Counselling Strategies for Addressing Militancy and Social Restiveness in Nigeria

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Introduction

The youths remain can be considered as the greatest assets that any community can possess. They are the greatest investments for a society's sustainable development and future. This is the reason that is generally acknowledged that meaningful and positive fundamental changes are usually fostered, shaped across cultural settings or shaped by the generation of youths in the society.

Youths of every society are looked up to as leaders of the next generation, and as such a great resource for national development. Youths, since time immemorial play different vital roles in communal life, they have served as helpers to their parents on the farm, assistant to their parents, families and communities such as farming, blacksmithing, weaving and so on. They have also served as communal watchmen that have protected their immediate environment from external attacks. Youth have been great source of human power for developmental process and also constitute man-power for production in cottage industries, drilling and agriculture from which many factories in Africa have benefitted in raw-material productions.

It is also vital to note that the human society, and in fact, the whole universe is simply and squarely a complex entity. To the extent, individuals and groups have their own complexities, needs, aspirations, hopes, goals, opinions, views and values which could be social, economic, religious, psychological or political (Chukwuemeka,Anazodo & Nzewi, 2011). Young people all over the world are a vital and important segment of the society in which they live. A group of disciplined, focused, and law-abiding youths can create a bright future for any nation.

Conversely, a group of lawless, indulgent, and violent youths could constitute a great threat to a nation's peace and security. Therefore, any culture or community, whether macro or micro that allows a good percentage of her youths to be misdirected, risks her future viability and survival. (Ogba, 2010).

Youths could be said to be more disposed to excel in whatever past time that catches their fancy by virtue of their age. They are filled with energy that desires an outlet. When this energy is positively channeled, the youths are highly productive; hence they are likely to contribute a great deal to the socio-economic development of their environment and the society at large. Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. Apart from being the owners and leaders of tomorrow, they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged. Besides numerical superiority, youth have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials (Onyekpe, 2007).

The National Youth Development Policy (2001, p.1) asserts that: Youth are the foundation of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation founds her motivation; on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured.

Ozohu-Sulaiman (2006) attests to the above statement that the role of the youths in the peace and security of a nation cannot be overemphasized. As the most active segment of any society, youth are the major determinants of peace and stability of a nation. The National Youth Policy (2001) affirms that the extent of the youth's "responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country".

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However, if the reverse is the case, restiveness and its resultant effects are likely to be experienced (Enueme & Onyene, 2010).

Also, the degree of disorderliness and instability in society is determined in part by the youths. Since peace is a precursor of development, the absence of peace means no meaningful development can take place.

The recent report that Boko Haram attacks heightened terrorism in Africa is not surprising. Boko Haram has never hidden its interest in advancing the course of its brand of Islam in the country through violence and the use of force. To achieve this aim, it has embarked on acts of unbridled terrorism and wanton destruction of lives and property. According to Chiawolamoke Nwankwo in Sunday Punch Editorial of 5th August, 2012, 'never since the Nigeria Civil War of 1967-1970 has the country faced the kind of security challenge posed by Boko Haram. The group has bombed national institutions and attacked and killed security agents and ordinary citizens. While some apologists of the group have continually attributed Boko Haram's mindless acts of terrorism to poverty, unemployment and bad governance, the group itself has held fast to its stated mission of foisting its variant of the Islamic mode of governance on the northern parts of the country, the Boko Haram group reportedly said, "Christians in Nigeria (no longer the North) should accept Islam, that Islam is the true religion, or they will know no peace." It has never cited poverty and unemployment as its grouses'. The terror in question is not being perpetuated by women, children or old men but youths between the 17 and 25 years of age, one begins to wonder the fate of our nation with social unrest, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery and ritual killing and the future of the youths in Nigeria.

Origin of Youth restiveness and Militancy

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Youth restiveness in Nigeria has been a prominent issue in recent times. There has been a increase in the occurrence of acts of violence and lawlessness, including things like hostage taking of prominent citizens and expatriate oil workers, as well as oil bunkering, arms insurgence, cultism, etc., especially in the Niger Delta region (Igboanugo, 2012). Various forms of youth restiveness that are economically, politically, or religiously motivated have existed for a long time. Elegbeleye (2005) defined youth restiveness as "a sustained protest embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths." It is marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities.

For example, social disorder in the Niger Delta is not recent, it could be traced to Isaac Boro, a Niger Delta militant and radical youth. While in the University of Nigeria Nsukka, he organized secession. The primary aim was to liberate his people from oppression and consequently form the Republic of Niger Delta. That happened in the 1960s. He was subsequently arrested and punished. In the 1980 and 1990s, another radical environmental activist Ken- Saro Wiwa emerged, organized some restive youths in Ogoni land against the Federal Government. They claimed marginalization and neglect that in spite of the fact that their region produce oil that contribute about 90% of Nigeria income, yet their region is one of the most underdeveloped in Nigeria (Chukwuemeka, 2006). After the demise of Ken Saro Wiwa and members of his restive group, in 1999, youth restiveness in the South-South took a new dimension. The new form of militancy and restiveness include kidnapping of foreign workers, top government officials and those supporting government, arson and other forms of destructive behaviours.

Restiveness according to Abdah (2004) is self generating theory of conflict process within social groups. He further stated that any restive act of groups whether inter or intra in nature in

contemporary history of Nigeria is synonymous with conflict. Intra group restiveness or conflict occurs when there is a competition for an interest (Onah, 1999).

It is important to state that the human society, and in fact, the entire universe is simply and squarely a complex entity. To that extent, individuals and groups have their own complexities, needs, aspirations, hopes, goals, opinions, views, and values which could be social, economic, religious, psychological or political (Anioke, 2002).

Consequently, restiveness is bound to occur. It therefore presupposes that since conflict is a situation that is natural to man, our social life revolves and grows in conflict and restiveness.

The relative deprivation theory: asserts that psychological variables and deprivation is the basic product for conflict and restiveness of any kind. The more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of violence in one form or the other (Famham & Pilmot, 1998). Oil has become a serious topic of academic discussion, largely pertaining to the developmental prospects it may confer and the links it has to conflict. Natural resources such as oil can create violent competition and protracted conflict over access to resource wealth. The forms this violence takes have been connected to the nature of the particular resource (Le Billon 2005; Ross 2003). Paul Collier has proposed the "feasibility hypothesis", stipulating: 'when rebellion is materially feasible it will occur' and the motivations behind violent rebellion 'are incidental to the explanation of civil war (Collier, 2006).Collier strongly suggests that it is economic greed, the wish to gain access to resource wealth and the client list' rents commonly to natural resources, which drives rebellion. Such behaviour is evidenced in the predatory economic activities seen among militants, often standing starkly at odds with their professed grievances of political and economic marginalization. The disapproval

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of grievance explanations of conflicts has led Richards to term the perspective of Collier and related scholars (such as Kaplan 1994; Keen 2000; Reno 2000) as "greed, not grievance" (Richards, 2003).

The impact of oil extraction in the Niger Delta is not just connected to the economic privation of the region but also to political marginalization and Nigerian identity politics. Contemporary militants are predominantly Ijaw, who constitute the most prominent ethnic group in the Niger Delta yet remain a minority in the Nigerian federal system which is dominated by Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo interests. Petro-capitalism is the form of political economy engendered by the interaction of oil wealth with pre-existing grievances of political marginalization and the quest for local autonomy by those who have come to identify themselves as oil minorities (Obi, 2001). The Ijaw and a number of other oil minorities in the Niger Delta, provide evidence of hardening ethnic identities and an increased consciousness of their economic deprivation in comparison to the dominant ethnic groups.

Causes of Youth and Social Restiveness

Youths restiveness and social instability have become a major source of concern for many Nigerians, who through the years of debauchery under the military had hoped and prayed and looked forward to peace and security at the termination of the evil dispensation, but rather than experience the peace and security, are today confronted more than ever before with the questionable nature of our national polity and the frightening dimensions of youth restiveness and social insecurity have assumed in Nigeria. The orgy of violence all over the place and the

restiveness of youths amidst our fledging democracy may be an expression of the failure of state and the collapse of governance.

Inequitable distribution of revenue and uneven development: According to Saro-Wiwa (1985), the root causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta are inequitable distribution of revenue, uneven development among the Niger Delta region. He argues that the grassroots and the people of Ogoni land in particular and the people of Niger Delta in general are like that goose that lays the golden egg. The conflicts are also as a result of dominance of leaders of specific groups to gain office and use such states and institutions to distribute economic and political benefits preferentially to their interest groups. Discrimination against subordinate groups, often portrayed as less deserving human beings accompanies this preferential treatment.

Defective Family Background: According to Nwolisa (2011), parental deprivation, separation or divorce of parents, inability of a father to cater adequately for the number of children he has due to acquisition of many wives and disunity and strife in the home amounting to children preferring the street to homes could also cause restiveness and social insecurity.

Religious and Ethnic Militancy: From the sporadic exploits of the terrorist Boko Haram (Islamic fundamentalist that says that western education is evil) in the North West and North Central, to the incessant display of violence by the angry militants in the Niger Delta, from the armed bandits that rule the highways of the North East to the hired assassins that paint the political landscape in the South East with blood. From the ethnic militia known as O.P.C. (O'dua Peoples' Congress) in the South West and MASSOB (Emancipation of the Sovereign State of Biafra) in the South East, to the murderous secret cultists in nearly all our universities and

polytechnics, it has been an orgy of violence and a season of blood and tears in which the very foundation of the nation is now threatened.

A number of studies have identified factors responsible for youth restiveness. Elegbeleye (2005) identified three major factors as: perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation, the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas and the peer motivated excitement of being a student.

Ogoni elders according to Ogbeifun (2007) and Shaibu (2008) attributed restiveness to lack of access to quality education due to collapse of facilities resulting from neglect and activities of multinational oil corporations.

With the long years of military rule in the country and high spate of political crisis, rights of individuals such as to education, health, etc are being neglected. Many of these youths appear to be easily recruited by politicians as thugs, paid huge sums of money, armed, given promises for juicy packages and used for electioneering purposes. Moreover, the arms that were given to them for the electioneering purposes often times were not retrieved; in the absence of paid employment to keep them busy, the youths easily get attracted to wrong vices, with the acquired /unretrieved arms as somewhat confidence boosters. This is often worsened by the fact that some of these youths seem to have easy access to drugs, which obviously influence them negatively (Enueme & Onyene, 2010). Ekhomu (2008) noted that 'drug abuse' is becoming a pervasive problem and it is directly responsible for the increase in robbery, violence and youth restiveness being experienced in Nigeria today.

Lack of Social Amenities: Some youths engage in oil pipeline vandalization and shutting down of flow stations to attack the oil prospecting companies because they perceive these oil

companies as coming to destroy their environment, disrupt production and economic activities, and dislodge their social structures without commensurate compensation and or programme of sustainable rehabilitation Most of these communities have no pipe-borne clean water for drinking, most of their occupation like fishing, are adversely affected because the waters are polluted and fishes die, some do not have access to good health care and both infant and maternal mortality are very high. Many do not have access roads to schools. They argued that while the oil companies make huge profits, nothing appears to change in the lives of the communities rather they leave behind low productivity, intra-ethnic hostilities, unemployment, poverty, prostitution and environmental degradation.

Unemployment: Ozohu-Suleiman (2006) notes that the Nigerian youths are trapped by unemployment. Experts believe that the number of jobless youths is twice as high as official estimate. Unemployment is like a monster which exist among the youth in all developing countries. Zakaria (2006) strongly believes that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences. He believes that "the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youths in African countries have made them vulnerable to manipulations. Unemployment becomes a common feature, and the youths seem to be the worst hit. Ofehe (2008) pointed out that the unemployment and sufferings among the Niger Delta is educating the youths bring about youth restiveness which manifests in increase in armed robbery, hostility to companies' staff and family, prostitution, ritual killing etc. Alaibe (2008) noted that 'there is high population of unemployed, semi-skilled, half-educated youths in the Niger Delta', this makes a large number of them idle and vulnerable to negative influences.

Lack of Involvement in Curricula Design: Most of the youths also believe that restricting their input in curriculum design has contributed to youths' restiveness. Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and cohesion. The knowledge and skill that young people acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contribution to national integration and progress.

Inadequate Educational Opportunities: Enueme & Onyene (2010) found out in their own study that lack of opportunity to go to school contributes to youth restiveness. This supports Enyinnaya (2006) who asserted that lack of opportunity to education contributes to youth restiveness. Enueme & Onyene (2010) also found out that the youths in the Niger Delta region found it difficult in gaining admission into Nigerian higher institutions, predisposes them to restiveness and high cost of tertiary education in Nigeria causes youth restiveness. This still corroborates Enyinnaya (2006). Lack of social amenities is rated highest by the respondents as causing youth restiveness, while inadequate infrastructure /instructional materials in schools is also rated highly by more of the respondents. Ogbeifun (2007) also listed lack of basic amenities e.g. water, electricity, roads and infrastructural decay of educational/ health institutions as some of the youths' grievances. Worse still, some who struggle to enroll in various educational institutions drop out due to lack of basic learning facilities. This situation is attributable to the dwindling resources of government at both federal and state levels as a result of economic meltdown.

Lack of basic infrastructure: Most communities and urban slums in Nigeria have no access to potable water, health facilities, electricity, communication facilities, motorable roads, school buildings, scholarship programmes, job opportunities, industries and commercial facilities

among other things. Behind social unrest and youth restiveness in the country is the agitation for equitable distribution of resources.

Poverty: This connotes inequality and social injustice and which traumatizes the poor. More than 70% of people in Nigeria are living in abject poverty, living below the poverty line, and one-third survive on less than one US dollar ($1) a day. This figure includes an army of youths in urban centres in Nigeria who struggle to cut out a living by hawking chewing sticks, bottled water, handkerchiefs, belts, etc. The sales-per-day and the profit margin on such goods are so small that they hardly live above the poverty line. Disillusioned, frustrated, and dejected, they seek an opportunity to express their anger against the state. Scholars have overtime agreed that there is a link among poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality, and youth restiveness as evidenced by the numerous violent protests against the wielders of power in Nigeria.

Counselling Strategies for Addressing Militancy and Social and Youth Restiveness.

Guidance and Counselling are both involved in helping people solve their problems; however, guidance is broad while counseling is in-depth , narrowing down the problem for the client to understand himself/herself through inward analysis. Guidance is more external and the focus at times, involves proffering readymade solution. Focus in Counselling is not just on solution but on understanding the problem in relation to the client's personality. It involves a series of talking and listening, discussing the problem and sharing relevant information that could help the client arrive at his/her decision. The process of counselling usually ends with the client gaining an insight into the problem and developing a more empowered self that could help in making future decisions (Olusakin, 2011).

Professional Counsellors help people examine their personal constructs and make them more realistic and logical. Personal constructs are the mental images or story lines clients have regarding a host of issues. They represent how clients view the world and how they think the

world should be. Each construct has its own unique script. People have people personal constructs about issues such as work, school, traffic and money, as well as about relationships with family, friends, spouses, lovers, peers, employers and a host of others. Often, these constructs and scripts are not based on logic or realistic expectations hence they become a source of psychological distress.

Professional counsellors can often help people make right decisions. Many people need assistance when evaluating information so as to make informed choices. Counsellors help them understand the pros and cons of their decisions (Akinade, 2011).

The task of nation- building must begin with an elaborate programme of, and an honest commitment to social reconstruction and moral revolution as the first steps towards peaceful co-existence, or else our preoccupation with democratic governance will lack the much needed foundation, and end once again in disaster.

Social justice and optimal utilization of the national resources would also abate youth and social restiveness. According to Zainad in Nmodu (2011), if the natural resource was explored optimally it would be able to equitably go round, creating sufficient employment opportunities for the youths to check restiveness. Youth restiveness in the country might not have as much religious inclination as it might look but a crisis emanating from dominant inequitable social justice in the country.

Guidance and counselling should also be properly rooted into all the educational sphere from nursery to primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Youths should be given adequate mentoring and social activities.

Education is the most veritable means for achieving sustainable development. There is need for infrastructural development, but if there are no well-trained (well educated) persons, such

infrastructure may rot away for lack of maintenance. For our educational curriculum to be more active and meaningful to our youths, the authorities must ensure effective implementation of skill acquisition programmes in relation to the subjects and when properly carried out, such trainings would make them to be creative and at the same time, make them come up with ideas that will help them become self-employed.

Nigerian youths as leaders of the future need access to a wide range of information which will help reposition them to take their rightful place in the comity of nations. Such information, according to Onyekpe (2007), should be geared towards:

- Sensitizing them to seek greater employment and educational opportunities as a means of redirecting their energy and ideas from anti-social activities to creative efforts;

- Encouraging them to raise issues relating to unresolved problems of nation building and the problem of neglect of the youths in the development process at every level;

- Creating in them a sense of history, especially of the noble and heroic contributions of the youths in the past to the development of Nigeria, in comparison with the ignoble behaviour of some youths today;

- Sensitizing them to the fact that the future and its nature depend on the decisions and choices they make;

- Sensitizing them to embrace the rule of law and democratic ideals;

- Creating the awareness that the future belongs to them and that it must not destroyed by them.

Vocational training should be encouraged at the level of disengagement from the primary schools in order to be gainfully employed and their minds adequately engaged to avoid

restiveness. The nefarious practices of those who sponsor and spur the youths into restiveness for their own selfish ambition should be checked. Oil companies should carry out periodic and sustainable corporate social responsibilities in their host communities. Moral education should be re-introduced to the school at all levels from primary to secondary to tertiary. Youths should be appointed into positions of authority in governance to serve as avenues of airing their views and be heard. Parents should be adequately mentored to see the need for maintaining proper atmosphere of raising responsible children that translate to youths and try avoiding making the home hellish thereby sending the children to the streets from their they become vulnerable to crime and other anti-social activities. Regular enlightenment of the leaders at the grass root who are directly connected with the youths to be more proactive in their dealings with them. Provision of recreational facilities in the neighborhood for usage to enable youths expend excess energy is also advocated. Proper distribution of resources accrued to communities should be adhered to minimize anger and anti-social behaviours.

Youths should also be adequately tutored on self-reliance and to live within their means. Public office holders should lead corrupt-free lives to encourage the youths that with hard work, perseverance and God's help, success could be achieved.

The larger society should de-emphasize money and material wealth and encourage the youths by emphasizing the development of the total man that is morally responsible. Integration of skill acquisition mechanism, sports and entrepreneurial programmes into our educational systems enriched with adequate counselling and vocational trainings, so that unemployed youths can acquire certain skills to not only employ themselves, but also engage others as a way of curbing restiveness in the country.

Conclusion

Government at the 3-tier (Federal, state and local government) levels should open up functional literacy centres in all their localities and experts recruited to manage the trainings, rehabilitation programmes that will re-engineer the youth. The amnesty given to the Niger Delta youths should be extended to other youths in the other geo-political zones because the youths that went into militancy would not be preferred above the ones who are at the verge of engaging in crimes. The use and sale of illicit drugs should be put under check and drug peddlers and pushers should be well punished so as to deter youths from engaging either in the trade or from being users. The training and sponsorship of social workers, psychiatrists and other medical experts to treat youths that have been entangled with drugs one way or the other. Multinationals, philanthropies should engage on programmes that re-direct youth's energies productively like MTN Project Fame, Airtel's soccer teams, Glo's sponsorship of Nigeria Premier Leagues and others. The training programmes which could be organized in mother tongue should be used to ensure maximum effectiveness and the youth should be adequately represented in all the tiers of government and religious education must be brought back to our curriculum at all levels.

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