly restrictive national laws on possession. While this does not necessarily indicate intent to use these weapons in an illegal fashion, as self defence is a primary motive for possession in some cases, it does mean that there are few records of the number of weapons in the country and ineffective means of controlling the importation and distribution of small arms in Nigeria.

The military and police are increasing their stocks of weapons in an effort to modernize their forces and to combat rising armed violence in the country, while illegal civilian importation is also continuing. The problem is one of demand. The security forces are importing weapons in order to meet the demands of their role in securing the country. Individuals and groups are importing and purchasing small arms as a result of the failure of the security forces to provide security and, in some cases, due to the draw of rich profits from the use of small arms in illegal activities.

2.1 Circulation of small arms

There are an estimated seven to ten million illicit small arms and light weapons in West Africa (Small Arms Survey, 2003, p. 80). These figures are based on rough estimations, given population size and levels of conflict in countries and in the region as a whole. There are an estimated one million (Ebo, 2006, p. 1; Mensah, 2002) to three million (Obasi, 2002, p. 69) small arms and light weapons in circulation in Nigeria alone. Civilians possess the majority of weapons in the country. A 2001 estimate claimed that 80 per cent of the weapons in civilian possession had been obtained illegally (Obasi, 2002, p. 69), because of strict laws on civilian possession.

26 Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria 27 These estimates have been used for over five years without modification, suggesting that it is time to re-evaluate the situation and review the estimates. There is little quantitative or qualitative data available on small arms and light weapons in Nigeria (Ebo, 2006, p. 2), making it difficult to conduct such a review. This is true for both the legal and illegal flows of small arms. This lack of data also makes it difficult to determine a baseline for measuring rises or declines in the flows of arms into and out of the country. It is equally difficult to assess the numerous claims that there has been an ‘alarming increase’ in the number of illegal small arms in circulation resulting from the worsening security situation and fuelled by oil bunkering (BBC 2006a; Peel, 2005, p. 2; Servant, 2006). This raises questions about how widely available small arms are, how common possession is by civilians, and whether there has been a dramatic spike in the level of imports of illegal weapons over the past year.

2.2 LEGAL SMALL ARMS

There are several security agencies operating in Nigeria , While all of these agencies play a role in either the internal or external security of the country, not all of them or their members are authorized to carry small arms. The primary agencies authorized to carry arms are the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the Nigeria Police Force, and some specialized units within the other agencies. Those official persons authorized to bear arms number over 400,000, but other agencies are pressing to be allowed to carry small arms. In 2000 one report suggested that of the one to three million small arms in Nigeria, only a few hundred thousand weapons were in official stocks (Obasi, 2002, p. 69). According to the current personnel figures and recent orders of weapons for the police and the military, this estimate is likely to be outdated, and the actual number of official small arms is likely to be higher.

2.2.1 The Military

The Nigerian military is roughly 85,000 strong. This includes the army (67,000), air force (10,000), and navy and coast guard (8,000) (IISS, 2007, p. 286). There is little information available about the existing small arms stockpiles of the military forces, and military officers are reluctant to release this information. Develop the military's capacity in general, and were not intended for any specific purpose (Buhari, 2007). The military is undoubtedly poorly equipped and requires additional and new weapons. Government expenditures suggest an ongoing attempt over the past seven years to infuse additional funding into the military in order to ensure a better equipped, better trained, and more professional force. Expenditures have increased significantly since the return to democracy in 1999.

The Nigerian government has not only increased spending on the military forces, but has also increased funding for the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON). DICON, located in a large compound in Kaduna in the north of the country, is the only facility authorized to produce arms and ammunition in Nigeria. It was created in 1964 to supply arms and ammunition to the police and military in order to meet the needs of the newly independent country. Over the past several decades, successive administrations neglected the facility and failed to provide it with sufficient funding, and it fell into disrepair. From 1999 President Obasanjo refocused attention on internal production capacity and how to refurbish the defunct company. At least two companies, one in South Africa and one in China, have expressed interest in assisting with the refurbishment of the company, but these deals never came to pass. Instead, it appears the Nigerian government has decided to conduct the refurbishment on its own. In 2006 Obasanjo authorized funding of NGN 1 billion (USD 8 million) for DICON to refurbish the company's production facilities and begin the process of designing an AK-47-type assault rifle for production in Nigeria. The refurbishment has reportedly brought the factory to nearly 70 percent of its, the military is primarily confined to its barracks domestically and is used for border

operations or navy patrols of coastal waters, or for contributing to international peacekeeping operations. The military's role is currently defined by the 1999 Constitution. According to Section 217 of the Constitution, the military is responsible for defending Nigeria from external attack, maintaining territorial integrity and securing the country's borders, and suppressing insurrection and aiding civilian authorities when requested to do so by the president. The military can be called upon to conduct other activities by the National Assembly, but only through a legislative act by the Assembly.

The military is currently being used for one internal problem: the crisis in the Delta. Reluctant to refer to the growing conflict in the Delta as an internal conflict, military commanders instead use the euphemism 'disturbance' and suggest that the problem should be handled by the Nigeria Police Force rather than the military.¹⁷ The Joint Task Force (JTF) has been posted in the Niger Delta since 2003. Originally planned as an interim measure to quell rising violence in the Warri area and provide protection to the oil installations in the area, the JTF has remained in the Delta, and to date there are no plans for its removal. The army leads the JTF, which also includes officers from the navy, the paramilitary mobile police, and the regular police force. The JTF has held primary responsibility for security in the area, including responding to kidnapping incidents. It has been accused of excessive use of force in quelling protests or raiding villages believed to be harbouring or aiding militant groups (AI, 2005). This has raised questions about both the JTF's tactics and its level of firepower. The military has acknowledged that it needs to procure weapons to counter armed groups, which are increasingly well armed. While there are reports and claims that armed groups are better equipped and trained than the Nigerian military (Ogbedu and Ogundele, 2007), this has been disputed by claims that the military faces problems of low morale and fighting a conflict against its fellow countrymen in unfamiliar terrain, but it is not yet outgunned. Newspaper reports emerged in early 2007 claiming that the government was to purchase military equipment worth NGN 2

billion (USD 16 million) for the purpose of suppressing militants in the Delta. Such reports were dismissed by government officials, who claimed that the purchases were being used to normal production levels (Buhari, 2007). DICON has reported that it has finished the prototypes of the Nigerian-made AK-47 rifle, dubbed the OBJ-006 after President Obasanjo, and is now ready to commence mass production (*Vanguard*, 2007a). There are no figures available on how many rifles this would entail, or what other arms or ammunition DICON will now produce. DICON has reported that it has restored its production capacities for ammunition and rifles, which have not been manufactured for the past several years due to dilapidated equipment (*Vanguard*, 2007a). Undoubtedly the infusion of funds has assisted in the refurbishment process. The 2007 national budget provides NGN 413,700,904 (USD 3.3 million) for the company. While just under two-thirds of this amount will go toward salaries and benefits for company workers, the remainder will pay for the ongoing rehabilitation of the various facilities and infrastructure, and for capital investment, including NGN 35,000,000 (USD 280,000) for the new rifle (Nigeria, 2007). Obasanjo stated that the investment in DICON is aimed at making Nigeria self-sufficient in ammunition production by September 2007 and in weapons production by September 2008 (Obasanjo, 2007). It is questionable whether these goals for self-sufficiency can be reached. Such statements are likely for local consumption, especially the military and police, who complain of inadequate equipment. The comments might also be aimed at the United States.

The Nigerian government has complained that the United States has been too slow in providing military assistance to Nigeria to secure the Delta, and that the government has turned to China to source the necessary military equipment, with China fast becoming one of Nigeria's main suppliers of military equipment (Mahtani, 2006). Obasanjo might also have been reinforcing the role he wished to see Nigeria play in the sub-region, and in Africa as a whole.

Nigeria has long played a strong role in peacekeeping missions, first in the sub-region, and now outside of it in places such as Somalia and Darfur. In order to perform well in these missions, the military must have the necessary equipment and resources. Such efforts to improve domestic production for national consumption took an unexpected turn when Obasanjo proclaimed that DICON should produce arms and ammunition not only for Nigeria, but also for the sub-region: 'By 2010 you must be able to supply the entire West African subregion all the small arms they require' (Oji, 2007).

2.2.2 The police

The Nigeria Police Force is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. It plays the primary role in ensuring internal security, while the armed forces are responsible for security from external threats. The police force is a federal police force, and the only force with the authority to operate in the country. The Constitution makes this clear in Section 214, which states that no state or local government can establish its own policing force. This specification resulted from previous problems with local police forces. Prior to 1967, both local and federal police forces existed in Nigeria. This changed as a result of the 1967 report of the Working Party on Police and Prisons, which found that the local police forces had been used as political tools by local politicians to conduct political intimidation and commit fraud during elections between 1960 and 1965 (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 4). This report led to the dismantling of local police forces and the establishment of a centralized federal force. This did not resolve all concerns over the capacity of the police force to carry out its duties impartially and effectively. Complaints persist that the centralized nature of the force places too much power in the hands of the federal government.

The Nigeria Police Force is currently structured into 12 zones, with between 2 and 4 state commands within each zone, and then a series of area commands,

divisions, police stations, and police posts under these commands. A commissioner of police leads each state command, and there is a hierarchical chain of command down to the lowest level, the police post. In addition to the state command, each state possesses at least 2 area commands, 10 divisions, and 11 police stations, with some states possessing far greater numbers.²⁰ Given the primary role of the military in the governance of the country over the past four decades and the neglect of the police force during the years of military rule, the police are only now coming to fill a role common to democratic polities. As a result, they have faced difficulties in obtaining sufficient personnel, resources, and equipment, and demonstrating their effectiveness in creating and maintaining law and order. The force has grown in size since the return to democracy in 1999 from 160,000 to over 300,000 officers in 2007.

The government has taken steps to increase the resources available to the police, but still falls short of meeting the needs identified by the force. The 32 Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria³³ police, arguing that ‘crime fighting involves the use of arms and ammunition as sophisticated or even more than the ones used by the hoodlums’, complain that they possess insufficient numbers of small arms to perform their role of enforcing law and order, especially in areas with high levels of armed crime (Nigeria Police Force, 2005, p. 26). In a submission by the Nigeria Police Force to the Presidential Committee on Police Reform in 2006, the police indicated that they would need over 500,000 small arms and over 5 million rounds of ammunition in the coming 5 years to fulfil their needs (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, pp. 7–8). The government purchased 80,000 assault rifles in 2006, about one-sixth of what the police claim they need. These weapons were requested five years previously, but only purchased in 2006. The police claim they need the new arms to combat crime (BBC, 2006c). However, the purchase of 40,000 AK-47 assault rifles, 30,000 K2 assault rifles, and 10,000 pistols has raised concerns among Nigerians who think the police need to be better trained, not better armed, and that assault rifles are not the best

option for a police force struggling to reform its reputation for brutality. The report of the Presidential Committee on Police Reform, which has not yet been released publicly, recommended that the police reduce the proportion of police officers on the streets carrying assault rifles. This recommendation was not accepted by the government. The 2007 national budget provides for NGN 297,500,000 (USD 2.38 million) for the procurement of arms and ammunition. There are no details on what this will entail in terms of particular purchases. The budget also provides for NGN 2,060,200,000 (USD 16.5 million) for riot equipment and bulletproof vests and helmets.

2.3 ILLEGAL SMALL ARMS

Given the difficulty in legally owning a gun, the majority of small arms in Nigeria are believed to be held illegally. Their illegality makes it difficult to track flows and possession. Weapons transit into the country across land borders and via sea ports. Sources of small arms include arms dealers, serving and retired military and police officers, returning peacekeepers, armed groups across borders, and other individuals. These weapons transit into the country and into the hands of armed groups, national dealers, political and community leaders, and individuals. Craft production provides a domestic source of small arms. Demand is the key to understanding the trade: as long as insecurity persists, and economic and political opportunities for gain exist through the use of force, demand for small arms will continue.

2.3.1 Entry points and transit routes

Since Nigeria has lengthy and porous borders, a number of airports, and numerous ports along the southern coast, smuggling and cross-border trade are difficult to detect and monitor. Limited staff, vehicles, and resources make the job of customs officials, the police, and the navy all the more difficult. While many are

certain that small arms and light weapons are coming into the country, as evidenced by the presence of foreign-made weapons in circulation, the exact entrance routes of these weapons are less clear.

A number of transit countries are often mentioned. These include the neighbouring countries of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger,²⁴ as well as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 228; Ojudu, 2007). Other reported sources include Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine as well as Nigeria Police Force small arms and ammunition, small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia. While source countries are often named, the flows of small arms from source and transit countries are not well documented. The police have impounded a large quantity of arms and ammunition smuggled through neighbouring countries, with many coming from the Tudu arms market in Ghana and making their way to Nigeria through Togo and Benin (Olori, 2004).²⁷ This suggests that there are important entry points for small arms into Nigeria. Reportedly, the three most notorious arms smuggling frontiers in Nigeria are in the south-west (Idi-Iroko in Ogun state and Seme in Lagos state), in the south (the port city of Warri in Delta state), and in the north-east at the border with Niger and Cameroon (Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states) (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 21). Warri has been referred to as the 'hub of the gun trade' in the Niger Delta (Ojudu, 2007; Peel, 2005, p. 2), and its location in the Delta, as well as the demand for small arms in that area of the country, make this a logical place for the reception of shipments. However, relatively little concrete evidence of small arms transfers is available, making it difficult to assess trafficking routes, transit countries, and sources. A number of towns are known for the availability of weapons, including Asaba, Benin City, Warri, Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri, Awka, and Port Harcourt (Small Arms Survey, 2007). Arms that come into the country through the southern ports may be distributed in this southern region, or they move further north to primary

distribution points, and then on to secondary distribution points. Some of these weapons will move farther north, but the north appears to have additional sources of small arms through the borders with Niger and Chad in the north-east. Entry points here include

Maigatari, Nguru, and Mallam Falori (Adejo, 2005, p. 93).

2.3.2 Sources of illegal small arms

Sources of illegal small arms and light weapons include purchases from international and national arms dealers, sales and rentals by serving and retired security personnel, sales by returning peacekeepers, sales of recycled weapons from decommissioning exercises, oil-for-arms exchanges in the Delta region, and purchases of locally produced craft weapons. Illegal weapons are also obtained through thefts from dealers, armories, and residences; seizures from security officials during robberies; and in clashes with other armed groups (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 16).

National weapons dealers remain quiet on the sources of their weapons. While a few international dealers have been named during interviews in country, there is little information about these dealers or their operations. Both armed groups and dealers have been quiet on their operations. While this is not unusual for the illegal trade, some have specifically refused to share these details, show their weapons, or allow the recording of serial numbers of weapons, explaining that they do not want to threaten the future supply of arms by divulging their sources. Despite the difficulty in obtaining details of transfers, there do appear to be different sourcing methods. Weapons entering the south, especially in the Niger-Delta 36 Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria 37 Delta area, appear to be acquired through more direct means, such as cash payments or bartering oil for arms between armed groups and offshore ships.

Weapons entering through border areas and the south-east take a more indirect route to both dealers and buyers, often passing through primary and secondary distribution points. While international arms dealers remain a primary source of weapons, the

scale of imports and sales remains unclear. Some persons interviewed in Nigeria reported hearing of purchases of NGN 7 million (USD 56,000) or even NGN 20 million (USD 160,000), when translated into weapons, these amounts are roughly equivalent to 40 and 100 weapons, respectively, based on a price of USD 1,500 per weapon, which was the average price for an AK-47 in late 2006. Even at lower prices, the amounts imported would still number in the low hundreds. This does not limit the significance of their importation or the destructive effect of their use, but it does raise questions about the level of arms possession that exists in the country, and whether the often claimed high figures in circulation have been exaggerated.

Illegal sales by serving and retired security personnel pose a major concern with regard to the proliferation of small arms. This problem was publicly acknowledged by President Obasanjo in December 2002 when he stated that ‘the majority of [small arms and light weapons] circulating in Nigeria were either sold or rented out by, or stolen from, the country’s security agencies’ (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005, pp. 6–7). Security officials have lost a number of weapons through theft. While a common occurrence, the numbers lost in this way appear to be relatively small (Bah, 2004, p. 4). Security officials have provided weapons to ethnic militias in their home areas, with one customs official claiming the donation of 16 G3 rifles as his ‘contribution to the Niger Delta cause’ (Ebo, 2006, pp. 11, 25). A survey of armed group members conducted in Bayelsa state revealed that the majority of respondents received assistance from the police (30.4 per cent), the mobile police (14.7 per cent), and the military (24.5 per cent) in obtaining small arms (Isumonah, Tantua, and James, 2006, p. 74). There is also some evidence of the diversion, or recycling, of weapons from decommissioning exercises into the illegal trade (SDN, 2006b, p. 8). In addition to providing access to small arms, serving and retired service personnel have also provided training to militants (AAPW, 2006). The armed groups in the Delta have displayed ‘superior strategies and tactics using better training and organization’ (Von Kemedi, 2006, p. 3). The use of military trainers would explain how militants in

the Delta have developed more organized and sophisticated tactics over the past years. Nigerian peacekeepers have also been identified as a source of black market weapons. Nigerian soldiers have served in a number of peacekeeping missions in Africa, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, among others.

This has provided Nigerian soldiers with access to small arms. Soldiers returning from peacekeeping missions have sold small arms on the Nigerian black market, providing 'a ready source of assault weapons' for the Nigerian population. Although perhaps not a significant source of weapons in terms of numbers, this has been recognized as a source of small arms, especially for inter-communal conflicts (Bah, 2004, pp. 4–5). Increasingly, in the Delta region, oil bunkering by armed groups has provided an important source of funding and small arms to groups. Bunkering is the illegal tapping of oil pipelines and wellheads to siphon off crude oil. The oil is then sold to foreign buyers or bartered for small arms. Oil bunkering is believed to be a lucrative endeavour, providing an estimated USD 1–4 billion per year (Lueck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 9). Bunkered oil provides Box 1 A dealer's story. A dealer will place an order for a client for specific types of small arms and specified quantities. The dealer does not keep these in stock, but instead purchases them as they are ordered. Once an order is made, the dealer, or an associate, will travel to the Tudu market in Ghana, where weapons traders from across West Africa can purchase small arms on the wholesale market. The weapons are purchased, disassembled, and transported by road back to Nigeria. The weapon parts are placed in empty fruit or vegetable tins or other innocuous containers to avoid detection. In Lagos, the shipment is shifted to another transporter, who is responsible for getting the shipment to its delivery point, the buyer. As security for safe delivery, the transporter carries NGN 50,000 (USD 400) in cash, provided by the dealer, to use to bribe security checkpoints or to ensure his delivery to a 'safe' police station that is regularly provided by dealers with funds to ensure its personnel's complicity, should he be stopped. This money ensures his release and his ability to complete his delivery.

Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria significant funding necessary for armed groups to purchase more powerful weapons from external sources (BBC, 2007b), and in some cases the oil is exchanged directly for weapons, usually new AK-47 assault rifles (Davis, Von Kemedi, and Drennan, 2006, p. 29). International oil companies operating in the Delta region have also contributed to the problem of small arms proliferation.

A decision by the government to allow oil companies to import weapons in order to arm police assigned to oil installations reportedly brought in a number of arms (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 22). Oil companies operating in the Delta do utilize Nigerian police to protect their installations; however, they argue that these police are employed by the government and allocated to the companies for this specific work, even though the companies pay the normal salaries and benefits of these officers (Peel, 2005, p. 4). Shell, the largest oil producer in the Delta, argues that these police are not armed (Peel, 2005, p. 4). The large revenues attached to oil production ensure a close relationship between government and the oil companies. This has led many communities to view them as one and the same, and such perceptions have been reinforced by reports of oil companies directly calling upon the police, military, and navy to quell problems at their installations rather than seeking assistance through the government (Ibeanu, 2000, p. 22). Oil companies have also provided payments to groups and communities in return for being allowed to operate in peaceful conditions. While payments to militant groups might provide a modicum of security and stability, they also threaten to empower militants and provide them with the financial means to improve their arsenals (ICG, 2006b, p. 25). There are no hard figures on the levels of bunkering. Figures vary widely, ranging between 100,000 and 700,000 barrels per day, and oil companies are reluctant to provide their own estimates, but even at the lower end of this range, oil bunkering would provide significant funds to armed groups. There are claims that military officials,

businessmen, and high-level government officials are involved in the bunkering business (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 9), suggesting collaboration between armed groups and local officials, and protection from prosecution. The scale of bunkering activities suggests that senior Nigerian officials have protected and backed armed militias to enable the latter to continue operating without interference by security forces (BBC, 2006a). Some have suggested that there is a tipping point for engagement by the military at a level of theft of 8–10 per cent of oil production (WAC Global Services, 2003, p. 6). There is little evidence to support this theory. Oil companies do not appear to be able to track oil production sufficiently closely to determine the level of bunkering this precisely, nor is there evidence that they could then convince the Nigerian government to act on this. The Nigerian military is also not capable of tracking oil bunkering with great precision and therefore of determining when it should intervene. There is also the problem of military involvement in oil bunkering (ICG, 2006b, p. 9; Peel, 2005, p. 3), which reduces the incentives to eliminate the practice.

2.3.3 Craft production

Locally produced small arms, or craft weapons, are widely available in Nigeria. They are inexpensive and easy to acquire compared to more expensive and sophisticated models of factory-made small arms, which must be imported or bought through the black market. Locally produced small arms include mainly revolvers and shotguns. Craft weapons are used for hunting, community policing, and self-defence. As such, hunters, cattle herders, businessmen, politicians, elites, and vigilante groups are among those purchasing such weapons.

There are a number of well-known craft production markets in Nigeria, including Katsina, Kaduna, and Calabar, one primary centre for craft production is Awka in Anambra state. Awka has been a centre for craft production since the Nigerian-Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, when Awka produced explosives. Since

this time, the expertise for local production has remained a family business, with knowledge of fabrication techniques passed down through generations. Some interviewees claimed that a group of Ghanaian craft producers had visited Awka in 2003 to provide additional training to Nigerian producers. However, it is clear that the trade preceded this by several decades. The predominance of Awka in the production of craft weapons is evidenced through the common reference to craft weapons as 'Awka-made' or more simply 'Awka'. Production techniques remain rudimentary. No machines are used in the production process. Vices, steel saws, manual drills, and files are employed in the Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria 41 there is no evidence that this is happening on a large scale. Craft weapons are based on the designs of imported arms, but this process remains restricted to rifles, shotguns, and pistols. Craft production does not currently entail the production of more sophisticated small arms.

According to the 1959 Firearms Act (Nigeria, 1959, Para. 13), it is illegal to sell or transfer any firearm unless it is permanently marked, or stamped, with the maker's name and number, or other prescribed identifier, unless this information is specified on the purchaser's licence or permit. Currently, craft weapons are not marked with individual identifiers. Until several years ago, craft producers had marked their weapons with their own number or symbol. However, these identifying marks were used by police to trace weapons used in crimes. This led to the prosecution of craft producers whose weapons had been implicated in criminal activities, and consequently a halt to the practice of marking. There have been recent proposals and discussions within the police force to try to implement a system of marking craft weapons by local producers, but to date this initiative has not moved forward. The police have yet to devise a strategy for implementation, due in large part to the belief that craft producers would be unlikely to obtain the necessary equipment for marking due to its high costs. Thus, the initiative remains an idea on the drawing board. More recent attempts to bring craft weapons in Nigeria under the legal

framework have been partly successful, with many of these weapons provided with ad hoc serial numbers and their owners licensed. Craft *production* is only legal when the craftsman is licensed by the government, and thereby authorized to produce firearms. According to the 1959 Firearms Act, ‘no person shall manufacture, assemble or repair any firearms or ammunition except at a public armoury or at arsenals established for the purposes of the armed forces with the consent of the President’ (Nigeria, 1959, Para. 23). Nevertheless, most craft producers have continued to operate without authorization, and without being under threat of prosecution. That seems to be changing in some areas. In Awka, for example, the craft production community had enjoyed the support of a senior police figure. The retirement of this officer and the stricter attitude of his successor have meant that producers must now operate with greater care and secrecy. Some producers have responded by reducing their production and only producing weapons made fabrication process, with small makeshift furnaces used to heat the metals. Fabrication of craft weapons usually takes place in producers’ homes or backyards. In addition to producing craft arms, these blacksmiths often produce other tools, such as hunting traps, gardening implements, and machetes. The materials used in the process are sourced locally.

There have been reports that components are often brought in from foreign sources for assembly in-country. While this might be the case on a limited scale, and there has been one report that a group in the Delta is trying to develop its own mortar, Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria arms possession do give insight into the types of weapons and ammunition coming into the country, as well as patterns of sales, and to some extent the scale of flows. This information suggests that while arms are flowing into the country, they do not appear to be coming in large quantities (i.e. by the thousands), and that the primary product coming in is ammunition. This suggests that there are sufficient weapons in the country to meet demand, but that the primary need is ammunition for weapons already in-country. The flow of illegal weapons into the

country remains difficult to assess. A commonly cited report from December 2003 states that one respondent had claimed that every village had 20–100 AK-47 assault rifles in its community armouries (WAC Global Services, 2003, p. 48). This number has since taken on a life of its own, and has been reported in a number of publications as a fact, rather than as a report by one informant. It has also been used, inaccurately, as a measure of circulation.

There are no official figures for the illicit trade. Interviews in Nigeria revealed competing views on the topic. One person interviewed claimed to have heard reports of shipments of weapons coming into the country, but had little evidence to support such second-hand reports, and little to point to in the way of incidents on the ground to indicate that large shipments had arrived. Others disputed the contention that arms were flowing into the country in large quantities, but instead believed they were coming in on a smaller but steady basis. Interviews conducted in Nigeria in early 2007 suggest a smaller but to order, rather than stockpiling for future sales. There was also rising concern in 2007 about police crackdowns in the tense pre-election climate. Producers claimed they had witnessed similar crackdowns in the lead-up to the 2003 national elections and 2004 local elections. This suggests that police attention to craft production might decline again in the post-election period. The *possession* of craft weapons is legal only when the weapon is properly licensed. According to the 1959 Firearms Act, such individual licensing is possible through application to the police. In practice, the licensing process appears to be less rigid. In some cases, this process has been done by the producer himself after the buyer has provided the necessary paperwork. In Awka, the local police chief and the chairman of the Anambra Vigilante Service, formerly the Bakassi Boys, must both sign the licensing application for it to be valid. This suggests government support for craft production or, at the very least, a reluctance to eliminate the practice altogether. It remains unclear how strictly the licensing of craft weapon owners is monitored or enforced. The government announced a ban on all licensing of firearms in 2004 as part of an effort to reduce the

circulation of all firearms. The continuation of craft production and sales in imported arms suggests that the ban is not entirely effective. Instead, those who do possess firearms, both craft and sophisticated, are more likely to possess them illegally, i.e. without a formal licence. Due to the strict laws on gun ownership and the lengthy bureaucratic process to obtain a licence, few people own guns legally (Ojudu, 2007).

2.3.4 Measuring the Illegal Trade

Reliable data on illegal arms transfers into Nigeria is unavailable. In part, this is the result of the illegal nature of the trafficking, and in part due to poor record keeping. The illegal nature of the sale and movement of arms and ammunition in Nigeria means that few involved in the trade are willing to discuss the operational side or the scale of the flows. Interviews with those in the illegal arms business provide some insight, but this information is also difficult to verify. Records of seizures and arrests are kept by the customs service and the police, but the data is inconsistent and often incomplete. While not an exact estimation of the scale of movement of illicit arms and ammunition, data on the pricing of arms and ammunition, the seizures of weapons, and arrests for more consistent flow of illicit arms into the country. One arms dealer claimed that the increase in purchases had come nearly a year earlier in April 2006, and that demand had been consistent since then. Members of armed groups stated that they had already purchased what they needed, and that government efforts to crack down came too late. Pricing and seizure data give support to the assessment that it is not large numbers of guns that are being sought, but rather ammunition for the weapons already in the country.

These prices are not an exact measure of the illegal arms market in Nigeria. Prices fluctuate over time, depending on the quality and age of the weapon, and where the weapon is being sold in the country. Prices tend to be higher in the south, where there is reportedly more demand. While not an exact measure of price, the pattern of pricing does suggest times when demand has been higher, and these time periods

coincide with important events in Nigeria. In late 2003 the clashes between the NDVS and the NDPVF were escalating. In December 2004 the disarmament process was starting to fail. Higher demand could have arisen for two reasons: efforts to purchase weapons in order to turn them in for disarmament benefits, or groups were re-arming on the understanding that the disarmament process was indeed failing. Higher prices in late 2006 suggest groups were bringing in arms in preparation for the election season, with the prices falling off just before the elections, when groups were reporting that they had already purchased what they needed.

The higher prices also suggest that there is a limited supply of weapons and that the market is not flooded with available arms. Ammunition, on the other hand, appears to maintain a steadier price at NGN 150–500 (USD 1.20–4.00) per round, but this is a significant increase from past years. Ammunition is often sold in paint tins, with about 700 rounds per tin running at NGN 150,000 (USD 1,200). The same tin of ammunition would have cost NGN 80,000–100,000 (USD 640–800) in 2004 and 2005. This suggests that demand for ammunition has increased or supply has declined. Militants in the Niger Delta have stated that ammunition often bought from Anambra and Abia states is harder to find and the cost is rising. Another measure of the illegal flow of arms and ammunition into Nigeria is the data on official seizures. Customs seizes very small quantities of arms each year, but by contrast rather large numbers of rounds of ammunition. While this would be expected, as more ammunition is required than weapons, the number of weapons is disproportionately small compared to the amount of ammunition seized. There is inconsistency in national reporting and data collection, which makes it difficult to assess the full scale of the illegal arms trade in Nigeria. The figures reported by the customs service do not match newspaper reports of seizures, nor do they match newspaper reports of figures attributed to the customs service. For example, according to the data provided by the customs service in guns and 3,002 rounds of ammunition were seized in 2001, while 2 guns and 5,944 rounds of ammunition were seized in 2002. A newspaper report

provided figures of 20 guns and 122,494 rounds of ammunition seized in 2002, and 9 guns and 110,283 rounds of ammunition in 2001 (Oritse, 2002). The newspaper reports in more closely match this single newspaper report, but there are still discrepancies. Whereas the newspaper reports indicate fluctuations in the number of weapons seized across years, data released by the inspector general of police on small arms seizures by the police suggests an upward trend in the number of seizures. Whether this is the result of better policing, more weapons in the country, better data, or something else entirely is difficult to determine. One problem with obtaining consistent data is that no centralized data collection and analysis system exists to collate inputs from the police, the customs service, or other agencies involved in weapons seizure and destruction. In addition to various government agencies, there are also numerous field offices of each agency, requiring coordination both across and within agencies. Such coordination is difficult, given the lack of computerized systems and systematic data collection. These challenges are compounded by the failure of the police to understand the importance and utility of data collection and its use in formulating and directing policy (Alemika, Igbo, and Nnorom, 2006, pp. 12–13). Even with the concerns noted above about the incomplete nature of the data available, a consistent picture is painted of the balance of the flow in favour of ammunition over guns themselves. This suggests that either the interdiction efforts have been more successful in capturing ammunition than guns, or there is simply far more ammunition, by proportion, flowing into the country. If the latter is true, then this would support the argument that there are already sufficient guns in the country to meet demand, and that what is needed is ammunition. This would then suggest that the demand for ammunition is the likely result of the expenditure of existing ammunition stocks in the country.

2.4 DEMAND FOR SMALL ARMS

There are two primary factors that drive demand for small arms in Nigeria: security and personal gain. National security forces obtain small arms primarily for the purpose of enforcing the law and protecting the country. While these forces have arguably used their weapons for more than their constitutional duties—e.g. human rights abuses, renting weapons for personal gain, excessive use of force in performing their duties, and suppressing political dissidents— the primary reason for the government to supply weapons to national security forces is to uphold law and order and maintain the security of the country. Demand in terms of the national security forces has increased over the past decade, as indicated in the rise in the military budget. However, most within the military and police, as well as a number of outside observers, would argue that the security forces remain under-equipped. Among the civilian population, the reason behind demand is still based on these two factors: security and personal gain, but the procurement and use of small arms reveal a more diverse pattern. Civilians procure small arms for security as a result of the inability of the police to maintain law and order in a consistent and reliable fashion. The threats to personal security include crime, communal clashes, and land disputes. Procurers of weapons for security purposes include individuals, communities or community leaders for community arsenals, and vigilante groups and ethnic militias. Armed groups have also claimed that they need to obtain arms as protection against the excessive use of force by the military. Civilians also obtain small arms for personal gain. Personal gain might be sought individually through armed robbery, or collectively, e.g. by a cult group or criminal gang, through armed robbery, oil bunkering, or clashes with other groups. Personal gain has also been sought by politicians who have armed youth gangs and wielded them as a personal election campaigning tool. In a 2006 national survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation, when asked whether there are too many or too few weapons circulating in the

community, most respondents replied that they did not know (CLEEN, 2007). Of those who did answer the question, nine per cent stated that there were too few, while only one per cent said that there were too many. A similar pattern of responses emerged from the Small Arms Survey's household questionnaire in Kano.

2.4.1 Perceptions of number of guns in Rivers

Too few Too many Enough Do not know Number of respondents
 Kano: n = 638; Rivers: n = 459 Sources: Small Arms Survey (2007o; 2007p) 50 Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria individual security. Yet, when respondents were asked whether they believed that guns were a source of protection or a source of danger, the majority of those responding claimed that guns were more a danger than a source of protection, although this varied geographically. This question requires further research. It remains possible that even those who believe that guns are a source of danger would seek to obtain a gun if they felt threatened by the growing number of guns in the community or by perceptions of rising insecurity. As such, individuals may see small arms as necessary for individual protection, even if such small arms ultimately decrease overall community security.

2.4.2 Perceptions of number of guns in Nigeria

Number of respondents Too few Too many Enough Do not know
 CLEEN Foundation (2007) with the majority of respondents not knowing how many weapons were in circulation, but of those who did respond, seven per cent stated that there were too few small arms in the community, while one per cent said that there were too many (Small Arms Survey, 2007p). The pattern was reversed in Rivers, with far more respondents answering the question, and of those answering, 7 per cent stated there were too few guns in circulation, 15 per cent stated that there were too many, while 32 per cent stated there were enough (Small Arms Survey, 2007p). These

are not large percentages, and given the large number of respondents who claimed that they did not know how many guns were in circulation, the results are not representative of the states or the country as a whole. However, these responses do portray a pattern that suggests the population maintains mixed views about the need for small arms possession. One explanation of the results suggests that perhaps people believe that guns afford protection to the owner, and therefore those claiming there were too few guns in the community would think that obtaining a gun for protection would enhance Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria.

2.4.3 Armed violence in Nigeria

Although violence in Nigeria has often been depicted as a fight over religion, or, more recently, a fight over oil, the reality on the ground is more complex. There are a number of dividing lines within society that provide the tinder for conflict. One suggested typology of armed violence in Nigeria includes inter- and intra-communal violence, ethnic militia and vigilante violence, political and electoral violence, armed criminality and gangsterism, state armed violence, state-sponsored violence, ethno-religious violence, and arms racing (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005, pp. 7–10). Such categorization is often difficult in practice, as many conflicts overlap in their cause and nature. The dynamics of conflict also evolve over time, leading to the prevalence of certain types of conflict at different times. The thread underlying all types of conflict in Nigeria is access to and control over scarce resources, whether economic or political. While armed violence is not a rare occurrence in Nigeria, it is important to note that the country should not, and cannot, be viewed as homogenous in terms of criminality or security. The frequency and nature of crime vary across the country. The type of perpetrator involved depends on the context, as do the tools used in committing armed violence. These have evolved over time as well. The following presents some of the current trends in armed violence in Nigeria.

2.4.4 Trends in press reporting

The Small Arms Survey is conducting a study of press reports of armed violence in Nigeria. The preliminary data from this study illustrates a number of patterns. First and foremost, the overall level of violence in the country appeared to be increasing in the lead-up to the April 2007 elections. The Small Arms Survey identified 234 incidents of armed violence during the reporting period. These incidents occurred in 27 of the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), indicating that armed violence is common to a number of states. Incidents of armed violence appeared more concentrated in Lagos state (45) and in the Delta states of Rivers (44), Delta (19), and Bayelsa (15), followed closely by the FCT and Oyo state (12 each). The incidents in Lagos and the FCT were primarily criminal in nature, while those in the Delta states were a mixture of criminal and oil-related violence. In international reporting, violent crime was the most common incident (48 per cent), followed by political and election-related violence (23 per cent), and oil-related violence (20 per cent). There were no reports of large-scale ethnic or religious violence in the international press during the reporting period. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria and politically related incidents. The variation in levels of certain types of crimes suggests the possibility of the substitution of criminal activities, depending on the current situation in Nigeria and the opportunities available at the time. Interviews with actors on the ground, especially in the Niger Delta, put forward this notion of ‘substitution’, wherein groups alter their targeted activities depending on the opportunities available. For example, a government official in Rivers state explained that at the time when the military was acting to reduce oil bunkering in late 2005–early 2006, the state witnessed a rise in kidnapping and robberies, suggesting that armed groups had switched activities as a way of compensating for the loss of income

from no longer being able to steal oil. Another example comes from the electoral cycle.

There was a higher number of politically related incidents of armed violence in December 2006, the month of party primaries, than in January 2007, a month with little electoral significance. As politically related incidents declined in January, there appears to have been a rise in oil-related incidents, once again suggesting substitution. A third example comes from the national monitors of the electoral process, who predicted that kidnappings would decrease in the lead-up to elections as armed groups focused their attention on election-related violence (NAPE, 2007b, p. 5). Armed groups did in fact free all of their remaining hostages on 4 April, to the surprise of many (BBC, 2007e), suggesting that perhaps these groups were shifting their attention to the elections. This assumption of substitution was, however, challenged when two hostages were taken a few days later. Although anecdotal reports suggest that there is a relationship between the types of armed violence and the opportunities available, and that substitution occurs, the current data is too limited to reveal a direct relationship between a decline in one type of crime and a rise in another.

A second explanation is the source of the information, i.e. the international press, and the possibility that it is the choice of events to cover, as opposed to the number of incidents actually taking place on the ground, that influences reporting, and therefore the pattern of incidents reported. In the case of international reporting, election-related and oil-related violence appear to be priorities. Depicts a different level and pattern of reporting by national newspapers, with data suggesting that the overall level of violence was increasing, not remaining steady, and that there was a different pattern of violence.

CHAPTER THREE

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND ARMS PROLIFERATION IN THE NIGER DELTA

3.1 POVERTY AND ARMS CONFLICT IN THE NIGER DELTA

The Niger Delta is one of the world's richest areas in terms of natural resources. Apart from its substantial oil and gas deposits, there are extensive rainforests, abundant wildlife and fertile agricultural land where rice, sugarcane, plantain, beans, palm oil, yams, cassava and timber are cultivated. The delta is also famous for having the largest expanse of mangrove in Africa, and rich fish resources. It has more fresh water fish species than other coastal systems in West Africa (NDWC, 1995).

The Anglo-Royal Dutch Shell first discovered high-quality oil in Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri, Bayelsa state. Additional discoveries quickly followed across the region. The promise of lucrative exports raised hopes that this newly found source of wealth would lead to improvements in the living and economic conditions of the region and the country. Such hopes did not turn into realities (Olojede, 2004). Instead, the population remains impoverished, despite large revenues accrued from oil, and the environment has been severely damaged by the reckless practice of the oil companies. Discontent over limited economic opportunities and poor environmental practices which has led to organized but non-violent protest against poor practices (Hazen & Horner, nd).

The Niger Delta has been described by many as the "*Paradox of the Plenty*" the region that bears these riches is also home to some of Africa's poorest people, and is the theatre of the continent's worst environmental destruction (*Times Magazine*, May 22, 2006:20). It is a well known fact that all stages of oil activity, from exploration and drilling to transportation, result in the destruction of the natural

environment and the livelihood of the local inhabitants who depend on the land and creeks of the Delta for their survival. These, when combined with incessant oil spills and blowouts resulting from over-aged and ill managed wellheads, pipelines and other facilities make Nigeria to record the highest number of oil spillage incidents in the world (International Crisis Group, 2006b:21; Osuoka, 2003:116).

The cause of much of the damage that has occurred in the Niger Delta is the result of oil spillage. For instance, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) is losing 187,000 barrels per day due to a major oil spill at its Nembe Creek Trunk Line. Oils spills have produced waste pollution, soil degradation and climate changes, all of which have troubled the living environment of Niger Delta locals (Adams et al, 2008:112,113). Resistance Movement have existed in the region since the 1960s, but oil is not the only contributor to violence and the rise of armed groups. There have long been and continue to be clashes between communities over land and security concerns, as well as a number of criminal gangs and cult groups who contribute to the atmosphere of insecurity and violence. Yet oil has become both a cause to rally around and a source of necessary funding for perpetuating the fight (Hazen & Horner, nd).

The lack of will of past leaders to implement the mild recommendation in the Willink Commission report was met with Late Major Isaac Adaka Boro's '12-day revolution' in 1966 but he was suppressed. The Ijaw Youths of the Kaiama declaration fame in 1992 were also repressed. Asari Dokubo of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force was arm-twisted, and his guns taken from him (Emmanuel, nd). Boro's armed uprising continues to inspire some armed activists in the region, to pursue a surrectionary agenda (Naagbantou, 2005). Various militant groups have emerged from the region at different times and circumstances to try to compel the Nigerian State to solve the Niger Delta imbroglio.

The scenario in the Niger Delta where openly armed youth patrol group territories demonstrates the extent to which small arms have become a symbol of

power, dominance and worth. Youth have grown up to believe that violence, especially through the use of small arms, is the only way of “gaining power, obtaining goods and services, and establishing respect, thus perpetuating the culture of violence.” (Amoa, 2006).

The government of Nigeria, apart from serving as a cover to perpetrate gross human rights abuses, it has also been a source of small arms. It is common knowledge that in the wake of the escalation of violence in the Niger Delta, oil companies have not only armed private security personnel to render security services, they have also “reached an agreement with the government to import weapons for Nigerian troops” (Musah, 1999:13). This is the context for the recent pronouncement by former Nigeria Vice President Atiku Abubakar, during the commissioning of his presidential campaign headquarters in Abuja that:

A few weeks ago, this government approved over \$2 billion to buy weapons to suppress the people of the Niger Delta, not to develop the area. I will channel that money to the development of the area because if the area is developed, the people will not carry guns
(*Thisday, Feb 1, 2007:1*).

Although the President responded to the Vice President’s exposé of the administration’s covert arms purchase by referring to the allegations as “reckless and barefaced lies” (The Guardian, *Feb. 1, 2007:1*) and a plan design to scuttle the transition programme, (*ThisDay*, Feb. 12, 2007:16) the fact that the statement came from such a high level makes it impossible to ignore. Rather than take the Vice President’s statement to mean that there can be a different approach to the Niger Delta imbroglio, President Obasanjo ‘carelessly’ added salt to the wound by revealing at the

Port Harcourt venue of the PDP's South-South Presidential Campaign kick-off for Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua that:

We discovered that quite a number of youths, running into thousands ... are establishing camps.... They are also buying arms with a view to overawe the community, overawe the local government, overawe state government and overawe government of Federal Republic of Nigeria. No self-respecting government will allow criminality to overawe it...(The *Guardian*, Feb.4, 2007:1).

The above pronouncements, if anything, make the Niger Delta imbroglio a top election issue in 2007.

The December 1998 All Ijaw Youths Conference crystallized the Ijaws' struggle for petroleum resource control with the formation of the **Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)** and the issuing of the "**Kaiama Declaration**". In it, long-held Ijaw concerns about the loss of control of their homeland and their own lives to the oil companies were joined with a commitment to direct action. In the declaration, and in a letter to the companies, the Ijaws called for oil companies to suspend operations and withdraw from Ijaw territory. The IYC pledged "to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination and ecological justice," and prepared a campaign of celebration, prayer, and direct action, *Operation Climate Change*, beginning December 28 (www.wikipedia/conflict_in_the_niger_delta.html).

In December 1998, two warships and 10-15,000 Nigerian troops occupied Bayelsa and Delta state as the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) mobilized for Operation Climate Change. Soldiers entering the Bayelsa state capital of Yenagoa announced

they had come to attack the youths trying to stop the oil companies. On the morning of December 30, two thousand young people processed through Yenagoa, dressed in black, singing and dancing. Soldiers opened fire with rifles, machine guns, and tear gas, killing at least three protesters and arresting twenty-five more. After a march demanding the release of those detained was turned back by soldiers, three more protesters were shot dead including Nwashuku Okeri and Ghadafi Ezeifile. The military declared a state of emergency throughout Bayelsa state, imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew, and banned meetings. At military roadblocks, local residents were severely beaten or detained. At night, soldiers invaded private homes, terrorizing residents with beatings and women and girls with **rape** (www.wikipedia/conflict_in_the_niger_delta.html).

On January 4, 1999 about one hundred soldiers from the military base at Chevron's Escravos facility attacked Opia and Ikiyan, two Ijaw communities in Delta State. Bright Pablogba, the traditional leader of Ikiyan, who came to the river to negotiate with the soldiers, was shot along with a seven-year-old girl and possibly dozens of others. Of the approximately 1,000 people living in the two villages, four people were found dead and sixty-two were still missing months after the attack. The same soldiers set the villages ablaze, destroyed canoes and fishing equipment, killed livestock, and destroyed churches and religious shrines.

Nonetheless, *Operation Climate Change* continued, and disrupted Nigerian oil supplies through much of 1999 by turning off valves through Ijaw territory. In the context of high conflict between the Ijaw and the Nigerian Federal Government (and its police and army), the military carried out the **Odi massacre**, killing scores if not hundreds of Ijaws. Subsequent actions by Ijaws against the oil industry included both renewed efforts at **nonviolent** action and attacks on oil installations and foreign oil workers (<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/finance/?blurb=669>).

There are multitudes of militia youth as well as regular government and private security personnel who take part in organised crime in the Niger Delta using small arms. The dynamics of the interface between the struggle for power and the struggle for wealth tend to condition the nature, dimensions and magnitude of the proliferation of the illicit weapons (Ebo 2005:2). While the option of violent confrontation may represent one of the ways in which people have chosen to express their disgust for the unhealthy development, hardship and misery which oil production has spawned, the Nigerian government's resort to the use of violence, under the bogey of "national security" for the absolute protection of multinational oil companies to whom it is held captive as a rentier state has worsened the conditions for internal violence, leading to the free flow of small arms and, by extension, exacerbating the existing poverty and underdevelopment in the region.

First is the vulnerability of ordinary civilians who are caught between a predatory state and ruthless militants. Militants have freely used small arms in killing and maiming in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. The post-military Nigerian state has also demonstrated an increasingly militaristic response that raises questions about the civil credentials of former President Obasanjo's administration. Massacres by soldiers in Odi, Choba and Gbeji are examples. As things are now, the situation in the Niger Delta has become a Hobbesian state wherein life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Beyond the perverse culture of gun-running, killing, maiming, burning and looting that has become a permanent feature of life in the area, one finds militias who have perfected the art of engaging state security in a duel using illicit small arms. Ostensibly determined to own their security where the Nigerian state has failed them, some members of the civilian population in the Delta region have also organized themselves into militias and civil defense bodies. This situation, as already argued, has further increased the quantity of small arms in the region.

One new line of difference among the youth who are involved in the use of small arms is between those involved in protection services for oil companies and those involved in illegal oil bunkering, a phenomenon the Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO) refers to as their own “resource control.” (CLO 2005:374). The violence spawned by this situation has become particularly severe in Rivers State whose capital city of Port Harcourt has regularly witnessed open confrontation between the rival militias of Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokobo’s Delta Peoples Volunteer Force and Tom Ateke’s Niger Delta Vigilantes since 2004 (*The Guardian* , Sept 9, 2006:11-14). The lull in the violent activities of these two groups has since been ended by the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in January 2006. While very little is known about MEND, its activities to date leave no doubt regarding its capacity to destabilize Nigeria’s oil industry (<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk>).

Another notable effect of the proliferation of small arms in the Delta region is its close linkage to high levels of crime and violence. From banditry, armed robbery, hostage-taking and pipeline vandalism to illegal oil bunkering, the Delta region has had more than its fair share of turbulent times. Several unarmed persons have been reported killed and abduction or hostage-taking of foreign oil workers and attacks on oil platforms have become a recurring phenomenon in the region. Since the first incident in which 16 employees of Shell were taken hostage, and a helicopter and two British engineers working for Shell-contracted Bristol Helicopters were confiscated at gunpoint by militias who demanded US\$100,000 in June 1999 (Musah 1999:12), hostage-taking has grown into big business in the Delta region. And the MEND phase that started in January 2006 represents a new escalation. Besides attracting the attention of the Nigerian state and horrifying the international community, this strategy takes on the character of simple criminal activity which hijacks the Niger Delta struggle (*The Guardian*, Sept 9, 2006: 11-14).

Added to the image of insecurity that the above conjures up, hostage-taking has an enormous cumulative cost in human, financial and economic terms. For instance, since 2004 there have been frequent sharp reductions in the country's crude oil shipments because of youth militancy involving the use of small arms. In the wake of the attack and killing of seven oil workers (including two American nationals) in Bibi and Olero creek fields of Delta state in 2004, ChevronTexaco suspended production of 140,000 barrel per day (bpd) in the flowstations in these communities, and many other thousands of barrels in four other flowstations – Abiteye, Makaraba, Opuekeba and Otunana – around the area (Garuba 2005). In the same vein, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SDPC) had to close down production in several areas of the Delta region, leading to its inability to meet its normal production quota of half of Nigeria's daily oil output. The series of encounters between Alhaji Asari-Dokubo and his arch-rival, Tom Ateke, which started in 2004, also resulted in the drastic reduction of Nigeria's oil production. Indeed, but for the discovery of oil deposits off-shore, the country's production has really dwindled as a result of sabotage and crime in the Delta region. From Shell's loss of 370,000 bpd and ChevronTexaco's suspension of 140,000 bpd in 2003, and another loss of 25,000 bpd due to an explosion of the entire flow-line leading to the flowstation from Escravos, all in Delta State in 2005, as well as the shutting down of oil platforms in several other areas of the Delta region due to a wave of attacks by militants (which have reached their peak since the second quarter of 2006), it is not hard to predict the financial and economic loss of the free and unregulated use of small arms in the Delta region. The most recent calculation of this cost is contained in a statement credited to Nigeria's Minister of Finance, Mrs. Nenadi Usman, who blamed the 600,000 barrel cut in oil exports (representing 25% of Nigeria's total daily production, and amounting to \$4.4 billion) on "the activities of militant groups demanding more control of Nigeria's oil revenue

(<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa.>)

The following table has a detail of the cost of militant activities on oil production in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Quantity of Oil Loss to Oil Bunkering/ Amount in US Dollars
For 2006**

| Months | Estimated Qty of Barrels of Oil Lost Per Day | Total Barrels of Oil Loss for the Month | Total Amount Loss for the Month In US Dollars |
|--------------------|---|--|--|
| January | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 138,966,800 |
| February | 700,000 | 2,030,000 | 126,103,600 |
| March | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 138,446,000 |
| April | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 150,780,000 |
| May | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 155,697,500 |
| June | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 147,462,000 |
| July | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 163,813,300 |
| August | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 163,379,300 |
| September | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 134,127,000 |
| October | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 127,096,900 |
| November | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 126,672,000 |
| December | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 139,487,600 |
| Grand Total | | | 1,978,191,600 |

Source: November 2008 Report of Technical Committee on the Niger Delta

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Analysis_Nigeria_peace_initiative_fails_999.html

Table 2: Quantity of Oil Loss in Barrels Per Day/Amount in US Dollars For 2007

| Months | Estimated Qty of Barrels of Oil Loss Per Day | Total Barrels of Oil Loss for the Month | Total Amount Loss for the Month In US Dollars |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| January | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,219,106,000 |
| February | 700,000 | 2,030,000 | 1,167,768,000 |
| March | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,401,63,000 |
| April | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 1,470,210,000 |
| May | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,519,651,000 |
| June | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 1,563,450,000 |
| July | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,718,857,000 |
| August | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,591,478,000 |
| September | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 1,677,270,000 |
| October | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,721,244,000 |
| November | 700,000 | 2,100,000 | 1,865,640,000 |
| December | 700,000 | 2,170,000 | 1,888,985,000 |
| Grand Total | | | |
| 18,805,262,000 | | | |

Source: *November 2008 Report of Technical Committee on the Niger Delta*

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Analysis_Nigeria_peace_initiative_fails_999.html

Table 3: Quantity of Oil Loss in Barrels Per Day/Amount in US Dollars For 2008

| Months | Estimated Qty of Barrels of Oil Loss Per Day | Total Barrels of Oil Loss for the Month | Total Amount Loss for the Month In US Dollars |
|--------------------|---|--|--|
| January | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 1,219,106,000 |
| February | 700,000 | 20,300,000 | 1,839,992,000 |
| March | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,148,951,000 |
| April | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,208,360,000 |
| May | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,590,763,000 |
| June | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,694,000 |
| July | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,847,474,000 |
| August | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 1,633,793,000 |
| September | 700,000 | 21,700,000 | 2,439,297,000 |
| Grand Total | | | |
| 720,842,000 | | | |

Source: November 2008 Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta

http://www.terradaaily.com/reports/Analysis_Nigeria_peace_initiative_fails_999.html

Table 4: NNPC'S Monthly Production Profile VS Shut-In for Year 2008

| Date In Month | Monthly Production Capacity (bbls) | Overall Daily Production Capacity (bbls) | Monthly Production Capacity (bbls) | Shut-In (bbls) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| January | 67,122,292 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 32,123,216 |
| February | 60,380,977 | 3,201,468 | 92,842,572 | 32,461,595 |
| March | 64,000,319 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 35,245,189 |
| April | 58,930,055 | 3,201,468 | 96,044,040 | 37,133,985 |
| May | 63,636,321 | 3,201,468 | 96,044,040 | 32,407,719 |
| June | 60,542,039 | 3,201,468 | 96,044,040 | 35,502,001 |
| July | 65,961,347 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 33,284,161 |
| August | 65,241,907 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 34,003,601 |
| September | 65,157,212 | 3,201,468 | 96,044,040 | 30,886,828 |
| October | 70,192,271 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 29,053,237 |
| November | 64,257,050 | 3,201,468 | 96,004,040 | 31,786,990 |
| December | 63,319,397 | 3,201,468 | 99,245,508 | 35,926,111 |
| Total | 768,741,187 | 34,417,616 | 1,168,535,820 | 399,794,633 |

Source: November 2008 Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Analysis_Nigeria_peace_initiative_fails_999.html

This loss continues to translate into a needless budget deficit with a snowballing effect on not only the people of Niger Delta, but also on the Nigerian population as a whole.

There is also the question of the human development cost of small arms, especially as they do damage to infrastructure, displace people and cause decline in economic activity. The negative impacts of oil production and the highhandedness of

an increasingly militaristic and masochistic federal government, along with the increasingly daring posture of the militant youth, all using small arms to settle their conflicts arising from the inequitable sharing of oil revenue, will only further exacerbate the core problems of poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta.

The scourge of small arms in the Delta region has exacerbated the already twitchy oil markets precipitated by a series of crises in the Middle East. This has helped to push global oil prices to unprecedented heights. The same thing can be said of the West African Gas Pipeline Project (WAPCO) which is expected to facilitate the supply of natural gas to four countries in West Africa – i.e. Benin, Ghana, Togo, and subsequently Cote d'Ivoire. This project of regional economic integration, which was slated for completion in 2006, has been stalled and derailed as a result of the proliferation of small arms in the Delta region. (The Guardian, *Feb 13, 2007: 3*).

Due to this devastating development the U.S is beginning to see the Niger Delta imbroglio as a threat to energy supply, for this reason it has offered to police the entire new Gulf of Guinea in order to ensure that America's interest (which is oil) is safeguarded. And if allowed, this will amount to security and military imbecility on the part of Nigeria as a regional power broker in Africa.

3.2 ARMED GROUPS IN THE NIGER DELTA

3.2.1 The Bush Boys

Overview

The group known as the Bush Boys exists to protect Okrika community in Rivers state from incursions by its Eleme neighbours, and fights to gain territory disputed by these two communities. This inter-communal conflict is stoked by the presence of oil refineries in the area. Lucrative rights to the territory around these communities provide considerable fuel for armed violence and have led to widespread

small arms proliferation as the two communities continue to clash over ownership of this land.

Background

The Bush Boys are a vigilante community defence group composed exclusively of Ijaws. The Bush Boys' ideology is based in Ijaw ethnic nationalism and irredentism. The group's narrow and focused mandate is to protect Okrika and its population. Its activities remain focused on the ongoing war between its native Okrika and neighbouring Eleme communities. The group's members do not tend to engage in alternative criminal or anti-government activities. The Bush Boys emerged in 1999 as the communities of Okrika and Eleme mobilized and armed their youths to prosecute a war between the communities. Dispute over the land on which the Port Harcourt Refinery Company was situated prompted the chiefs of Okrika to task each family with nominating two able-bodied men for the defence of the community (Kaliu, 2006). The resulting force was then known as the Bush Boys. The conflict's escalation meant increased demand for small arms and light weapons. The Bush Boys have also faced conflicts with neighbouring groups. Upon return from initial prosecution of the Eleme conflict, the group accused those members who had been charged with maintaining security and order on the Okrika home front of numerous crimes against the community. Among those Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria persed.

The redistribution of benefits remains a rallying call for the armed groups active in the Niger Delta. Addressing the problem of armed violence in this region will require tackling the thorny issue of resource distribution. Armed violence remains a common problem in Nigeria. In much of the country, such violence takes the form mainly of armed robbery. But this is not the only security concern. There is heightened insecurity in the Niger Delta specifically due to the operation of numerous armed groups, and clashes continue between various community groups over resources. These tensions and violence are not election-related. As such, they will

persist until the underlying problems of access to and distribution of resources are more equitably dealt with. Nigeria also faces a problem of combating small arms proliferation and use. This problem results from a combination of large numbers of arms in circulation and a number of incentives for individuals and groups to resort to violence. This situation is compounded by the inadequacy of the security forces and the inability of the government to track the licensing, possession, and use of small arms. Widespread feelings of insecurity result from the failure of the police to maintain law and order. This feeds the desire for self-defence measures, such as the procurement of small arms and the creation of vigilante groups. This in turn contributes to the cycle of violence and ongoing threats to safety. A key element of addressing insecurity and armed violence is comprehensive security sector reform. The government has yet to engage in a comprehensive reform programme, and will need to bring on board key leaders in the military and police in order to implement any strategic reform programme. accused was Ateke Tom, the leader of the Icelander cult group. This confrontation drove Tom to seek exile in Port Harcourt in late 2000. The situation then degenerated into intra-communal warfare. The IYC, then led by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari of the NDPVF, attempted to intervene in the crisis between Tom and the Bush Boys. At this time, Tom and Asari were still enjoying amicable relations. The dispute led to further polarization between supporters of rival claimants to the Okrika throne. Many viewed Tom's Icelander as attacking the Bush Boys and its members' families. This prompted Asari to side with the Bush Boys against Tom (DonPedro, 2006, p. 91). This would contribute to later tensions and divisions between Asari and Tom. The acknowledged leader of the Bush Boys is Sunny Opuembe. Within the Bush Boys, he is known as the general commanding officer. Prior to his ascendancy to the leadership role, Opuembe was a popular youth leader in Okrika. Continuing discord over ownership of oil-bearing land around Okrika and Eleme means that the group remains active. While group numbers have

remained relatively steady, despite a selective system of recruitment, recent attacks by Icelander have weakened the group.

Support

The Ijaw community of Okrika provides a solid base for the Bush Boys. The group is well supported by the 200,000-plus population of Okrika because of its community-protection orientation (Alagoa and Derefaka, 2002). The group is politically independent. However, there are allegations that it has provided support to former Rivers state governor Ada George, and to Chief Sergeant Awuse, the Rivers state 2007 gubernatorial candidate. Local recruitment remains the key to membership and local support. At the time of the group's formation, two men from each family were recruited to become members of the Bush Boys. Since this time, recruitment has been aimed at men considered to be courageous. During times of conflict, recruitment is less discriminating and the group draws from the Okrika male population more widely. As of 2004 the group claimed to have some 3,000 combatants; however, internal crises and violent conflict with Icelander have reduced numbers, with some Bush Boys members deciding to leave to join other armed groups. Financial support also comes from local leaders. Initial funding and subsequent large donations of revenue have come from powerful and wealthy members of the Okrika community. Okrika politicians and chiefs, including former governor Ada George, have also provided funding (Joab-Peterside, 2006).

Activities

Initially based in Okrika town, the Bush Boys were driven out by Icelander in 2001. Since late 2001 the group has been camped in Amadi-Ama, outside the town; however its members regularly move in and out of Okrika proper. Temporary population displacement occurs whenever clashes occur within Okrika; however, residents are generally able to return soon after tensions have dissipated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more permanent displacement does occur as a result of armed

clashes; however, this goes unrecorded officially and is difficult to confirm. The Bush Boys regularly collaborate with the NDPVF. This partnership originated in 2000 during Asari's tenure as president of the IYC (DonPedro, 2006, p. 91). Asari was eager to consolidate his affiliation with the Bush Boys after his move to the NDPVF in 2004 as a way of solidifying a partnership with this Okrika-based group that could share the NDPVF's more revolutionary stance. Collaboration between the two was seen most clearly in 2004 when the NDPVF launched an offensive to 'liberate' Okrika from Icelander. During this conflict, the Bush Boys provided technical and logistical support to the NDPVF fighters, who eventually succeeded in their campaign. Asari's partnership with the Bush Boys also resulted in the NDPVF providing weapons to the Bush Boys. The Bush Boys also collaborate with Greenlander, a breakaway group of Icelander. Because the Bush Boys do not maintain a mandate to pursue grievances against government and petroleum companies, dialogue with local and national government to resolve the inter-communal crisis is possible. A key element of resolving the crisis is better defined and accepted divisions of land and resources between Okrika and Eleme. However, there is the potential for the Bush Boys to be drawn into the broader fighting in the Delta and to be used by politicians for political gain. Important factors in this include the Bush Boys' relationship with ethnic militias such as the NDPVF and MEND, their relationship with some local politicians, and their organizational and numerical strength.

3.2.2 Deebam

Overview

Deebam is the street wing of the Eternal Fraternal Order of the Legion Konsortium, known more commonly as the Klansmen Konfraternity (KK) (Ndubuaku, 2001). The group is a violent and secretive cult comprising mainly unemployed youth. It has no political agenda. Instead, it simply strives to expand and consolidate its territorial control. Deebam, which translates to 'be strong' in KK

vernacular (CEHRD, 2006, p. 6), views Deewell, another cult, as its primary and direct rival. While many of its activities are directed against Deewell, the group will strike at any person or group that is perceived to have offended it or encroached on its territory.

Background

Deebam has several affiliated cult cells scattered across much of southern Nigeria. The cult is most deeply rooted in the Niger Delta region. Deebam does not directly oppose the state; however, the cult group has engaged in clashes with state security forces as a result of its violent running rivalry with Deewell. Most of Deebam's involvement in violence revolves around clashes with Deewell and clashes with state security forces attempting to crack down on the group's activities. Deebam lives by a creed of *debt na debt*, meaning that if a person offends one member of the group, that person offends the entire group, and as a result that person and his/her group must be punished. Deebam also claims to be fighting injustice and oppression, particularly when this involves any other member of the group.

The group is currently active and has been responsible for regular outbreaks of violence in Port Harcourt, both during and after the 2007 election period. Its tendency to strike at the slightest provocation adds to the group's reputation as an actively violent gang. Despite retaliatory attacks from the police and military, as well as clashes with Deewell, Deebam continues to witness a growth in membership (CEHRD, 2006). As the street wing of the KK, Deebam was founded to widen the group's struggle for territorial control. The KK draws its membership from university students, while Deebam draws its membership from non-student community youth. The KK was founded in 1983 at the University of Calabar in Cross River state. Deebam was subsequently created in Rivers state in 1991 by Onengiye Ofori Terika (also known as Occasion Boy). Terika had established Deebam in his Buguma village community in Degema local government area (LGA) as part of the struggle for space

and compensation owed to the community by Shell and other oil companies in the area. After enrolment in a graduate programme at the University of Port Harcourt, Terika spent a decade building and strengthening Deebam until his murder by Ateke Tom's Icelander/NDVS in October 2003.¹⁰⁷ Terika's death, however, did little to curtail the growth of the organization. Former head of the Tombia Youth Council Prince Glad Igodo became the leader of Deebam in late 2004. In February 2007 posters of Igodo flooded major areas of Rivers state controlled by Deebam, such as Gambia, Diobu, and Port Harcourt, announcing his gubernatorial intentions. Although a member of the PDP ruling party, he lacked strong party support in his bid for state governor in the 2007 elections. Igodo had been in hiding to avoid capture by security forces as a result of a warrant for his arrest, along with 13 other Deebam members, for drug trafficking, gun running, and several incidents of kidnapping of expatriate oil workers.¹⁰⁹ Igodo was killed in June 2007. Deebam leadership has a history of violent ends: Igodo's predecessor, Ichechi Owaka (also known as Angel), who had been instrumental in forging an alliance with the NDPVF, was killed during a raid on a joint Deebam–NDPVF training camp in Ogbakiri.

Support

Deebam draws its membership from the large pool of unemployed youths, school dropouts, and criminal elements of rural communities and urban slums. The group claims that all those who join do so entirely of their own accord. One element of recruitment is peer pressure. While there are no specific cases of children being involved in Deebam operations, anecdotal evidence points to boys as young as 14 being recruited into Deebam as combatants. The group derives funding from a wide range of sources. Deebam has hired out the services of its members as mercenaries. Given its lack of a political ideology, the group has proven indiscriminate in its missions, fighting for anyone with sufficient funding. The group levies membership dues of differing levels, depending on geographic area. These dues provide a significant portion of the group's funds. Many members are involved in organized

crime, including drug trafficking, the weapons trade, hostage taking, and armed robbery (Okpongata, 2007). In the past, the NDPVF has provided significant support to Deebam, including both cash and arms.¹¹¹ Politicians have also allegedly provided funding to the group in order to secure political victories and to provide support against the rival Deewell cult (CEHRD, 2006). Such benefactors have reportedly included Sir Celestine Omehia, aide to former governor Peter Odili (Eugene, 2007); the Rivers state commissioner of finance, Kenneth Kobani; and Chief Fred Barivale Kpakol, chairman of Gokana LGA.

ACTIVITIES

Deebam operates mainly in Rivers state, though it has significant presence elsewhere in the Delta. The group has active cells through much of the southwestern parts of Port Harcourt, including Gambia, Mile 1, Mile 2, and Emenike. Ogbakiri has been the group's headquarters since 2002, when Ichechi Owaka (Angel) brought the group to this community.¹¹² Many Ogoni villages and towns are destinations for Deebam followers since a concerted effort to expand the group's presence in Ogoni areas (CEHRD, 2006).

The group's former leader, Prince Glad Igodo, had claimed that Deebam had a membership larger than any of the other prominent cult group active in the Delta, including Deewell, Greenlander, the Outlaws, and Icelander. Deebam operates in disparate units, each one of varying size and strength. It claims to have some 3,000 members in Tombia, Degema LGA; 2,500 in Bukuma, Degema LGA; and 6,000 in Port Harcourt.¹¹⁶ Currently, there are no verified figures for the group's actual strength. Deebam's simple mandate is to undertake reprisal attacks on rival groups and to gain territory or protect its existing areas of operation. The group does not deploy any specific tactics in its attacks, except to use large numbers when launching an attack. Training of Deebam combatants takes place in isolated areas, such as sacred forests or abandoned villages. Deebam combatants are known for their determination and bravery during conflict. However, in the event that their leader is killed in battle,

they are known to fall into disarray and to retreat immediately, taking some time to reorganize for conflict. In 2004, former leader Owaka forged a solid relationship with the NDPVF.

This relationship provided a source of cash and arms for Deebam. Under Igodo's leadership, this relationship was being reviewed, as the NDPVF had not approved of the aimless nature of the cult group's activities. Deebam also collaborates with the Gberesaakoo Boys, the Black Brazier (a women's cult group), and the Mafia. Deebam's size means that partnership with other armed groups is not necessary for it to achieve its objectives. Former Deebam leader Igodo had warned that should security operatives provoke the group, it would make the Niger Delta region ungovernable. This belligerent stance provides little hope for negotiations in the foreseeable future. The group is entirely opposed to negotiations with its sworn enemies, Iceland and Deewell. There seems to be little prospect for the disbanding or pacification of Deebam, which continues to wage street battles against its primary enemy, Deewell.

Small arms and light weapons

Deebam uses funding from a wide range of sources, including funds derived from ransom payments for abducted foreign oil workers, illegal oil bunkering, drug trafficking, bank robberies, and other organized crime, in order to purchase small arms and light weapons from arms dealers (AAPW and Our Niger Delta, 2006).

3.2.3 Deewell

Overview

Deewell is a cult group that engages in armed violence and organized crime. The SVC formed Deewell in the late 1990s in response to the formation of Deebam by the rival KK. Deewell fights to protect the interests of its members, achieving this aim through the perpetration of violence and gangsterism.

Background

In 1999 the SVC decided to shift the violent battle for territorial control from university campuses to the streets, slums, and creeks of the Delta. The SVC believes that because it was founded in Rivers state, no other group should be able to operate there. After an unsuccessful attempt to create the Junior Vikings Confraternity, the SVC created Deewell in the Diobu district of Port Harcourt. Deewell translates into 'be well' in SVC vernacular. The SVC subsequently created Icelander to support Deewell militarily. Deewell claims to be fighting against the intimidation, oppression, and abuse of its members. Many view Deewell as simply a street gang. The group directs its violence against rival cult groups in the ongoing fight for territory and security. Retaliatory attacks by rival cult groups such as Deebam and arrests by the police have more recently limited Deewell's activities. However, new members, mostly younger men, continue to join the group on an almost daily basis, and it remains highly active. Deewell is generally known to be less organized than other cult groups or street gangs. The group has no central leadership. 'Skull executioners' (bosses) head its various cells or units and coordinate the group's activities.

Support

Deewell draws its membership from the large pool of unemployed youth in the Delta. Initiation is characterized by some physical torture and other degrading treatment. Training in obtaining and using weapons is then provided to new recruits. In 2005 Deewell claimed a membership of over 4,000 members scattered across Bayelsa and Rivers states. A considerable number of teenage boys of age 16 and older are involved as Deewell combatants. Political figures reportedly provide the bulk of the group's financial support. Among those alleged to be providing such support are Rotimi Amaechi, speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, and the governor of River State who backs the group in his struggle with his cousin, Sir Celestine Omehia; Gabriel Pidomson Jr, a former member of the Rivers State House of Assembly; and unnamed officials within the Rivers state government (Ebiri, 2006). Deewell members

have often been hired as political thugs by Niger Delta political figures (Naagbantou, 2007b).

Activities

Deewell operates in the slum communities in Rivers and Bayelsa states. The areas in which its members conduct operations or engage in clashes with rivals tend to be different from the areas they consider to be their territory. Most collaboration is undertaken with the group's SVC cousins, Icelander/ NDVS. Icelander was created largely to support Deewell, which had shown weakness militarily. Since February 2007 several units of Deewell have formed alliances with the Outlaws of Soboma George. The Deewell cult under the leadership of Gabriel Pidomson Jr now bases itself with the Outlaws at Marine Base, Port Harcourt after being chased out of Bodo by Deebam. Deewell had formerly worked closely with the now-defunct Elegemface cult group.

Small arms and light weapons

Using funds provided by politicians, Deewell purchases weapons from arms dealers.

3.2.4 Icelander (also known as Germans and NDVS)

Overview

Icelander is a cult group founded as a street wing of the SVC. The SVC created the group to support its other street wings, which were in decline and losing territory and supporters. The group has used several names, including Niger Delta Vigilante Services (NDVS) and Germans (a term used to refer to senior Icelander officers). Neither of these pseudonyms alters the group's cultist roots and belief system. Under the NDVS banner, the group has provided vigilante services for sale, most often to the Rivers state government (Saharah Reporters, 2006).

Background

Despite the group's reference to being a 'vigilante' group, Icelander remains primarily a cult group. Its raison d'être has little to do with any political goals. In most

cases its members are the instigators and perpetrators of violence, particularly in Rivers and Bayelsa states. They are generally available for hire by the highest bidder, particularly during electoral periods. They have a history of fighting for members of the Rivers state government in exchange for weapons and cash. Icelander has a long history in other groups. The SVC, also called the Adventures of De Norsemen club of Nigeria, created Icelander. The SVC is a campus cult founded around 1984 at the University of Port Harcourt (known as 'Alpha Marine'). The SVC broke away from the Buccaneers Association of Nigeria (the Sealords), another notorious campus gang. Since its creation, the SVC has spread through tertiary institutions across Nigeria (CEHRD, 2006).

The Rivers state government co-opted the SVC by creating a select group of leaders, known as the '5 wise men,' who were brought together by members of the SVC working in government house. The '5 wise men' comprised Ateke Tom, Julius Oruitemeka, Theophilous, Cassy, and Cockman. Some of these men had previous ties to other cult groups. The SVC then trained this select group in the philosophy and practice of the cult group. Icelander has been working with the government from mid-2000 onwards. Icelander's *raison d'être* is simply to fight against any form of oppression from other groups, and it has little in the way of ideology. Its members are primarily involved in gangsterism and violence (Joab-Peterside, 2006). However, Icelander does have strong ties to the ruling party, the PDP: a vast majority of the group, some 90 per cent, are registered members of the PDP (AAPW and Our Niger Delta, 2006). Leader Ateke Tom has made clear Icelander's support of the PDP government: 'We are government children. And we are all members of the PDP. We don't fight the government. We support them.' Tom is the acknowledged leader of Icelander, and one of the group's founding members. He is Okrika-born, and had a history of working as a political thug prior to his emergence as group leader. He believes strongly in the potency of charms, talismans, and amulets, and has a

reputation for being generous towards his followers and ruthless towards his enemies (Naagbantou, 2006). The changing of the group's name to Niger Delta Vigilante Services represented an attempt in July 2003 to recreate the group in a new image following repeated involvement in violent killings in the Delta and the negative publicity that followed.

Support

The spiritual homeland of Icelander is Ochochiri on Okrika Island, Rivers state. Icelander cells also exist throughout Rivers and Bayelsa states. Although the leadership are all Ijaw, support for and membership of Icelander are not limited to any one ethnic group. Ikwerre, Ekpeye, and Ogoni are also prominent within the group. Icelander draws its membership from the slum settlements of urban areas in Rivers and Bayelsa states. Many of the young men who join are already part of the slum subculture existing in such settlements, where unemployment and crime are the norm. Such conditions provide an easy environment for recruitment. Tom claims a membership of some 10,000 members in Rivers and Bayelsa states. Other estimates put this number at closer to 6,000 personnel. While the group regularly engages in bloody clashes with security forces, this has not yet affected its strength or cohesion. Icelander has a number of funding sources. Much of the group's funding comes from the Rivers state government, allegedly from Governor Peter Odili and Transport Minister Dr Abiye Sekibo. Another source of significant funding is oil bunkering. The epicentre of oil bunkering is located near the Icelander headquarters in Okrika, which provides easy opportunity to engage in bunkering, although control of these access lanes is highly contested by other groups. In addition to engaging in oil bunkering activities, Icelander collects large security and rental fees for each oil barge loading oil and leaving the Okrika waterways. The group also provides 'security services' to chiefs, politicians, and others for a fee.

Activities

Icelander has bases across Rivers and Bayelsa states. Different cells have different numbers of combatants. Each cell has a senior officer, a 'German', who controls the combatants (or 'suicide squads') of that cell. The activities of the group as a whole are overseen and coordinated by leader Tom. Icelander uses armed violence to create terror in its areas of operation so as to be able to control these areas. In most cases, rival cult groups are viewed as enemies and are therefore subject to particularly harsh levels of violence. Terror tactics used by Icelander include the beheading of enemies and the raping of women (Joab-Peterside, 2006). The group also carries out targeted assassinations of well-known figures within enemy groups. Members of the Outlaws who have become victims of such assassinations include Warrioko Ngeribara (also known as Yellowman) in November 2006 and Chinedu (also known as Chiboy) in March 2007 (CEHRD, 2006).¹⁴⁰ Many of these attacks have the result of victimizing members of local communities. Cult violence in populated areas regularly results in multiple civilians dead or wounded. The group has been involved in major skirmishes in Okrika and Buguma. Upon initiation, the new member is taught the importance of spiritual fortification as a cult group member. In addition, new members are given training in the use of small arms and explosives, such as dynamite and grenades, as well as in physical combat without weapons. Until recently, Deewell has been the primary and most consistent Icelander ally. Both groups are street wings of the SVC. The recent breakdown in relations between the two groups has resulted from Deewell's collaboration with an Icelander enemy, the Outlaws Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria. Icelander's *raison d'être* is simply to fight against any form of oppression from other groups, and it has little in the way of ideology. Its members are primarily involved in gangsterism and violence (Joab-Peterside, 2006). However, Icelander does have strong ties to the ruling party, the PDP: a vast majority of the group, some 90 per cent, are registered members of the PDP (AAPW and Our Niger Delta, 2006). Leader

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declared his intention to stay clear of the April 2007 elections after delivering the 2003 elections for Governor Peter Odili (Sahara Reporters, 2006). In mid-April 2007 Tom led his men on a raid of the police armouries at Elemenwo and Mini-Okoro police stations in Rivers state, with the resulting loss of several police officers' lives and the burning of both stations (Small Arms Survey, 2007m; CEHRD, 2007). Icelander is capable of negotiation with government authorities, and has engaged in negotiations in the past. However, such talks are generally undertaken to empower, fund, and arm the group rather than resolve any outstanding grievances or disband it. Politicians have attempted in the past to use financial means to reduce violence and restrict the activities of cults. For example, in October 2006 the Rivers state government released over NGN 15 million each to the Outlaws and Icelander as an incentive to the two groups to stop fighting during Governor Odili's attempts to gain the PDP presidential nomination.

Small arms and light weapons

Icelander purchases small arms from illegal arms dealers. Funds for such purchases are derived from the Rivers state government, oil bunkering, and rental and security fees. Nigerian military raids on Icelander camps provide some insight into the weapons at the disposal of the group. A June 2006 raid in Okochiri village yielded 12 AK-47s or their derivatives, 7 general purpose machine guns, 8 other machine guns, a locally made craft pistol, and both 7.62 mm and 5.56 mm ammunition (*Moonlight Newspaper*, 2007). Operations and recoveries have also evidenced the use of dynamite during group operations. Contrary to the experience of many other Niger Delta groups, in the run-up to the 2007 elections, Icelander had only limited supplies of small arms and ammunition, partly as a result of several military raids on its camps. As a result, the group raided several police stations in Elemenwo and Mini-Okoro in order to rebuild its stockpiles and planned further attacks to recover the weapons lost to the military raids. During the Elemenwo and Mini-Okoro attacks, Icelander seized 18

AMD 65s; 12 M59/M66s; and several Type 65-1s, Beretta BM59s, FN FALs, and AK-47s.

3.2.5 The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

Overview

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta was formed in early 2006 as a loose assemblage of militant groups claiming to be fighting for justice, resource control, and self-determination for the people of the Niger Delta. MEND operates across the Delta. Since its inception, it has been the most visible of the Delta's armed groups, demonstrating a capacity for coordinated attacks on oil and gas infrastructure, as well as the abduction of both foreign and Nigerian employees. Tensions within the group have reportedly led to a split, with two factions now operating. These tensions rose with Asari's release from prison in June 2007 and the struggle for leadership in the Delta. Although both Asari and MEND are trying to assert their leadership and control in the region, neither has proven capable of fully controlling the violence there.

BACKGROUND

MEND rose from an element of Asari's NDPVF. Unhappiness within the NDPVF at Asari's distribution of monies from the 2004 disarmament campaign in Rivers state (and his subsequent arrest) caused the dispersal of many of the group's combatants. The group's first operation—the kidnapping of a Briton, a Bulgarian, a Honduran, and a US citizen from a Shell flow station in Bayelsa on 11 January 2006—marked its official inception. The February 2006 bombing by the Nigerian military's JTF of an Ijaw community in Okerenkoko further spurred the formation of MEND (Naagbantón, 2006), and aided in the enlisting of many former NDPVF members. The remaining Reformed NDPVF members subsequently joined MEND themselves and continue to form the core of the group (Naagbantón, 2006). Militants

created MEND to defend the rights of the Niger Delta's largest ethnic group, the Ijaw. This identity as an Ijaw ethnic militia remains strong, but has been diluted by the inclusion of non-Ijaw groups under the MEND name. The Ijaw Gbaramatu clan represents MEND's military and spiritual headquarters. MEND declares that it is committed to a fight for the liberation Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria Icelander remains active, recently razing the police divisional headquarters at Okrika after the police had killed the group's second in command. Leader Tom had declared his intention to stay clear of the April 2007 elections after delivering the 2003 elections for Governor Peter Odili (Sahara Reporters, 2006). In mid-April 2007 Tom led his men on a raid of the police armouries at Elelenwo and Mini-Okoro police stations in Rivers state, with the resulting loss of several police officers' lives and the burning of both stations (Small Arms Survey, 2007m; CEHRD, 2007). Icelander is capable of negotiation with government authorities, and has engaged in negotiations in the past. However, such talks are generally undertaken to empower, fund, and arm the group rather than resolve any outstanding grievances or disband it. Politicians have attempted in the past to use financial means to reduce violence and restrict the activities of cults. For example, in October 2006 the Rivers state government released over NGN 15 million each to the Outlaws and Icelander as an incentive to the two groups to stop fighting during Governor Odili's attempts to gain the PDP presidential nomination.

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3.2.6 Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF)

Overview

The NDPVF is an ethnic militia of Ijaw origin. It is led by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, who formerly led the IYC. Until the creation of MEND in early 2006, the NDPVF represented the most visible armed group calling for increased control of local resources by Niger Delta communities. MEND provides a new mouthpiece for these concerns, and the NDPVF constitutes MEND's most prominent member and the main driver behind the group's operations and communications.

Background

Asari left his position as the head of the IYC in July 2003 to establish the NDPVF. British Columbus Epibade and Asari are credited with being two of the organization's founding members.¹⁵² The NDPVF founders claim to have derived inspiration from Isaac Boro, an Ijaw revolutionary and nationalist who began his own guerrilla war against the federal government in 1965 with the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Service. A top-ranking NDPVF commander declared that 'Dokubo Asari had come to start from where Boro stopped' (*Midweek Telegraph*, 2006). The NDPVF is steeped in the personality and goals of its leader, Asari. After engaging in several armed campaigns during 2003 and 2004, Asari was pardoned and granted

amnesty by the federal government. However, he remained vocal on issues of self-determination, compensation for local communities, and resource control, and as a result was arrested in September 2005. Despite his arrest, Asari remained a touchstone for both the interests of the Ijaw nation and the neglected Niger Delta communities more generally. As a result, the NDPVF has not remained a solely Ijaw organization, but now draws support and members from various ethnic groups across the Delta.

The NDPVF pursues a number of goals: more equitable distribution of oil revenues and greater employment opportunities for Niger Delta youth (IISS, 2007, p. 431); the right to self-determination (DonPedro, 2006); the release of former Bayelsa state governor, Diepreye Alamiyeseigha and the release of Asari (both have since been released). These demands are often couched in. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism, and the NDPVF has not shied away from using armed violence to achieve its goals.

Support

The political arm of the NDPVF is the unregistered political party known as the Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (Amaechi, 2006). This wing has in the past promoted Asari as a Rivers state gubernatorial candidate.¹⁵³ The NDPVF's primary political base remains the Kalabari clan of Ijaws. The NDPVF draws its combatants from the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta, as well as the Kirimani, an Ijaw militant group (DonPedro, 2006). At the NDPVF's creation, many IYC members followed Asari to form the NDPVF, which also draws support from community activists in Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa states. The NDPVF has attracted many followers throughout the Niger Delta as a result of its consistent stance on issues of justice, compensation, and the distribution of oil revenues. The NDPVF continues to grow in strength, despite police and military raids, arrests, and offensives from rival groups in the Delta.¹⁵⁴ However, this might be counterbalanced by growing fissures within the group. In 2007 there appear to be two factions: a more

militant splinter 'Reformed' or 'Creeks' NDPVF, which broke from the larger NDPVF, and the NDPVF itself, which remains more urban and less militant.

The NDPVF finances its activities through proceeds from illegal oil bunkering, contributions from Deebam (Florquin and Berman, 2005, p. 338), and contributions from Ijaw supporters and residents of Port Harcourt.

Activities

The NDPVF has a loose command structure. NDPVF groups in Delta and Bayelsa states have their own command centres, with sector commanders for each.¹⁵⁵ The group is active mainly in three states of the Niger Delta (Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers), with the majority of its activities carried out in the riverine communities of Rivers state. This state remains the headquarters for the group, which claims some 5,000 members in the state alone.

The NDPVF has collaborated with a number of other armed groups in the Delta, including Deebam, Greenlander, and the Bush Boys. Currently, the NDPVF operates under two umbrella organizations: the JRC and MEND. The group lost many members to MEND after Asari's arrest. The remaining members continue to exist as a group under the MEND umbrella name. Although it takes a militant stand and uses armed violence to achieve its goals, the NDPVF is not opposed to negotiations with the government. It engaged in negotiations in 2004, which provided a respite from armed clashes, but ultimately failed to bring peace. The inability of the government to deliver on its promises generated distrust of the government and negotiations, making subsequent negotiation efforts more difficult. The release of Asari will have much to do with the willingness of the group to negotiate by opening up new channels of communication and improved dialogue between the group and the government.

Small arms and light weapons

The NDPVF uses funds accrued through the sale of bunkered oil to purchase small arms from illegal arms dealers. Some of these arms dealers are on ships anchored offshore in international waters, where they exchange arms for oil. The NDPVF also

receives assistance from the Ijaw people and others in the Niger Delta sympathetic to the group's cause. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria.

3.2.7 Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF)

Overview

The Niger Delta Strike Force is a small group that claims to be fighting for the basic rights of the people of the Niger Delta. It is a relatively new group, and until recently has acted largely independently of other Delta networks and groups. The group was founded by estranged members of the NDPVF who were displeased with the handling of funds accruing to the latter in the wake of the 2004 Rivers state disarmament campaign. The NDSF is now acting as part of the MEND network of armed groups.

Background

The NDSF is not an ethnic militia, because of its diverse ethnic composition. Instead, the uniting factor has been its members' resentment of Asari. The group believes that Asari failed to share large cash payments received during the November and December 2004 disarmament exercise. As such, it has insisted on receiving a percentage of the monies paid out by the Nigerian government to Asari, as head of the NDPVF, in 2004. The NDSF has declared that these funds would be used to rehabilitate other groups who fought with Asari in 2004, including the Bush Boys, Greenlander, and Deebam. The group professes little in the way of new aims or goals, which has led to doubt as to whether it is truly fighting for the rights of those living in the Delta. The NDSF's professed goals are similar to those of other militant groups active in the region. Leader Prince Farah declared that the group's primary aim is to fight for equity and justice in the management and distribution of resources and political power. The primary motivating factor behind the group's activities is an interest in economic gain, and it appears to equate being armed in the Niger Delta with achieving the status and means to accrue wealth. The NDSF is a nascent and

active group learning new tactics and establishing its place in the order of militia groups in the Niger Delta. The group has grown without hindrance, and largely outside of government attention. The police and military have not targeted it. Recent disturbances perpetrated by the group in the guise of a mercenary group in Kula community, Akuku-Torlu LGA have now brought the group to the government's attention.¹⁶⁰ In the leadup to the April 2007 elections, the NDSF met to try to ensure the emergence of a governor of Ijaw extraction in Rivers state, issuing a threat to cause mayhem in the state should the Ijaw Kalabari people not receive the governor's seat in the elections (*Hard Truth*, 2006, p. 2). The leader of the NDSF is founder and former NDPVF member Prince Ipallibo Farah. Farah is from the Ijaw cult group centre of Tombia, where he gained a reputation as a calm yet cruel militant. The only other identified commander is a 14-year-old boy known as the Last Don. He is known to have shown great skill in the use of weapons and headed the NDSF contingent during the January Port Harcourt raid.

Support

The NDSF garners financing from oil bunkering and from political figures. Prince Tonye Prince will was the Action Congress governorship candidate for Rivers state in the April 2007 elections and is alleged to have provided funding to the group in exchange for its backing for his campaign. Farah claims that there is also significant funding from individuals sympathetic to the group's cause of bringing justice to the Delta.. The NDSF's political base lies in Kalabari land, which stretches across Degema, Asari-Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state. The group's lack of a cohesive political goal stunts its ability to draw political support at the community level. Initially, combatants were drawn from a splintered NDPVF; however, since the NDSF's establishment, others have been recruited from Kula, Buguma, and Tombia in Rivers state. The NDSF is allegedly the smallest armed group in Rivers state, with just 60 members. Strength, however, is drawn from collaboration with other local groups, including MEND, the Outlaws, and Deebam.

Working with these groups, but carrying out operations under the NDSF banner, NDSF numbers can swell to 600.

Activities

The group is known to operate primarily in Kalabari land, comprising Degema, Asari Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state, which are the areas in which the NDSF undertakes oil bunkering and derives support from the local population. With its complicity in criminal activities and kidnappings index. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria. Pendent of the wider MEND network, the NDSF has not demonstrated high levels of discipline within its ranks. For example, the group's violent attack on the Kula community in oil-rich Akuku-Torlu LGA resulted in the killing of 12 chiefs, along with other community members. The NDSF is viewed by many as a 'mercenary' group and can be hired for a fee. The group has not developed any distinct tactics in its activities. It is believed to have a high level of tactical proficiency due to the NDPVF combatants in its ranks. Some in the group are also reportedly well versed in the use of explosives and firearms. The NDSF has started talks with MEND, seeking MEND's help in joining the JRC's umbrella, of which MEND is a leading member. At present, the NDSF enjoys an amicable though informal relationship with the NDPVF, the Outlaws, and Deebam.

Small arms and light weapons

The NDSF claims that it possesses the weapons needed to engage in any battle. The group claims to have RPGs and dynamite at its disposal, as well as Russian-made AK-47s, or variants of the AK, and PK machine guns. There have been reports of a number of deliveries of small arms to the group, including a 15 March 2007 delivery of around 200 weapons, including G3 rifles, AK-47s, and RPGs, as well as a 26 March shipment of unspecified content. The NDSF uses funds from political contributions, sympathetic individuals, and the sale of bunkered crude oil to purchase small arms from illegal arms dealers.

3.2.8 The Outlaws

Overview

The Outlaws is a cult group that operates according to the basic principles of protection through numbers and fraternity invoked by most cult groups in Nigeria. The group lays claim to being the largest organization fighting for the rights of the youth in the Niger Delta region. It emerged under acrimonious circumstances as an offshoot of Ateke Tom's Icelande cult group. The Outlaws have engaged in armed clashes with other cult groups, particularly in and around Port Harcourt.

Background

The group is largely the creation of Soboma George, formerly second in command of Icelande. The break between George and Icelande leader Tom came as a result of Tom handing George over to the authorities for the murder of a member of the NDPVF in late 2004. George escaped from a Port Harcourt prison and broke with Icelande to form the Outlaws (Naagbantun, 2007a). George's Icelande lieutenants who followed him to the Outlaws also wield some authority within the highly hierarchical cult group. Like most cult groups, the Outlaws fight for little else beyond the well-being of the group. The group claims to be fighting for the rights of the Niger Delta youth, but its activities suggest its focus remains limited to members and is insular in nature. George has become one of the Delta's most notorious figures since the group's inception. He is a 27-year-old high school dropout from an ethnic Ijaw group in Kalabari kingdom. He is deeply Christian, though this is mixed with the animist beliefs endemic to cult groups. He is also a senior commander of MEND. The Outlaws do not take issue with the Nigerian or Rivers state governments. As former members of Icelande, who had fought on the side of the Rivers state government during previous electoral periods, the Outlaws have a history of amicable relations with government. However, the arrest of George has caused some tension with government, though this has not yet resulted in the group being targeted by security

forces. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria.

Support

The Outlaws reportedly have a large following across Rivers state. This membership extends well beyond a single ethnic group. Originally founded by Ijaws, the group also derives members from the Ibibio, Ogoni, and Ogba ethnicities. There are ongoing attempts to establish Outlaws 'cells' in the other core Niger Delta states of Delta and Bayelsa.

The Outlaws claim a membership of 4,000 throughout Rivers state, all of whom can be utilized as combatants. The group draws its members from armed cults, such as Icelander and Deewell, as well as from non-militarized youth groups, including the Awolowo Boys, the Getto, and Agaba from northern Port Harcourt. Many who join the Outlaws are simply jobless youths without livelihood opportunities. They are prone to drug use or small-scale trafficking of cocaine or marijuana, and are easily convinced to join. The January 2007 storming of Port Harcourt by the Outlaws and MEND served to enhance greatly the reputation of the cult group and led to an increase in members.

The Outlaws allegedly receive funding from political figures, small-scale oil bunkering, and the sale of illicit drugs. In addition, the group offered its support for a fee in the 2007 electoral period.

Activities

The group is known to operate primarily in Kalabari land, comprising Degema, Asari-Torlu, and Akuku-Torlu LGAs in Rivers state. These are the areas in which the NDSF undertakes oil bunkering and derives support from the local population. There is little overall control of the Outlaws. The group is characterized by criminal activity and political manipulation through violence. The group has reportedly provided services to the ruling PDP in Rivers state, and this provides some coordination to its activities and operations.

The Outlaws' main strategy is to expand the group's territorial presence and to protect its members from security forces and rival groups who seek to encroach on its territory and methods of funding. Attacks on oil and gas facilities are a new strategy for the Outlaws, and may be the result of a recent increase in dialogue with MEND. The group has yet to claim responsibility for any abductions in the Delta. The Outlaws have collaborated with other armed groups in the Delta, including collaboration with the umbrella group COMA in mid-2006 (*Hard Truth*, 2006, p. 4), collaboration with MEND to rescue Outlaws' leader Soboma George from a Port Harcourt jail in January 2007, and sharing a training camp with Deewell at Marine Base, Port Harcourt. The activities of the group have made maintaining relationships with other groups difficult. The attack on the Port Harcourt jail led COMA to denounce both MEND and George as opportunists looking to harness the Niger Delta crisis for their own ends. The relationship with MEND appears increasingly contradictory as the cult group moves closer to the ruling PDP of Rivers state, while MEND retains its opposition to the government. There is little possibility of reconciliation between Icclander and the Outlaws, which broke away from Icclander. The Outlaws continue to be very active in the vicinity of Port Harcourt. While security operations against other armed groups have reduced their size and influence, the Outlaws have not yet been targeted, and as such continue to grow in security-poor Rivers state. The group is currently negotiating with MEND over the former's reorganization and reorientation (Naagbantou, 2007a, p. 13).

Small arms and light weapons

Members of the Outlaws have openly displayed RPGs, sub-machine guns, and AK-47 derivatives. The group has traded bunkered oil or cash with arms traffickers as a primary method of acquiring small arms and light weapons. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arm violence armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria

CHAPTER FOUR

DISARMAMENT EFFORTS IN THE NIGER DELTA

4.1 DISARMAMENT EFFORT IN NIGER DELTA

The Nigerian government has attempted a number of disarmament exercises in the country over the past several decades. Many of these have taken place in the Delta region, but their implementation was never fully documented. To date there are no reliable figures on the numbers of weapons collected during any of the disarmament programmes, nor accurate data on the amounts paid for weapons submitted to the process. Many claim that the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria began following the end of the Biafran civil war, due to the lack of an effective disarmament programme at the time (Obasi, 2002, p. 69). This trend has continued, most recently in 2004 in Delta state. The impacts of these unsuccessful disarmament programmes continue to be felt through the prevalence of armed robbery across the country and the growing role of armed groups. Between 1997 and 1999 the Delta state government initiated a disarmament programme calling on warring ethnic factions from the Ijaw, Urhobo, and Itsekiri ethnic groups to hand in their weapons. The call went unheeded (Lewis and Davis, 2006, p. 64). Shortly thereafter, the governor of Warri offered cash, short-term training, and employment to militant youths who gave up their weapons. This call was met with scepticism, and ultimately little success (Lewis and Davis, 2006, p. 64). These initiatives failed to reduce significantly the number of arms in circulation. In July 2004 the governor of Rivers state initiated a disarmament programme. The programme provided financial benefits and amnesty to those who turned in their weapons (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 5). Although some weapons were handed in, the programme failed to deliver a sustainable peace. Renewed fighting between the NDPVF and NDVS, as well as a declaration of all out war by Asari, led to the intervention by the federal government. In September 2004 President Obasanjo

invited the leaders of the NDPVF and NDVS, Asari and Tom, to meet with him in Abuja. This initiative for peace negotiations to end the rising violence in Rivers state in the Delta was successful, and a peace agreement was signed on 1 October 2004. This agreement, which provided payments for weapons turned in to authorities, a general amnesty, and promises of employment, paved the way for another disarmament programme to take place. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme was established, but it failed to live up to the expectations of the militants. The government had promised 4,000 jobs (HRW, 2005a, p. 21). Although training was provided through the reintegration phase for nearly 2,000 youths, the inability of those youths to obtain jobs following the training programme resulted in growing disenchantment with the process (Bekoe, 2005). Although the disarmament programme collected nearly 3,000 weapons (Bekoe, 2005), observers claim that this was only a small fraction of what was circulating in the Delta (NDPEHRD, 2004, p. 7), that the weapons turned in were old or unserviceable (NDPEHRD, 2005, p. 7), and that the process actually encouraged the purchase of additional weapons in order to benefit from the high prices being paid for weapons submitted to the disarmament process.⁸⁶ An inventory of weapons destroyed in early November 2004 supports the claim that the weapons were old. Of the 848 recorded weapons, more than one-third of them were AK-47 assault rifles from the late 1960s. The disarmament process failed to secure a sustainable peace. Disputes over levels of disarmament and cash payments received for submitted weapons.

The West Africa Initiatives

It is estimated that there are between seven and eight million Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in circulation in West Africa, many of which are not in state hands but rather held privately or by non-state actors. The sources of these weapons are multiple. Not only are they imported from outside the sub-region but in addition they stem from illegal manufacture by artisans and from

circulation between conflict zones. These SALW have been used in civil wars, especially in the Mano River region, have fuelled ethnic strife in southern Nigeria amongst other places, and have been utilized by criminals across the region. The widespread proliferation of the SALW has also led to human rights abuses mass displacement and the undermining of the rule of law, amongst other things.

In west Africa, the principal sub-regional SALW control measure is the ECOWAS Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West African.⁵ since the signing of the ECOWAS Moratorium in Abuja, Nigeria, on 31 October 1998, it has been renewed twice, most recently in the summer of 2004 for a three-year period. Despite criticism about its weak language and scope for misinterpretation, the Moratorium has the support of all 16 ECOWAS member states and, given the overlap in their provisions, it acts as a sub-regional framework for the implementation of the PoA.

However, the fulfillment of this role is hindered by its lack of enforceability. There are positive indicators of increased government support of the Moratorium in recent years, particularly with regard to provisions in the Moratorium, echoed in the PoA, such as the requirement to establish a national coordination agency and a national point of contact, as well as regular reporting on the implementation of SALW controls (Oche 2005:60).

The Program of Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Developments (PCASED), developed by UNDP to support the Moratorium, was disbanded at the end of 2004 as a result of the feeling among both civil society groups and donors that PCASED was not performing as intended. PCASED was ECOSAP (the ECOWAS Small Arms Project), which concentrates on the provision of technical advice on the implementation of Small Arms Unit based within the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja,

Nigeria, whose role is to deal with the political aspects of the Moratorium such as the granting of exemptions.

A meeting of civil society and political leaders of the West Africa Sub-region was held in Accra in November 2004 on starting the process of converting the politically-binding Moratorium into a legally binding convention. Subsequently, Oxfam, the Government of Mali and ECOSAP held a meeting in Bamako in March 2005 to begin the drafting of a legally binding Moratorium. The redrafting will attempt to widen the scope of ECOWAS small arms policy to make it more comprehensive by including previously overlooked issues such as brokering. It is hoped that such a revised agreement will replace the Moratorium when it is due to be renewed in 2007.

Selected Cases of Seizures of Arms and Ammunition Being Smuggled into Nigeria

| s/No. | Year | Arms/Ammo | Quantity | Place |
|--------------|---------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) |
| 1. | March 1993 | Live Ammunition | 1000 | Kano Airport |
| 2. | 1998 | Live cartridges packed in 15 boxes | 15,412 | Seme |
| 3 | July 1999 | Live Ammunition | 72,500 | Lagos Bar Beach |
| 4 | June-Oct 2000 | Live Ammunition | 19,675 | Seme |
| 5 | April 2001 | Live Ammunition | 2,252 | Ibadan |
| 6 | July 2001 | Shotgun/Cartridges | 26 500 | Ogun State |

Source: Nnamdi K. Obasi, *Small Arms Proliferation and Disarmament in West Africa: Progress and Prospects of the ECOWAS Moratorium* (Abuja: Aprophiyl production 2002), pp. 72-74.

WEAPONS COLLECTION INITIATIVES IN NIGERIA AND THE NIGER DELTA.

In responses to the emergence of a gun culture in the country and in realization of the adverse implications of this development for national security there have been several initiatives, over the years, aimed at controlling and collecting weapons from unauthorized individuals and groups. Some of the most notable efforts in this regard are reviewed below.

The Babangida Administration's Order of 1989

Following a bloody inter-ethnic clash in the northern city of Kaduna in 1989, in which small arms were used by the belligerent sides freely and with devastating effects, the federal government sought to curb the availability of firearms in the country. It therefore revised the regulations governing gun ownership, making them more stringent. Under this initiative the Babangida administration recalled dealers and owners in the country and enacted laws that made the restoration of licenses difficult (Obasi, 2001). The new rules stipulated the categories of guns that could be owned by citizens, "which included double-barrel, shotguns for game-hunting and sports." It also stipulated that "these must be licensed by the commissioner of police of a state, with the requirements that the applicant must be 18 years of age and above, of good address and a verifiable source of income (Obasi, 2001).

Plateau State Weapons Collection Program, 2004

In May 2004, following persistent settler-indigene and Christian-Muslim conflicts in parts of Plateau State, the federal government declared six months of emergency rule in the state and appointed Major-General Chris Alli (rtd) as the Sole Administrator of the state. Although that action brought an almost immediate end to hostilities in the state, the sole Administrator was worried that the retention of firearms in private hands could lead to a relapse into violence in the near future. On

21 May 2004, therefore, he ordered that all firearms in private hands be submitted to the government under a “Guns for Cash” program.

Under this program, the government directed all individuals and groups in possession of firearms to come forward and surrender them at designated centers for cash rewards. Whoever surrendered a rifle was to be paid 100,000 naira while locally made weapons would attract 25,000 Naira each. The government also directed that any person that had useful information on the whereabouts of hidden firearms could also come forward with such information to the nearest designated center for a cash reward of not less than 20,000 Naira. It added that anyone who voluntarily provided information leading to the recovery of firearms would be protected against police action or prosecution, while his identity would not be disclosed. The date of 7 June was fixed as the deadline for the voluntary surrender of the illegal arms.

The public response to the program, however, was very poor. As cooperation was not forthcoming from the people, the closing date for the voluntary surrender of the arms was extended by two weeks. During this period, and with strong assurances of amnesty and confidentiality by the Sole Administrator, some of the people voluntarily surrendered weapons and were issued receipts. They were, however, afraid of coming forward to collect their rewards openly. The open payment arrangement therefore had to be cancelled in favour of secret payment. In all, less than 300 weapons were voluntarily handed over to the security agencies. Thereafter, combined teams of the army and the police embarked on “cordon and search” operations in communities that were suspected to be harboring guns. However, there was no official record at the end of the exercise regarding the number of guns that were recovered.

Inspector-General of Police Order, 2004.

On 5 February 2004, the inspector-General of police (IGP) directed that all illegally acquired, prohibited and offensive weapons should be surrendered to the police within one month. He offered a “handsome reward” (later specified at 10,000

Naira) to any citizen who would volunteer information about persons in possession of offensive weapons and assured that all information received by the police would be treated with “utmost confidentiality.” He however, warned that after the expiration of a one month deadline, the force would commence raids on illegal owners of offensive weapons.

Following the expiration of the one month deadline, the IGP ordered the force to commence a mop-up operation of illegal weapons all over the country. On 14 March, 2004 he inaugurated a 60-man task force on the recovery of illegal firearms nationwide. For the conduct of its task, the following operational mode was outlined for the task force as follows:

- (a) Seek and obtain information on places where firearms are kept, sold or manufactured.
- (b) Obtain search warrants from courts of competent jurisdiction to search and identify premises where illegal firearms are kept, manufactured or sold and confiscated them.
- (c) Collate and forward returns of recoveries to force Headquarters, Abuja, for further action when necessary.
- (d) Collaborate with other sister organizations in all their operations.
- (e) Seek and obtain information on points of entry (Land, sea or air).
- (f) Approach its assignment closely throughout the 12 zones of operation of the police, which must be closely monitored by the zonal Assistant Inspectors-General of police (AIGPS), (<http://www.nigeriapolice.org>).

The achievements made in the recovery of firearms up till the end of June 2004 are shown in the table below.

Statistics on Recovery of Illegal Firearms by Nigeria Police Force, 14 March – 30 June 2004.

| S/no. | Item | No |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) |
| 1. | Weapons Recovered | 972 |
| 2 | Ammunition Recovered | 111,585 |
| 3 | Persons Arrested | 190 |
| 4 | Suspected Killed in Operation | 73 |
| 5 | Policemen Injured/Killed | 12/19 respectively |

Source: World Press Briefing held by Inspector-General of police on Wednesday, 30 June 2004; available on the internet at <http://www.nigeriapolice.org>

Delta State Weapons Collection Program, 1999

Following the transition from military to civilian rule in May 1999, a major conflict broke out between the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri ethnic groups in Warri that led to the deaths of hundreds of people and the destruction of property worth billions of naira. On 16 June 1999, the Delta State Governor, James Ibori, announced a peace plan which would include the mopping up of arms in exchange for cash and job opportunities in Warri city. Laudable as the plan was, many in the Niger Delta, where the plan was to be implemented, were from the outset skeptical of the government's wherewithal to implement the gun collection program. As it turned out, no concrete action was ever taken to ensure the implementation of weapons collection from the warring groups (Oche, 2005:73-74).

Cash for Arms Program, Rivers State, 2004.

In June 2004, violent conflict broke out in Rivers State between two major armed groups, namely the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the

Niger Delta vigilantes (NDV). In reaction to this development, president Olusegun Obasanjo invited the leaders of the two groups to a peace meeting in Abuja. At the meeting between officials of the Federal Government and the leaders of the two warring groups, held in Abuja on 1 October 2004, the two leaders agreed to disband their militia groups and to totally disarm. They further agreed to an immediate cease fire and undertook a commitment to maintain peace and to be law abiding.

After a second meeting with the militia leaders, the President established a committee chaired by the Chief of Staff at the presidency, Major-General Abdullahi Mohammed (rtd), to follow up on the decisions that were made during the peace talks which included, among others, the disarmament of the militia groups. Two sub-Committee, chaired by the Governor of Rivers State, Dr. Peter Odili, and a community sub-committee headed by the deputy governor of Bayelsa state, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. In accordance with agreement reached on October 1 at Abuja, weapons were collected from the various militia groups. By 30 November 2004, the disarmament sub-committee had collected close to 1,000 guns from the two factions and also from associated groups. Although the disarmament program had its limitations, it undoubtedly brought about more peace and much happiness in River state, when compared with the pre-disarmament period (Oche, 2005:78-79).

4.2 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 2009 AMNESTY (WEAPONS COLLECTION PROGRAMME)

The recent amnesty programme to Niger Delta militants could be adjudged a partial success, where some of the major militant warlords held disarmament ceremonies, bringing about “Ten thousand” of their followers and stalking guns high in public.

The big militant led the way-Victor Ebikabowei Ben, the self-styled “General Boy loaf” Government Tompolo, Farah Dagogo, and Ateke Tom, to name a few. Duffield of BBC news/africa stated that:

They certainly have not given up their entire arsenals-but the quantities of weapons dumped are significant, raising hopes of an end to the unrest which has severely curtailed oil production output for one of the world's biggest exports
(news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm).

And yet there are many questions about the Niger Delta's "peace process". The lack of independent monitors verifying what happened to the weapons provoked concern from some quarters. There were no neutral observers collating the serial numbers of guns, for example, or formally witnessing weapons being put beyond use. Instead the job was done by officials of local government (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm).

The Nigerian government states that it does not need to stick to the international standards for decommissioning seen in other peace process, said Timi Alaibe, the presidential adviser on the amnesty. He continued, "we have our own way of doing things here...As to whether we have the international standards for collection of those arms, we don't do them here. We don't know about them" (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa.stm).

Critics of the Yar' Adua's administration fret about the failure to observe international standards for decommissioning of repentant militants . In the past other amnesty programmes have been abused. Corrupt officials have sold weapons on and guns have found their way back into the hands of criminal gangs. But Mr Alaibe insist it will not end like that this time around. According to him, "those weapons will not find their way back. The Nigerian military have the structures in place to destroy them".

Already there had been street protests in Yenogoa, in Bayelsa state, by youths angry at not receiving money they had been promised in return for dumping guns. (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8291336.stm). "They haven't collected their money, that is what is bringing the problem now," said one of the men, Paul Innocent,

brandishing a photo ID showing he had accepted amnesty. Behind him, youths shouted warnings they would return to the creeks. www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11). About 200 rebels in Bayelsa's state capital Yenegoa took to the street in a protest after the government failed to pay them for handing over their weapons, marching from their small hotel to a sprawling state government compound where their leaders were being housed in mansions (www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11). Fabi (2009) believe that an amnesty programme in Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta risks failing if the government does not back up its offer with serious peace talks and concrete proposals to develop the impoverished region(www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-11).

MEND, one of the most active Niger Delta military groups, after announcing a 60-days cease fire amongst other issues, demanded the withdrawal of the army and the Joint Task Force (JTF) from the Gbaramatu area of the Delta. In addition, it demanded that processes be put in place that can facilitate discussions and dialogue on the main issues that gave rise to armed militia activities in the first instance. In response to these demands, the Nigerias Defense Minister, Godwin Abey stated that, “they cannot give conditions to government. The government will make decision on the effective deployment of troops when the conditionjs become ripe enough. And when law and order is comfortably established” (www.socialistworld.net/eng/2009/09/0101.html).

Within this context the amnesty package is simply a devise to dodge the major issues at stake and not tackle them. Also evident from this is the fact that government is not prepared to relent from its strategy of using military force to have its way in the Niger Delta region (www.socialistworld.net/eng/2009/09/0101.html).

In its editorial statement on 30th July, 2009, Vanguard newspaper made the following submission:

*Amnesty for the militants is a good idea.
However, the Federal Government must have
the political will to muster resources for*

development of the area. The government so easily finds funds for peripheral matter in the Niger Delta and not the core issues (Vanguard, July,4 2009).

An eight-man panel that was set up to review the post-amnesty deals for repentant militants of the Niger Delta, has roundly faulted the rehabilitation and training programmes of the Presidential Committee on Amnesty (PCA). On Sunday January 10, 2010, ex-militants, youth leaders in the oil and gas region as well as a sub-committee of the PCA on the Rehabilitation of the militants met in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, to review the workplan which had been drawn up by the PCA headed by Defence Minister, Major General Godwin Abbey (rtd). The eight-man panel which was headed by Patterson Ogon, the founding Director of the Ijaw Council for Human Rights (ICHR), in their report said that 80% of the estimated cost for the running of the program is going to consultants and contractors, leaving the beneficiaries (ex-militants) with just 20%. The Panel which also had Nollywood star and actress, Hilda Dokubo as Secretary, claimed that the plan had not taken into consideration those who have been directly affected and traumatised by the crisis; especially those who have lost their sources of livelihood and major breadwinners. These includes:mothers of dead militants, wives, children and siblings (www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm).

The Ogon panel stated that “in spite of the amnesty, a great number of Niger Delta agitators are still in detention. This shows a double standard position of peace and war”. According to the panel:

The status of institution for falls for short of acceptable standards, as they are neither certified nor can award acceptable certificates. Most of them have inadequate facilities for proper impartation of knowledge and skills (www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm)

The panel is pushing for training and training institutions in key sectors like maritime, oil and gas, which they claimed were left out by the PCA . For information communication technology they opted for NIIT And APTECH. For the entertainment industry, they said institutions such as the Centre for Creative Arts Education and PEFTI are preferable, while for entrepreneurship training, they recommended Quantum, and for sports, sports academies (www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm). According to the panel, the number of 20,000 ex-militants recorded by the PCA is over bloated. “We therefore suggest that the team meticulously review this number and ensure that leaders of key agitating militant groups be contacted as they have complained of not being carried along in any of the processes including the raising of the number to 20,000.

Moves by the PCA to grant loans to the ex-militants was by the Ogon panel. According to them, “this is unacceptable. In its place we suggest a development grant and the establishment of incubation centres”. Continuing they said the sum of N50 million allegedly earmarked by the PCA for the training of trainers “gives us reason to question the capacity of the trainers who need to be retrained. They pointed out that all the militants who were involve in the armed struggle, “took up arms with the full knowledge of its implication and have since after the amnesty and disarmament returned successfully and continued with normal life. So, the suggestion of psychiatrists is a direct abuse on the mental, emotional and psychological state of the ex-militants www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1001/S00448.htm). It could be observed from the foregoing that the amnesty package, no doubt is an avenue to enrich the pockets of some few persons that are highly placed in the Nigerian society and not to address the major cause of the Niger Delta.

4.2.1 THE RECENT WARRI BOMB BLAST

The Post Amnesty Peace Talks conference had just started with a welcome address by the chairman of the occasion, a former Chief of Defense Staff, General Andrew Owei Azazi (rtd) and the Chairman/Publisher of Vanguard Media Limited,

Mr. Sam Amuka was explaining the reason for the Vanguard initiative when the first bomb was detonated. The second bomb, reportedly planted inside a car across the road on Effurun-Nigeria Ports Authority Expressway near the Government House, Warri exploded 30 minutes later, forcing the stakeholders to leave the hall (*Vanguard* March 16, 2010). MEND later claimed responsibility for the explosions and in fact sent out electronic mail statements before they were detonated.

These are the words of Jomo Gbomo, the spoke person of MEND, one of the most active militant groups in the Niger Delta after the blast.

MEND salutes all its operatives who at great risk, successfully planted and detonated two car bombs at the venue of the Vanguard Post Amnesty conference in Warri, Delta state. Three such bombs of varying strength were planted at this venue. It was unnecessary to detonate the third and the most powerful bomb as our operatives noticed the participants at this jamboree fled towards the direction of the last bomb. Any attempt to detonate this bomb would have resulted in great loss of life. This bomb is been preserved for future use. All who participated in this operation, safely returned to their respective bases
(www.saharareporters.com/news/5512).

From the above statement it can be deduced that as long as the Nigerian State refuses to give full attention to the problems of the Niger Delta it should get ready to contend fully with the forces of MEND and other groups and splinter groups that may spring up subsequently.

4.2.2 The Nigerian Salw Control System

In Nigeria, the national legislation related to SALW dates from 1959 and has therefore become obsolete, despite considerable participation and involvement in the major international and regional initiatives. The National Committee, the main structure responsible for devising the national strategy on SALW control

implementation, remains weak and lacks substantial institutional and structural capacities.

4.2.3 NIGERIAN LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Current legislation

The Firearms Act (1959) is the main legal instrument governing the production, use, import, and export of SALW in Nigeria. Section 23 of the Firearms Act states that:

subject to the provisions of sections 24 to 26 of this Act, ... no person shall manufacture, assemble, or repair any firearms or ammunition except at a public armory or at arsenals established for the purposes of the armed forces with the consent of the President, acting in his discretion. It also prohibits dealing in firearms except by registered dealers as well as the import and export of firearms and ammunition into Nigeria by sea or by air. In addition, the Act imposes a minimum sentence of 10 years for the importation, exportation, manufacture and repair of firearms Firearms Act (1959).

An amendment to the 1959 Act was adopted in 1966, which increased the punishment for firearms related offences. Hitherto, the punishment was N400 fine or 12 months imprisonment, or both. However, it is the 1984 Robbery and Firearms Decree which considerably expanded gun-related offences and sanctions. Under this decree, illegal possession of firearms attracts a fine of N20,000 or a minimum of ten year imprisonment, or both. The Act also specifies that armed robberies are punishable by death (hanging or firing squad), and that offenders charged with attempted robbery involving the use of firearms face life imprisonment/sentence. Given the widespread proliferation of illicit SALW, civil society groups and the

Police have argued for a review of the law which would not give an option of fine to anyone found guilty of illegal possession of firearms.

4.2.4 Implementation And Enforcement Challenges

Although the provisions of the law are clearly spell out on what amounts to legal and illegal possession and use of SALW, the penalties for breaching the law have, particularly in relation to fines, become obsolete, while the enforcement of the law has been constrained by corruption and inadequacy of institutional capacity on the part of the law enforcement agents.

Consequently, even though the law can be considered adequate in terms of the production, import, and export of SALW, the penalty is often insufficient to ensure deterrence and enforcement in the event of a breach. The Chairman of the National Committee concedes that penalties for SALW-related offences are not strong enough, especially as the accused can easily obtain bail.⁽⁶⁶⁾ In addition, the National Committee acknowledges the fact that the current legislation is obsolete and is not adequate for the current situation (*Thisday, July 8, 2003:5*). The laws and regulations governing SALW were proposed for revision after the agreement of the UNPoA. In a memo dated 21 September 2001, the Nigerian President requested the drafting of a bill setting out more stringent penalties for contravention of firearms laws. He proposed a 10-year jail term, without an option of fine, for illegal possession of firearms and further proposed a cash reward for information that leads to the arrest and prosecution of anyone in illegal possession of firearms.^(Vanguard, Oct, 2001:8). However, no draft firearms law has yet been presented to the National Assembly.

At this juncture it is clear to see that our hypotheses are abundantly supported by evidence. Hence, there is a positive link between poverty and armed conflict. And that there had not being a comprehensive weapons collection programme in the Niger Delta region and the tackling of poverty in that region. The Nigerian regulations and

laws are weak and obsolete and should be strengthened as a measure to reduce the proliferation of small arms by unauthorized persons.

4.3 LEGAL MEASURES TO ADDRESS SMALL ARMS

Nigeria has been an active participant in international and regional discussions on small arms proliferation. The country has signed on to a number of international measures pertaining to small arms and light weapons. It supported the adoption in 2005 of the *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*, and has argued that this political document needs to be transformed into a legally binding instrument in order to control effectively and criminalize the illicit movement of small arms (Adekanye, 2006). Nigeria has also recommended consideration of sanctions for those found diverting arms into illegal networks. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria deterrent effect (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 24). Proposals were made that the laws be revised and updated following the *UN Programme of Action* in 2001, but to date there have been no efforts to overhaul the national legislation on small arms. President Obasanjo initiated a number of committees aimed at addressing the issues of proliferation, disarmament, and related matters, but to date these committees have made little progress in tackling these issues. In July 2000, the government established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons to respond to the growing crime in the country and the proliferation of small arms. The purpose of the committee was to determine the sourcing of illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria (PANA, 2000). In May 2001 the government established a second committee aimed at implementing the 1998 *ECOWAS Moratorium*. These two committees were later merged into a single committee after determining that redundancy in efforts made two committees superfluous. The committee has accomplished very little in the past five years. In

large part, this is the result of a lack of political will, financial support, technical expertise, and capacity. Rather than being established as an independent commission, the committee has been placed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Staffing of the committee is not permanent, but, rather, individuals with other full-time posts are asked to serve on the committee. The committee did produce an ambitious work plan in 2003, but has been unable to implement these activities. Originally conceived of as a primary documentation centre on small arms and light weapons, the committee has not yet demonstrated its capacity to act in this role. There were renewed efforts in 2007 to revive the activities of the committee, and legislation is being written to convert the committee into a national commission. This conversion would be significant in that it would change the nature of the institution from an ad hoc measure to a permanent institution with a budget from the national government and financial and institutional autonomy (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 26). The committee is currently preparing to conduct a national survey of small arms by the end of 2007. It is seeking support from the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme the establishment of a common international standard for regulating the activities of arms brokers, integrating small arms measures into comprehensive national development strategies, and the establishment of a common standard for end-user certification and stockpile management (Adekanye, 2006). In addition, Nigeria has supported West African regional measures aimed at reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. At the national level, Nigeria continues to rely on the national Firearms Act of 1959 as the legal instrument governing small arms possession, manufacture, and use in the country. The act has been amended and complemented by additional legislation since its introduction. On paper, the national legislation provides clear indications of what is legal and illegal, and all weapons without proper licensing are illegal. However, the legislation has been inadequately implemented and enforced. In addition, many fines imposed for breaches of the legislation are relatively minor, leading some to claim that they have no deterrent effect (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and

Mazal, 2004, p. 24). Proposals were made that the laws be revised and updated following the *UN Programme of Action* in 2001, but to date there have been no efforts to overhaul the national legislation on small arms. President Obasanjo initiated a number of committees aimed at addressing the issues of proliferation, disarmament, and related matters, but to date these committees have made little progress in tackling these issues. In July 2000, the government established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons to respond to the growing crime in the country and the proliferation of small arms. The purpose of the committee was to determine the sourcing of illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria (PANA, 2000). In May 2001 the government established a second committee aimed at implementing the 1998 *ECOWAS Moratorium*. These two committees were later merged into a single committee after determining that redundancy in efforts made two committees superfluous. The committee has accomplished very little in the past five years. In large part, this is the result of a lack of political will, financial support, technical expertise, and capacity. Rather than being established as an independent commission, the committee has been placed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Staffing of the committee is not permanent, but, rather, individuals with other full-time posts are asked to serve on the committee. The committee did produce an ambitious work plan in 2003, but has been unable to implement these activities. Originally conceived of as a primary documentation centre on small arms and light weapons, the committee has not yet demonstrated its capacity to act in this role. There were renewed efforts in 2007 to revive the activities of the committee, and legislation is being written to convert the committee into a national commission. This conversion would be significant in that it would change the nature of the institution from an ad hoc measure to a permanent institution with a budget from the national government and financial and institutional autonomy (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo, and Mazal, 2004, p. 26). The committee is currently prepared a national survey of small arms by the end of 2007.

It is seeking support from the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme to increased tensions within and between groups. Disagreements over payments and accusations of leaders keeping the money for themselves led to a split within the NDPVF, while smaller groups threatened the government with violence unless they were paid (NDPEHRD, 2005, pp. 7–8). By early November 2004 armed groups had broken the ceasefire in a series of clashes and attacks. The peace process continued despite these attacks, but leaders of the groups remained suspicious of the process (Asuni, 2006, p. 82). The Rivers governor held a meeting of all factions on 19 November, at the end of which another peace agreement was signed, which set the stage for a Peace Ambassadors Camp to be held in January 2005, with more than 700 representatives from armed factions and youth groups attending (Asuni, 2006, pp. 82–83). The camp took place, but failed to resolve the remaining contentious issues.

The 2004 disarmament process not only failed to disarm the factions, but also reduced confidence in the government, thereby making future disarmament measures more difficult. The key element preventing real progress on the 2004 disarmament process was the lack of attention to reintegration efforts and opportunities for former militants to earn gainful employment. Although over 4,000 jobs were promised, the posts that materialized were temporary, low paying, and oddly located in areas not directly affected by the conflict (Asuni, 2006, p. 83). As a result, the militants felt short-changed by the process. The failure of this disarmament process left armed groups distrustful of the government and its motives, and apprehensive about any future disarmament initiatives. This shadow continues to hang over ongoing government efforts to resolve the crisis in the Delta.

4.3.1 A split strategy of ‘carrot and stick’ in the Niger Delta

The government strategy pursued in the Niger Delta has been a mixture of incentives for reducing militancy and punishments for failing to do so. This carrot-and-stick strategy has so far failed to bear any fruit. The ‘carrots’ offered have come

in the form of a number of development initiatives in the Delta region. These initiatives, although numerous, have failed to produce any significant changes in the economic situation. The 'sticks' have come in the form of heavy-handed military tactics against militants and communities accused of aiding or harbouring militants. These too have failed. Militancy appears to be on the rise, and the more heavy-handed the government tactics, the more committed the militants are to their causes.

4.3.2 The 'carrot': development programmes

Obasanjo initiated a series of economic programmes aimed at improving development in the Niger Delta region. While these programmes have contributed at the margins to addressing the economic concerns of the population, none of them has led to sustainable development or easily recognizable change in the economic situation in the Delta. Instead, there has been a series of development initiatives, projects, and commissions that have failed to alter significantly the control of resources, levels of corruption, or lack of development. Each new initiative is judged by an increasingly suspicious and doubtful population. In December 2000 Obasanjo established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The purpose of this commission is to address the economic problems in the region through development initiatives. According to the NDDC, it has initiated over 2,000 development projects and 300 electrification projects (ICG, 2006c, p. 7). Yet residents dispute the effectiveness of the commission, saying they have not seen any real evidence of development, and do not believe that the government is sincere in delivering on its promises (Onyeka-Ben, 2006). Progress has been slow. The government finally launched the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan in late March 2007. The plan provides USD 50 billion over a 15-year period for development efforts (*Vanguard*, 2007b). The plan aims to target poverty and community needs; develop a strong economy, physical infrastructure, and human capacity; and provide care for the natural environment (Odili and Agande, 2007). Already, concerns have been raised

about implementing the plan. Its acting managing director pointed to problems of finance, cooperation, governance, and security as potential obstacles to implementation (*Vanguard*, 2007b). As one newspaper editorial pointed out, Nigeria does not have a strong record of implementing master plans (*Vanguard*, 2007b). The government created the Niger Delta Peace and Security Strategy in 2005. This strategy brings together the major stakeholders in the region to address issues of conflict and sustainable development. This includes efforts to address 98 Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 20 Hazen with Horner Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria constant presence of the military in the area. This feeling of occupation and the resultant siege mentality are exacerbated by the violence used by the police and military to clear towns of armed militias and alleged supporters of armed groups (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 29; Servant, 2006). There have been several examples of the military using excessive force and killing numerous civilians in response to militant violence. These include incidents in 1999 in Odi (HRW, 1999), in 2001 in Benue state (HRW, 2002), in 2003 in Ogbakiri, and in 2006 in Aker Base (HRW, 2006; O'Neill, 2007). There also has been a reported crackdown on militias, piracy, oil bunkering, and illegal arms since June 2004, involving massive military operations (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 223, citing Omonobi, 2004). These military actions resulted in widespread destruction and the loss of civilian lives. They also increased popular support for some armed groups among the affected communities. Initial military efforts to address the growing insecurity in the Delta and other parts of the south largely failed to have any positive effect in reducing armed violence. The vigilante group the Bakassi Boys stopped troops from entering Onitsha in July 2000 (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 29). Street fighting in Lagos between the OPC and the police resulted in 200 men lost by government forces (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 30). This suggested that the police and military have been largely unable to address the rising violence. In late 2004 some evidence of a decline in losses of oil from bunkering and pipeline vandalization suggested that the military approach might be working

(Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 223, citing Ozoemena, 2003). Given the difficulty in measuring levels of bunkering, the task of assessing any reduction in bunkering would be equally difficult, and many believe that the practice remains widespread. Even if military action has succeeded in reducing bunkering, the overall result of the military strategy may have produced the opposite outcome to the one desired. Many believe that the militarization of the Delta has simply exacerbated the problem; that each time the military responds with extreme measures, the number of people involved in the violent struggle increases (O'Neill, 2007).⁹⁰ A Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas, created in 2001, supported this position, arguing that the problem in the Delta is a political one, requiring a political solution (ICG, 2006c, p. 7). Perhaps the military is realizing this, as it has publicly stated that the solution to the situation oil theft, corporate responsibility, reconciliation, illicit arms, money laundering, good governance, implementing an early warning system, and developing a disarmament strategy (Bekoe, 2005). The Peace and Security Blue Print, developed as part of the strategy, will identify key issues, recommend conflict management measures, consider a regional disarmament and demobilization strategy, and suggest conflict-reduction programmes (PASS, 2006, p. 4). The Niger Delta Peace and Security Working Group has led this process in order to coordinate various activities and set a timeline for delivering on them. The Peace and Security Blue Print is intended to complement the economic strategy embodied in the Niger Delta Master Plan (Bekoe, 2005).

In April 2006 Obasanjo created the Consolidated Council on Social and Economic Development of Coastal States of the Niger Delta. It was to be a response to the growing violence in the region and a 'Marshall Plan' for development (ICG, 2006c, p. 8). The council has achieved very little, in large part as a result of its poor origins. The 50-member council draws its membership largely from the same government leaders seen by communities as a source of the problem, it failed to bring in civil society, and it offered jobs in the security forces that have imposed hardship

on these communities (ICG, 006c, p. 8). This series of economic initiatives has failed to contribute substantially to the development of the region, has involved large sums of money, and as such has led to complaints about corruption. The newly elected president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, has promised to implement the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, and the government hopes to begin with the process in 2008.

4.3.3 The 'stick': a strategy of militarization

Given the role of the military in governance over the past four decades, the military has often been used as the internal mechanism to control armed violence and political dissension in the country. As such, the national security services have acquired a 'reputation for brutality and impunity' in Nigeria (Peel, 2005, p. 5). Many regard the army and the police as occupying forces, rather than protectors, because they use violence to subdue challenges to government authority, but do not provide security for the broader population. In the Delta, there is a widespread feeling of being under siege because of the in the Delta must be a political one, and that there is no military solution to the problem (ICG, 2006c, p. 10; BBC, 2007b). Despite evidence to the contrary, Obasanjo continued to pursue a military strategy to end the violence in the Delta. In August 2006 he instructed the military to meet force with force (SDN, 2006b, p. 2). This statement focused on the military's handling of the problems in the Delta and came in response to a marked increase in kidnappings. Hostage takings were followed by military attacks on villages (Chatham House, 2006). In October 2006 the military arrested more than 160 suspected militants and burned settlements to the ground, accusing them of harbouring militants (Tayo, 2007, p. 8). Obasanjo further escalated his rhetoric against militants, without any greater success, in response to another rise in kidnappings in early 2007 and a statement by MEND that it had been treating the government with kid gloves and that it was clear that a military solution was not an option (Odili, 2007). The militants have demonstrated a

number of times that they hold the upper hand in the Delta region. This is not because they possess overwhelming military power, but because the military has proven unwilling to unleash a fullscale war in the Delta. The balance of power between the militants and the military remains unclear, and it still appears to favour the military, should they be willing to engage in a full-scale battle. The reality is they are not. While the military does not sit by idly and allow the militants complete freedom of movement and action, neither does it actively seek out militant groups in a consistent fashion. A heavy military response usually comes when the military is under direct attack, or when there has been a perceived egregious amount of kidnapping and violence by an armed group. This results in a heavy engagement by the military, but one that is limited in scope and duration.

4.3.4 The role of the United States

There has been much discussion of the role of the US military in Nigeria. There have been numerous reports in the media about US activities: the United States providing military training to Nigerian troops in and around the Delta port of Calabar in 2004 (Peel, 2005, p. 6); the United States patrolling the waters off the coast of the oil fields as assistance to Nigeria (Watts, 2007); Shell and other oil companies approaching the US military to provide protection for oil facilities in the Delta (Watts, 2007), a request that was denied; and the government requesting the presence of the US Marines in the Delta to counter the threats of militants to the oil production, which was also denied (Hanson, 2007). While the specifics of US support remain unclear, the fact that the United States is supporting Nigeria is certain. US support to Nigeria appears to be targeted at helping the Nigerian armed forces tackle the problems themselves. A US defence official stated in March 2007 that the United States 'is partnering with Nigeria to counter growing violence in its oil-rich delta region that is threatening an ally' (Fisher-Thompson, 2007). The deputy assistant secretary of defence for African affairs, Theresa Whelan, pointed to a number of joint training and

equipment programmes that were ‘aimed at helping Nigeria’s military counter the growing violence against oil facilities and their workers’, as well as a regional maritime awareness capabilities programme aimed at improving the Nigerian navy’s understanding of the situation in the Delta and enhancing its capacity to tackle illegal bunkering, and a small arms and light weapons identification programme to assist the military with identifying and tracking illicit small arms (Fisher- Thompson, 2007). In addition, the United States has increased its military presence in the Gulf of Guinea, increasing its naval patrols from nearly zero activity in 2004 ‘to nearly continuous visits by US Navy vessels in 2006’ (Crawley, 2006). Another platform for trying to address insecurity and volatility in the Niger Delta is the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy, which was initiated in 2005 between the United States and Nigeria. The United Kingdom quickly followed in joining the strategy. The group holds quarterly meetings to discuss the oil security situation. Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, and Switzerland participated in the meeting in August 2006 as observers, and were expected to join the group after the meeting. The aim of the strategy is to promote security of oil production and reserves, while contributing to sustainable development in the Delta region. There are four special committees as part of the strategy to coordinate action in specific areas: trafficking in small arms, maritime and coastal security, community development and poverty reduction, and money laundering and financial crime (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz, 2007, p. 19). There has been slow progress in terms of turning these discussions into substantive reforms and initiatives.

4.3.5 Security sector reform: the police force

Security sector reform remains a difficult task in Nigeria. Although President Obasanjo endeavoured to implement a programme for the reform of the security forces after his election in 1999, he proved unable to get past the traditions of the military. One of Obasanjo’s major concerns upon his election, an election that

removed the military from political power and sent it back to the barracks, was how to ensure that the military remained under democratic control. To this end, he engaged the assistance of Military Professional Resources Incorporated, a US security training firm. This initiative was short-lived. Military leaders, unhappy at the lack of consultation on the decision to hire an external firm, rejected the reform process (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, pp. 3–4). Since this time, there has been no effort to put in place a comprehensive and coherent security sector reform programme. One agency that has received significant attention has been the police. While there has been some progress in reforms, these have come slowly, and there remains significant resistance to a broader reform programme. An important element of addressing insecurity and violence in Nigeria is the strengthening of the national police force to enforce the rule of law and to prevent and respond to violence. Police reform has been a slow process in Nigeria. In part, this is the result of the size of the problem and the need for widespread reform. Decades of military rule had produced a militarized police force well known for its authoritarian practices, its political affiliations, and its poor relations with the community (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 127). Reform is also difficult due to the reluctance within the police force to implement far-reaching reforms, which often threaten access to resources. Some reforms have, however, been undertaken. The government held a recruitment drive in 2000–04 to raise force numbers. The Presidential Committee on Police Reform developed a set of recommendations in 2006 that have been partially accepted by the government. The United Kingdom has contributed through a community policing programme aimed at improving police capacity and community relations. Yet the police still suffer from a lack of training, equipment, and incentive to tackle violent crime. Although several successive Nigerian administrations, both civilian and military, have proclaimed a need for and commitment to reform, very little was done to reform or restructure the police (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 102). When President Obasanjo came to power in the transition to democratic rule, he declared his government's intention to

reform the police, recruit more officers, and increase salaries (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 102). The police launched a recruitment drive in 2000, with a target of 40,000 new recruits per year. The drive was ended in 2004, with a police force nearing 330,000 in strength. While a large force in numbers, it has proven ineffective in tackling crime and armed violence.

The overall average meets the United Nations recommended ratio of one police officer to 400 citizens, but with wide-ranging discrepancies among Nigeria's states. In many states, the average ratio far exceeds this, with one police officer to 600 or even 900 civilians. But more important than mere numbers is the quality of those on the force and their capacity to enforce the rule of law. Although bringing in large numbers of recruits, the programme has been accused of hiring the wrong people in a rush to fill quotas. The police themselves admit that the recruitment process was flawed, enabling the entry of a number of people who were not qualified for their posts. There are allegations that insufficient screening of the new recruits led to the inclusion of criminals, as well as a rise in illegal activities by newly recruited officers, such as the rental or sale of arms to civilians and the extortion of civilians (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5). In 2007 the police have engaged in a restructuring process whereby nearly 11,000 officers have been decommissioned. The majority of these were recruited during the 2000–04 period. In addition to problems with the quality of those recruited, the police also face a number of obstacles.

There are challenges in training the massive influx of recruits produced by the recruitment programmes. These high numbers stretched the capacity of training facilities and resulted in the sub-standard training of the new recruits (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5; Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). The police lack sufficient equipment, including communications equipment, vehicles, and small arms. By contrast, the military has been better equipped, staffed, and paid, producing tensions between the two national forces (Rauch and Van der Spuy, 2006, p. 99). Salaries are a concern for the police, being both low and often late. A new recruit into the police force earns

roughly USD 422 per year, an inspector just over USD 1,000 per year, and the inspector general of the force USD 9,300 per year (Small Arms Survey, 2007a).

Poor salaries, poor training, and poor conditions of service contribute to low morale, inefficiency, and incentives for corruption. Since 1999 police reform has proceeded at best on an ad hoc basis. There has been no overarching framework for reform (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 5; Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). A common response of the police to tackling crime is to increase the number of police officers and ensure that they have more firepower than the criminals (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 130). But Chukwuma (2000, p. 130) argues that more men and more guns are not a replacement for more effective police performance, and that there is no serious effort to transform the police into a democratic police force responsive to the community and effective in tackling crime. Police reform must be considered within a broader reform of the security sector, including democratic control and adherence to human rights standards. Simply expanding the numbers within the force and providing officers with more arms will not provide better security. In fact, it might produce the opposite effect. Police reform and effective policing must also be seen as part of a broader reform of government and further expansion of democratic principles within governance practices. Security forces have long been viewed as the brutal arm of government. Changing this perception will require improving the capacity of the police to provide security to the population at large and ensuring that the police cannot be used as enforcers of partisan and personalized politics. The Presidential Committee on Police Reform was established in January 2006. The committee was given a three-month mandate to review the structure, administration, morale, operations, training, and community relations of the force. The committee submitted its report on 25 May 2006, with a number of recommendations for reform. The government responded with a white paper, which has not yet been publicly released.

A comparison of the committee's report and the white paper reveals that the government accepted a number of recommendations pertaining to funding, operations,

and recruitment, but rejected a number of others aimed at reducing the politicization of the police and improving the independence and professionalism of the force (Small Arms Survey, 2007a, p. 6). One initiative that appears to be making some headway is a community policing programme. This programme is part of the larger GBP 30 million (USD 62,535,300 million⁹²) DFID Security, Justice and Growth Programme aimed at supporting reform of the security and justice sectors. The activities of this programme include alternative commercial dispute resolution and women's rights under sharia, as well as the community policing initiative. The impetus behind the community policing programme is to improve community relations, service delivery, and violence prevention and reduction through formal and informal policing and partnerships with communities. The programme was initially launched in Enugu state in 2004. It was expanded to a total of 6 states in 2005, and now it is likely to extend to a total of 18 of the 36 states. The idea is to begin to change the approach to policing and attitudes towards policing. The focus is on changing attitudes and behaviours at the state level as a first step in a more comprehensive national reform programme.

There is evidence to suggest that the community policing programme is making progress in improving police–community relations. A survey conducted by DFID in 2007 reveals that the overall experience of police corruption is down and reports of excessive use of force have declined, and that a number of respondents attribute this to the introduction of the community policing programme. The police also received high scores for performance, and 87 per cent of respondents reported a reduced fear of crime since community policing was introduced (DFID, 2007). The inability of the police to enforce the rule of law has resulted in the creation of a number of community defence groups. Other factors contributing to their rise include the role of politicians in supporting these groups, the lack of democratic institutions to settle disputes through non-violent means, and the lack of public confidence in the state to contain violence and protect groups within the population (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 27). These groups, often referred to as vigilante groups in local parlance, provide

services akin to community watch programmes. In theory, these groups are supposed to conduct patrols as a deterrent to crime, and to hand over any suspects to the police.

But in practice, some groups have taken the law into their own hands, meting out punishments, arresting individuals, and acting as their own police force. The result has been the outright banning of some vigilante groups and a population.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

The study examined the link between relative deprivation and armed proliferation, and the 2009 amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study investigated whether efforts towards the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme has been effective. To this effect, research question directing the study was formulated, objective of the study outlined and empirical significance of the study articulated. Furthermore, we embarked on the review of the extant literature relevant to the study to establish whether the data inquiries have addressed the research questions we raised. The review created a gap which the study addressed. To do this, we formulated a hypothesis that was linked in consistent manner to research question and objective of study. We also relied on the relative deprivation as our theoretical framework to provide philosophical justification for our hypothesis. To get information for the study, we utilized observation technique to generate relevant secondary data for the study. And for data analysis, we adopted qualitative descriptive analysis.

The result of data analysis confirmed our hypothesis. The findings reveal that there is a positive link between relative deprivation and armed proliferation and 2009 amnesty programme to mop up small arms have not been effective. If there is anything to go by, this ineffectiveness has allowed more weapons to find their way into the hands of unauthorized persons.

5.2 Conclusion

On the strength of data generated through secondary sources, we tested and validated our hypotheses. Hence, it has been empirically established that there is a positive link between relative deprivation and the endemic armed in niger-niger, and that there are weak efforts and laws towards the implementation of a comprehensive

weapons collection programme. This is why small arms are still proliferating and will continue to prolong armed conflict in the Niger Delta.

Therefore, the root cause of armed conflict in the Delta region is inadequate development project compare to the degree of resources which the region churns out for the Nigerian economy. As long as the Nigeria government is not ready to bring about meaningful development to the region, it should get ready to contend with the militant forces as well as subsequent splinter militant groups that may arise as well. Based on the foregoing we are arrived at the following finding:

- That poverty which is the major cause of the disturbances in the Niger Delta is yet to be seriously addressed. The Nigerian state has continued to drag its foot towards bringing about meaningful development in the region that “lays the golden egg”. This is because the interest (oil) of the Federal government in the Niger Delta has not being completely truncated.
- That effort towards the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive weapons collection programme has not been effective in the mopping up of small arms.

5.3 Recommendations

Resources are a major factor in the conflicts and threats of war in any society. Limited access and inequitable distribution often create patterns and feelings of marginalization. For a society that is used to settling even the most minor dispute with small arms, it should be expected that natural resources would spawn and sustain major conflicts. This is obvious in the case of Nigeria’s Delta region where the legal but unjust exploitation of crude oil has generated an on-going problem made worse by unregulated use and easy access to small arms. It makes no sense to call them “small” arms given the scale of the evil they perpetrate.

The foregoing notwithstanding, there are opportunities for the realisation of a Niger Delta that is free from the proliferation and use of small arms:

First, the government should create the necessary conditions for the genuine dialogue required for the resolution of the parlous state of underdevelopment which led to the violence in the region. Although the present civilian administration has made some major policy interventions in the Niger Delta imbroglio (especially the quarterly Presidential Forum on the Niger Delta) such efforts have become “a hollow, time-wasting, television show, where serious contributions are ridiculed and participants are harangued and shouted down by an all-knowing and comical moderator” as personified by former President Obasanjo.

Second, the government should demonstrate genuine commitment to stop the flow of small arms in the Niger Delta. For instance, while it is true that Nigeria has established a national committee on the implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Small Arms, indications are that the efforts made so far lack strategic coordination and consistent implementation. Thus, beyond the mere signing of the ECOWAS principle not to allow importation, exportation and manufacturing of small arms, the government should strengthen its control over arms in its armoury and work out necessary measures that would guarantee border security with its neighbours.

Third, it is necessary to ensure that only the police are deployed to the Niger Delta to keep peace. Even then, it should be the duty of government to ensure that those that are so deployed act professionally and in accordance with international standards.

Fourth, there is a need to ensure that concrete steps are taken to get oil companies to operate within the framework of international best practices in their prospecting for oil by protecting the Niger Delta environment and to promote

community development projects following the principles of corporate social responsibility. Such efforts should include a comprehensive road network that would open up the region and promote agro-allied industry and infrastructural transformation.

Finally, as a matter of urgency, there is a need for job creation to guarantee the socio-economic security of the vast army of jobless youth in the Niger Delta. This step, apart from helping to give the desired sense of belonging and partnership to the Nigerian project, would also help to anchor the Niger Delta policy in a political process that stresses human capital development and security rather than the one that attempts to foist dubious law and order upon the population. As the country talks about local content in the oil sector, the principle should be taken to a level that provides training in oil industry-related skills and enables these youth to find relevance in the fight against the proliferation and use of small arms and that finally allows the Niger Delta region to achieve its full potential.

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