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Community-Driven Peacebuilding and Sustainability of Human Security in Nigeria's Oil-Producing Communities

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This paper examines the shift from top-down security systems to community-driven mechanisms for peace-building and assesses their relevance to sustaining human security in the Niger Delta.* ***Method:*** *Using ideas from human security and bottom-up peacebuilding, the paper adopts a qualitative approach.* ***Results:*** *It argues that traditional state-centric strategies, which are sometimes militarized or transactional, have missed the structural reasons of local grievances, including economic marginalization, environmental damage and erosion of traditional governance. The paper reveals that indigenous conflict-resolution methods, like community-monitored development trusts, youth-led environmental advocacy and models mandated from outside, are more resilient and credible than others imposed from outside. These natural forms promote ownership, hence reduce sabotage and social conflicts. Two major obstacles underlined in the research are the gatekeeper phenomenon and the continuous partisan-interest encroachment threatening communal cohesiveness.* ***Novelty:*** *Nigeria's security strategy must move from protecting oil infrastructure to protecting community livelihoods in order for human security to be sustainable.*

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria stands as one of the most poignant global examples of the "resource curse", a geographic space where immense subterranean wealth coexists with crushing surface-level poverty and systemic instability. Crude oil extraction has been the foundation of Nigeria's economy for more than 60 years, but for the people who live in the oil-producing communities, this geological gift has frequently felt like a socio-ecological burden. Inevitably, state-centric security narratives have long prevailed in the discourse on the Niger Delta, which has centred on flow station maintenance and the safeguarding of oil infrastructure. However, this narrow focus on "regime security" has persistently ignored the broader and more volatile reality of human security. While state-led interventions and militarised responses still somtimes result in ad-hoc, short-term ceasefires, there is an opportunity to reconsider localised peacebuilding as the only durable route to achieving human security.

Human security, as a conceptual framework, shifts the referent object of security from the state to the individual. In Nigeria's oil-producing belt, human security is under constant assault from multiple fronts: environmental despoliation that destroys livelihoods, a lack of economic alternatives for a burgeoning youth population, and the proliferation of small arms fueled by communal fragmentation [1]. The conventional approach to peace in this area has been transactional, that is sometimes defined by

amnesty payments or sporadic infrastructure projects addressing the symptoms of conflict instead of the underlying pathology of marginalization. These top-down models frequently fail because they lack local legitimacy; they are viewed by the community not as genuine efforts at peace, but as strategic bribes intended to facilitate uninterrupted extraction. By contrast, community-driven peacebuilding stresses the local actors' agency. It recognises that those who reside right in the middle of the conflict have the most complex grasp of its causes and hence are the best suited weapons for its solution. This approach aims to repair social fabric, rather than simply remove violence.

When communities are empowered to design their own conflict-resolution mechanisms, leveraging traditional authorities, women's groups and youth councils, the resultant peace is more resilient because it is rooted in local ownership [2]. Active involvement of communities in peacebuilding has the capacity to sustain human security. Without this bottom-up integration, any semblance of order remains a "negative peace", a temporary lull in hostilities maintained by force or fiscal inducement, waiting for the next spark to get ignited.

The historical record of the Niger Delta indicates that the state monopoly on peacebuilding has had adverse effects. From the 1990s Ogoni struggle to the current phase of militancy in the Niger Delta, the main grievance is a real detachment from the decision-making processes affecting their land and resources. TThe "gatekeeper" effect is key here, in which the local elite often appropriates communal benefits for itself, fuelling inner-communal conflict [3]. Focusing on community-driven approaches presents a chance to avoid these bottlenecks and advance a more inclusive kind of development that gives human capital and environmental remediation priority above only physical security. Moreover, the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021, particularly its clauses for Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs), constitutes a critical, though contentious, milestone in this changeover.

While the Act purports to transfer more agency to local communities, its success hinges entirely on implementation. If these trusts are managed through the same top-down, exclusionary lens of the past, they will likely become new sites of contestation. If, however, they are utilized as platforms for genuine community-driven peacebuilding, they could provide the institutional framework necessary to sustain human security for generations [4].

The paper examines the intersections between local agency, resource governance and long-term stability. It claims that a long-term solution for the human security of oil-producing communities in Nigeria does not rest with more high-tech military weapons; military hardware or increasing defense budgets; it is a social contract problem. Therefore, to move on, the Nigerian state and multinational oil corporations must switch the gear from being purveyors of "security" to being purveyors of "peace." Only by anchoring peacebuilding initiatives in the social capital and indigenous wisdom of the communities themselves can the Niger Delta transition from a zone of perpetual crisis to a model of sustainable human development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite decades of state-led interventions and significant budgetary allocations towards stabilizing Nigeria's oil-producing communities, human security remains profoundly elusive. The prevailing approach, primarily a combination of militarized surveillance and transactional amnesty payments, has prioritized the uninterrupted flow of crude oil over the socio-ecological well-being of the local populace. This top-down security structure has failed to fix the systematic causes of volatility, including community fragmentation, erosion of traditional livelihoods, and chronic environmental deterioration.

The marginalization of local agency is at the root of the problem; peacebuilding projects are frequently created and imposed by outside players without a close awareness of the subtle social complexities of the area. Consequently, these efforts often collapse into "negative peace" (a fragile absence of overt violence that masks deep-seated grievances). Exploring the significance of community-driven mechanisms in enhancing human security is timely and adds value to knowledge, especially nowadays when states are facing threats. Without a shift towards community-led peacebuilding, human security in the Niger Delta will continue to be a fleeting aspiration, perpetually undermined by the very state-centric models intended to preserve it.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess the current state-led security apparatus in managing the unconventional security challenges of the citizens of oil-producing regions;
2. Study of existing grassroots peacebuilding mechanisms to do a preventional analysis of how they help in mitigating localized communal conflicts;
3. Examine the relationship between local agency in conflict resolution and stability in human security measures;
4. Understand what structural and political barriers exist to the formal incorporation of community-based peace-building models within the larger umbrella of national security architecture of the Niger Delta; and
5. Propose a policy frame work for decentralized Security that community ownership and custodianship experiences needed to ensure sustainable peace and regional development in oil-producing communities of Niger Delta.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study type qualitative, desk-based research; methodical review of secondary sources of literature examining the relationship between human security and community empowerment. Data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, longitudinal socio-economic studies and policy briefs from NGOs in the Niger Delta. KEY MESSAGE: A thematic synthesis of environmental impact assessments and ethnographic field observations extracted from the contemporary regional literature underpinned this

approach. Devoted to the 'provable' of environmental malady, attention to the devastation and forsaking of the infrastructure, and the militarized space of extractive zones, such sites provided essential virtual engagement with these denizens in their material and social settings.

The selection of these sources was influenced by academic authority and recent history— specifically, the period from the 2009 Amnesty Programme up to the present day. The data collected were then analyzed using content analysis for recurrent themes in grassroots peacebuilding successes and failures. This approach provided a balanced, evidence-based evaluation of local engagement in relation to the long-term sustainability of human security in an unstable extractive economy.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in the Human Security Theory, complemented by the Bottom-up Peacebuilding Approach. These theoretical perspectives provide a lens for analysing the shift from traditional, state-centric security paradigms to a more inclusive, people-oriented model within Nigeria's oil-producing communities.

The Human Security Theory, popularized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), moves the discourse on humans beyond the protection of state borders towards the protection of individuals from chronic threats, such as hunger, disease, and repression [5]. This framework is a necessary sieve in the context of the Niger Delta. It addresses the fact that security is more than the absence of arms; it is also the presence of integrity of the environment and economic agency. Human security is therefore an indivisible concept: as Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy have argued, the freedoms of fear and want are interlinked, and the environmental degradation engendered by the activities of extractive industries diminishes human security and produces an intergenerational cycle of vulnerability that state-led militarisation cannot break [6].

To operationalize the Human Security Theory, the paper integrates the Bottom-up Peacebuilding Approach, popularized by John Paul Lederach. Traditional Liberal Peace models often rely on top-down diplomacy and elite-level agreements that rarely permeate the grassroots [7]. The framework provided by Lederach shows the importance of leadership initiatives in rural communities to produce "infrastructure for peace that can stand the test of time". This theory posits that, for peacebuilding to be sustainable in oil-producing regions, it must be culturally grounded and community-owned. It acknowledges that local actors possess the contextual intelligence required to mediate land disputes and corporate-community friction more effectively than external security forces [8]. Through a synthesis of these ideas, the study maintains that human security in Nigeria depends on the empowerment of local institutions. Peace is regarded as a dynamic process driven by communities affected most by the externalities of oil development rather than as a stationary end-state attained via violence or forgiveness. This theoretical synergy allows for a rigorous objective analysis of how local participation acts as a buffer against both corporate exploitation and state neglect.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discourse surrounding peacebuilding and human security in Nigeria's oil-producing communities has evolved from a narrow focus on state-centric stabilization to a more nuanced exploration of communal agency and structural justice. Historically, the Resource Curse or Paradox of Plenty hypothesis ruled the academic narrative. Auty and Ross put forth the basic idea that nations rich in oil often have slower economic development and increased civil unrest [9][10]. However, contemporary scholars have moved beyond this deterministic view, arguing that conflict in the Niger Delta is not an inevitable by-product of geology, but a consequence of governance deficits and the marginalization of local voices [11][12].

The Shift from Top-down to Bottom-up Peacebuilding

Most early engagements in the Niger Delta with an early attempt to address needs in the region were through top down approaches most prominently the Presidential Amnesty Programme[PAP]. Although the PAP managed to diminish the immediacy of the kinetic intensity of militant activities, Watts and Omotola contend that it did not tackle the underlying causes of insecurity [13][14]. Such programmes, these critics assert, tend to become elite deals, with only former warlords getting the spoils, while the systemic environmental degradation and socio-economic exclusion of the wider community remains unresolved. The breakdown of this project has propelled a reorientation in the literature towards peacebuilding as the "local turn". Richmond argues that true peace tends to be "locally led": external solutions often lack the cultural resonance, or trust, that imbue them with the long-term durability required for a sustainable peace [15].

Environmental Governance and Human Security

A significant portion of the literature links the sustainability of human security directly to environmental justice. In Nigeria, the security-development nexus is frequently invoked. The degradation of the ecosystem by multinational corporations has decimated traditional livelihoods, primarily fishing and farming, thereby creating a vacuum of economic security that is often filled by oil bunkering and other forms of criminality [16]. Idemudia highlights that corporate social responsibility initiatives have historically been paternalistic and transactional rather than transformative [17]. The literature now argues that human security cannot be achieved through sporadic philanthropic gestures; it requires a systemic shift where communities are stakeholders in the protection of their own environment [18].

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and the HCDT Framework

With the passage of the Petroleum Industry Act, the thematic shift in the literature appears to be the Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) [19]. This legislative shift is an explicit effort to make development from the ground up. The initial reactions to the PIA, meanwhile, are divided. Although 3% of operating expenses is an important first step to community empowerment according to some scholars, others such as Ibaba counter that the power relationship remains largely favouring oil companies, which

preserve considerable power over who appoints trust members [20]. This new area of research indicates that whatever external funding is available to maintain peace under the PIA, the shape of that peace is not only determined by the availability of funds but by the transparency and inclusivity of the governance taking place within those communities.

Community Agency and Sustainability

The consensus among modern Africanists is that sustainable peace is a function of active citizenship [21]. When peacebuilding is community-driven, it leverages indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms that are often more effective than the formal legal system in resolving land and communal disputes. However, a gap remains in the literature regarding the internal frictions within communities–specifically how youth and women are often sidelined even in local models. Sustainable human security, therefore, requires a model of peacebuilding that is not only community-led but also internally democratic, ensuring that the benefits of oil production are not captured by the local elite [22].

Evaluation of State-led Security Frameworks and Non-traditional Threats

The prevailing security architecture in Nigeria's oil-producing regions remains anchored in a traditionalist, state-centric paradigm that prioritizes the protection of oil infrastructure over the protection of human lives. This "securitization of oil" [23] views disruptions to production as existential threats to the national treasury, while treating the non-traditional security crises, namely environmental displacement and chronic economic marginalization, as secondary or incidental externalities. Consequently, the efficacy of these frameworks in addressing the lived realities of community residents is profoundly limited.

The Kinetic Fallacy and Environmental Displacement

Deployment of combined task forces and naval patrols has been the main reaction of the Nigerian state to the instability in the Niger Delta. Although these strategies may momentarily stop significant crude oil theft, they are basically unable to solve environmental displacement. The literature points to the fact that government-led security frequently intensifies, rather than reduces, environmental damage. For instance, when security personnel destroy illicit refineries, they often burn confiscated items, therefore causing extra soot pollution and water pollution [24].

From a human security perspective, the threat is not merely the militant, but the vanishing of the mangrove ecosystem. State frameworks offer no environmental policing that holds multinational corporations accountable with the same vigour used to hunt oil thieves. As a result, residents fleeing from oil-soaked farmlands find themselves in a security vacuum where the state is seen as an occupying force protecting the pipes rather than a guardian of the soil [25].

Economic Marginalization and the Elite Pact Problem

So far, this marginalization has been addressed with state-led frameworks (the most recent being the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP)), which offered stipends

and vocational training. Yet these are frequently described as extractive peace models. There is the point for the battleground adjustment that the state has institutionalised a system of capable "militant entrepreneur" [26]. This attitude does not tackle the economic marginalization of the greater populace, such as non-combatant females and youth.

These frameworks are rendered ineffective by their transactional nature. Such security—through payoffs — only further incentivizes it and the economic insecurity that lies beneath this fact, whether that be ensuring that industrialization pays off or restoring local livelihoods (fishing and farming). This becomes a vicious cycle: as the security logic that justifies the use of force by the state continues to ignore the "quiet" violence of poverty and unemployment, the incentives for the community to guard oil installations remain primary non-existent [27].

Institutional Rigidity and Human Security

The root of failure of the present frameworks is their institutional rigidity. The Nigerian security system itself operates on a command-and-control logic which is not ideal for anything that resembles the complex, multi-dimensional nature of human security. To tackle sino-non-traditional threats means moving from state security (regime and its patrimonial assets) to human security (human dignity and means of life).

The Petroleum Industry Act (2021) tries to fill this gap through the Host Community Development Trusts, but even this is tainted by a security mentality that sees community involvement as something to be controlled by oil companies as part of a broader risk management procedure, rather than as a basic right of the inhabitants. As long as there isn't a radical expansion of the National Security state's charter to embrace environmental restoration and inclusive economic planning, the state can win tactical skirmishes but ultimately lose the sit-down battle for lasting peace.

Grassroots Peacebuilding: Traditional Systems and Youth Advocacy

Thus, state-led security is based on the principle of external imposition, whereas grassroots peacebuilding draws on the leverage of existing social contract. In oil-rich communities, formal legal systems are often seen as slow and biased in favor of corporate interests, making these local mechanisms a more accessible—sometimes even a more legitimate—alternative dispute resolution process.

The Resilience of Customary Authority in Traditional Mediation

The role of traditional rulers (ezes, obas and amanyanabos) and councils of elders remains a cornerstone of communal stability. Unlike the adversarial nature of state courts, traditional mediation is restorative. It focuses on the preservation of communal harmony rather than the simple assignment of guilt [28]. In the context of oil-related conflicts, such as land boundary disputes between families or internal leadership tussles within host community trusts, these traditional systems use deep-seated cultural norms to enforce compliance.

However, the efficacy of these systems is often under tension. The politicization of royalty, where the state or oil multinationals co-opt traditional leaders to secure social licence, can erode their perceived neutrality. When traditional authorities are viewed as

conduits for corporate patronage rather than defenders of the common people, their ability to mitigate localized conflict diminishes. Successful mediation, therefore, depends on the leader's ability to maintain moral distance from the oil industry's financial incentives [29].

Youth-led Advocacy: From Agitation to Civil Engagement

A significant shift has occurred in the demographic of peacebuilding. Historically framed as the primary "troublemakers", the youth in oil-producing regions have increasingly organized into sophisticated advocacy networks. Groups like the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) or localized "Federations of Youth" have transitioned, in various degrees, from purely kinetic agitation to policy-driven advocacy and communal policing.

Youth-led mechanisms are particularly effective in monitoring early warning signs of conflict. Because they are embedded in the socio-economic fabric of the streets, these networks can identify and de-escalate tensions before they reach a boiling point [30]. Moreover, youth-led environmental monitoring organizations perform a dual security role: they record oil spills and ecological destruction, giving locals a non-violent venue for redress, hence avoiding the frustration sometimes leading to sabotage or abduction.

The Part in Lowering Regional Communal Conflicts

Their cultural closeness defines the main power of these locally run tools. They know the complexities of kinship and the particular history of land ownership that an outside military official cannot grasp. By using shame and social exclusion, instead of prison, as punishment they preserve a self-regulating social order.

The assessment of their role, however, reveals a systemic challenge: scalability. Grassroots mechanisms are highly effective at resolving intra-communal friction (between neighbours or families) but struggle with inter-communal conflicts that are fuelled by competition for host community status or pipeline surveillance contracts. When the stakes involve massive financial inflows from the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), traditional systems are often overwhelmed by the scale of the oil-money at play, necessitating a hybrid approach, where the state provides the framework, but the community provides the mediation [31].

The Correlation between Local Agency and Human Security Stability

The sustainability of human security in volatile regions is rarely the product of high-level state intervention alone. Instead, there is a measurable, positive correlation between local agency, the capacity of community members to self-organize and mediate their own disputes, and the stability of human security indicators. Communities that hold the ability to settle disputes among themselves establish a social buffer that stops local tensions from spiralling into systematic violence.

a. Personal Safety: The Deterrent Power of Social Capital

Conflict resolution through locality is a game changer for the personal safety canvas. In more predatory or state-less policing environments, community mediation becomes the role model to minimize the impulses for crime and retaliation for murder.

Drawing on social capital —the trust and networks within a group— local actors can carry out soft policing implementing social sanction and restorative justice.

Residents are less inclined to arm themselves when they know they have an established, local avenue to address grievances. Direct stabilization of personal safety indices through the reduction of total of small arms proliferation. This agency is effective only to the extent that the mediation is inclusive; when local systems are perceived as mere instruments for a particular sub-group or ethnic group, safety for the out-group is at risk [32].

b. Communal Health: Security of Access and Psychosocial Stability

Often overlooked, but still essential is the connection between local agency and community health. Resolving disputes at the local level guarantees access security. Healthcare professionals can move freely in a steady, self-mediated setting, therefore allowing vaccination programmes or maternal health clinics to function without the danger of being caught in crossfire.

Furthermore, local agency provides a vital psychosocial benefit. The sense of collective efficacy, the belief that a community can control its own destiny, reduces the collective trauma associated with perpetual conflict. Where local leaders successfully mediate land or resource disputes, the resulting social cohesion acts as a public health asset, reducing the incidence of displacement-related diseases and the psychological stressors of insecurity [33].

c. Economic Resilience: Protecting the Micro-engine

Economic resilience in conflict-prone areas is built on the predictability of the local market. Local agency provides this predictability. When traditional or youth-led mediation systems resolve a trade dispute or a land-use conflict, they protect the micro-engines of the economy, smallholder farms and local markets.

If conflict is managed locally, it prevents the "scorched earth" outcomes of larger-scale communal warfare, where assets are destroyed and trade routes are severed. Moreover, communities with strong agency are better suited to bargain with external economic entities including international corporations. Through local representative councils, they guarantee that resource abundance helps to build community resilience instead of becoming a curse that fuels local militias [34][35].

Local agency serves as the glue for human security. While the state provides the legal architecture, it is the local actor who manages the day-to-day variables of safety, health and livelihood. The correlation is clear: where local agency is robust and inclusive, human security indicators show significantly higher levels of resilience against external shocks. Conversely, when local agency is eroded by state centralization or corporate co-optation, the community becomes fragile, leaving it vulnerable to both internal collapse and external exploitation.

Structural and Political Barriers to Community Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta hangs in a precarious balance. Decades of military intervention and amnesty programmes have repressed mass militancy but the root causes of conflict

— environmental degradation, in competition over resources and political exclusion — persist. Community-driven peacebuilding models have effectively addressed local disputes before they spiral into larger conflicts, however they remain almost entirely outside Nigeria's official national security architecture. This omission is not coincidental; it stems from embodied structural and political impediments resulting in state survival, flow of resources and power over human security.

a. The Securitization of Oil and the State-centric Bias

First, the main structural barrier is the Nigerian state perceiving the Niger Delta simply through its securitized lens. Since the region is the economic backbone of the federation, national security is regarded almost exclusively as the uninterrupted flow of crude oil. This leads to a modality that favours kinetic military solutions such as Operation Delta Safe focused on the protection of pipelines over people.

If security is seen through a lens of asset protection, the slower, softer, or more ad hoc models often associated with community-driven approaches are viewed as insufficient. The vertical, command-driven approach of the formal security architecture fails to connect with the horizontal, consensus-driven approach of community peacebuilding. As a result, local mediators often become more like informants than partners, and that is a sad state of affairs that erodes the root relationships needed for community models [36].

b. The Political Economy of Conflict and "the Security Vote"

There is a strong politico-economic incentive to keep the status quo. Security votes — unaccountable sums given to every state governor and security agency in Nigeria — thrive where crisis exists. Such a proactive, community-led model for conflict prevention also makes the case for these massive multi-year, multi-million dollar secretive budget appropriations hard to justify.

In addition, many of the local political elite profit from the present militant–clientelist system. Politicians and other stakeholders exploit this community-level actor set-up as political enforcers during elections, and in so doing maintain a vicious circle which comes to define peacebuilding; peacebuilding becomes just a buzzword for making politically noisy lags and lords feel temporarily woo-ed. In order to codify mediation driven by the community, it would have to be out in the open, a kind of transparency that endangers the patronage networks. Incorporating real grassroots voices from across the country into a national security framework would fundamentally democratize security: move the power out of the hands of state-appointed gatekeepers, and back to the community.

c. Institutional Distrust and the Complicity Trap

The gap of distrust between the Nigerian security forces and the communities of Delta, however, is yawn wide. For much of history, the military has functioned primarily as a mechanism of state-corporate repression. Local legitimacy is required for community peacebuilding models to work. If these models are embedded into the national security

baton, they could easily be interpreted as being co-opted by a government perceived by many citizens as the enemy. This creates a complicity trap.

On the one side, leaders fear that in the framework of participating formal security systems they will be required to share data that could lead to human rights violations of its own population. Conversely, military often does not want to share power with local commitees because it fears that community leaders may hold covert ties to insurgents or oil bunkers. Integration is still an exercise in theory unless civilian-military relations are fundamentally reformed.

d. Legislative Lacuna and the Lack of a Legal Framework

A strong legal regime around non-state peacebuilding actors as an ultimate authority is absent. Security power is centralized in the Federal Government by Nigerian Constitution and the Police Act. Although Host Community Development Trusts are established under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), they are geared towards creating economic remunerations rather than security redress. The absence of a statutory mandate granting community peace councils formal access to the police or military means that their interventions are effectively ad-hoc and therefore eminently dismissible by national planners.

The Niger Delta needs community-driven models—not because the community-driven models have failed—but because the security architecture of the Nigerian state is designed not to protect its people, but to protect them from their people. To move forward, we need to go from the security of the oil to the security of the host. The Niger Delta will continue staring down the barrel of fragile peace and choreographed violence until the political class come to see local agency as an asset and not a threat to patronage and centralized power.

The Community-led Security and Development (CLSD) Framework

Security in the Niger Delta has been perceived and practiced for decades as an external imposition, a kinetic tool used for the preservation of infrastructure rather than a social contract for the preservation of people. Nigeria needs a community-led Security and Development (CLSD) framework to interrupt the pattern of imposed stability and work towards a compressed transition to sustainable peace. This policy shifts security from a federal monopoly to a shared responsibility – based on the premise that those closest to the land are best suited to secure it.

a. The Institutional Anchor: Tripartite Peace and Security Councils (TPSCs)

At the core of this framework is the creation of Tripartite Peace and Security Councils through legislation at the local government level. The TPSC will be a legal entity consisting of three equally important components of: elected community representatives (traditional and youths leaders), commanders from security agencies (Police and Civil Defence) as well as technical experts from the various companies involved in oil production.

The TPSC de-militarizes local intelligence by making community leaders permanent members of the discussion. Instead of following up on tips that all too often

result in heavy-handed raids by the military, the council identifies potential flashpoints—mostly those of intra-communal land disputes or environmental grievances—before these can develop into sabotage or militancy. This reorients the function of the Nigerian state from occupier to enabler.

b. Fiscal Decentralization: The Peace Dividend Bond

An egregious failing of contemporary archetypes is that agitation is granted an expectation of greater return than peace. A Peace Dividend Bond is what is called for by the CLSD framework. While embodying this model, some percentage of the statutory 3% Host Community Development Trust (HCDT) funds envisaged by the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), should be linked to measuable Peace Indices developed by the communities.

For HCDT thus to be established as a continuous fund, it has to be noted that wherever a community is able to keep their zero-incident status as a result of their internal mediation mechanism, federal security votes — and rightfully usually allocated for military deployments to those communities — should be reinvested into the HCDT but rather deflected towards local infrastructure. This provides a clear economic incentive for security as a community owned service, and peace transforms from an abstract concept into a regional development engine.

c. Formalizing Local Mediation: The Multi-door Security Approach

The Nigerian Police Act should be amended to recognize Community Peace Facilitators (CPFs) as a formal first-response tier for non-violent conflict. These facilitators, trained in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and human rights, would act as the bridge between traditional justice systems and formal courts.

Formalizing these roles makes it possible to professionalize community peacebuilding and provide it with a budget. This multi-door approach ensures that 80% of local grievances never enter the overburdened and often mistrusted formal criminal justice system, thereby reducing the friction between the state and the host communities (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The reduction of such friction is a positive sign and assurance of sustainable peace.

d. Technological Integration and Environmental Sovereignty

Decentralized security must include environmental security. Community-led drone monitoring and digital reporting platforms can empower locals to report bunkering and corporate oil spills in real-time. Giving local people the means to track their surroundings turns a distrustful population into a complex network of environmental guardians. This transparency lowers the blame game between operators and residents, therefore lessening a major cause of regional conflict. A decentralized approach is a more intelligent application of state sovereignty, not a surrender of it.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The historical trajectory of the Niger Delta has long been defined by a paradox of plenty and a poverty of security. This paper has argued that the

prevailing top-down security paradigms, characterized by heavy-handed military presence and transactional amnesty payments, have failed because they treat peace as a commodity to be purchased rather than a social fabric to be woven. There is evidence of the capability of organic peacebuilding to tackle the underlying reasons of instability: environmental damage, seen injustice and erosion of traditional power. Local legitimacy, a currency the government and international oil corporations frequently lack, allows community-driven models to flourish where federal efforts fail. **Implication:** To achieve genuine sustainability in human security, the focus must pivot decisively towards community-driven peacebuilding. This is not merely a moral imperative; it is a structural necessity for the survival of the region's socio-economic ecosystem. Niger Delta's security architecture would shift from reactive crisis management towards active harm reduction by enabling local Peace and Security Councils and make official the duties of community mediators. This change guarantees that the fisherman on the creek and the farmer in the field are also protected, in addition to the crude flowing through pipelines. Moreover, the sustainability of human security is intimately related to the democratization of development. True sustainability requires that the communities are seen not as hostile hosts to be managed, but as primary stakeholders with the right to define their own developmental priorities. When a community owns the process of peacebuilding, they become the most effective guardians of their own environment and infrastructure. The path towards a stable Niger Delta lies in a fundamental shift in the Nigerian state's philosophy of power. Security must be redefined as the presence of justice and opportunity rather than the absence of militancy. The decentralization of the peacebuilding apparatus and placing it in the hands of those who live with the consequences of conflict would make the people move closer to a regional equilibrium where development is inclusive and peace is enduring. **Limitation:** Although its success depends on whether the Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) are permitted to operate as separate vehicles for local agency or are co-opted by powerful interests, the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) offers a nascent parliamentary opportunity. **Future Research:** The Niger Delta of tomorrow depends on the people's capacity to believe the communities to guide their own recovery, hence changing them from conflict sites to sustainable development hubs.

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