

---

# PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTHS THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

---

By

**EZIMMA EMILY DIMKPA**

*Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education,  
Federal College of Education (Technical),  
Omoku.*

## **Abstract**

*Peace is very essential to the economic development of any given society. Youths in Rivers State have been associated with various forms of violence ranging from kidnapping, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism and political violence. This paper identifies youths as a veritable force in the economic development of Rivers State, hence the need for their education. The paper suggested that peace education which is an integral part of adult education can be used to raise the consciousness of youths towards economic recovery and development of the state. The paper explained how peace education can be propagated through the family, religion, mass media, political and educational institutions for the economic well-being of Rivers State.*

**Keywords:** Economic Development, Peace, Peace Education and Youth

All over the world there are reported cases of violence and conflicts disrupting the world peace. Mass media reports of wars and violence in Syria, Pakistan, Egypt etc are on the increase, and recently the terrorist attack in a shopping mall in Kenya where over 30 persons were killed ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). In September 11, 2009 the world power - the United States of America had its share of terrorist attack on the world trade centre and twin towers where thousands of lives from all over the world were lost.

Therefore, it was not surprising or out of place that the International Day of Peace which was first celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept, 1982 by the United Nations, was for the first time dedicated to peace education in the 2013 celebration by the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, with the theme “Education for Peace.” This dedication to peace education was an effort to refocus minds and financing on the preeminence of peace education as the means to bring about a culture of peace (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). The theme placed an emphasis on education as an important

instrument that is needed to impart peace education to the people of any society. It was recognized that the formal education sector can not achieve this alone but that all other sectors including adult and non-formal education, informal education sectors should be encouraged in this task, such as the family, mass media and so on.

Rivers State, which is the home of oil and gas in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria and largest host to a number of multinational companies such as Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) and Total Nigeria Limited has not enjoyed peace in recent times. There have been reported cases of kidnapping, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, rape, political violence and a lot of other social vices perpetrated by youths in the state. The security situation is even worse in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA) of Rivers State, where it has degenerated into broad day light killings which are currently on the increase. This unwelcome development has disrupted economic activities in the local government area and in the state; businesses have packed up as a result of insecurity of lives and property in the area. A lot of the residents both indigenes and non-indigenes have relocated to the urban centres and this has also increased the rural-urban migration in the state. This trend is not good for the economic development of the state.

### **Overview of the Current Security Situation in Nigeria**

Terrorism has not only eaten deep into other parts of the world but also in Nigeria where recently it has taken the form of “BOKO HARAM” insurgency in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. A state of emergency was declared earlier in the year in these states to curb the insurgency but to no avail. Their attacks have completely spread to other neighbouring states in the northern region of the country, and scores of lives and properties are being wasted on a daily basis ([www.ntanews24.tv](http://www.ntanews24.tv)). Boko Haram insurgency has negatively affected the country in terms of security and has resulted in loss of business and investors, including local and foreign.

A few months ago, there were also media reports about the “Ombatse” cult group in Nasarawa state in which over 60 police men were killed and buried in Nasarawa Egon. In Kano state also, sometime in early October, over 20 students were bombed to death in their sleep in their school hostel. In plateau state, and Jos in particular, there are incessant cases of violence where a large number of deaths are always reported including Christians and Muslims. The state is known for its religious crises. Other instances of violence episodes in Nigerian communities are the Odua People’s Congress (OPC), and Hausa/Fulani residents in South-Western Nigeria; Ife and Modakeke also in the South-West; the Ijaw/Urhobo/Itsekiri in the Niger Delta Region and so on (Usman, 2011).

Other parts of the Niger Delta Region such as Rivers and Bayelsa States have also suffered from militant attacks as was the case during the “Niger Delta Militancy”. This group of youths was involved in kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, illegal crude oil refining and so on. This trend however has not changed. Their activities destabilized economic development in the region. The militancy acts was what resulted in the destruction of Odi community in Bayelsa State in 1999 under the President Obasanjo Administration.

Recently in Rivers State, there has been a lot of unrest both in the political angle and in other areas of the state. In the political angle, the present “People’s Democratic Party” (PDP), is in crisis, thereby destabilizing the peace of the state. A new PDP was formed by some governors known as the “G7 Governors” which is an opposing party to the already existing PDP. This, among other issues has made the National Assembly take over the Rivers State House of Assembly which is at the center of the whole crisis. Consequently, the pre-occupation by the Rivers State governor with these political issues has left the security situation in local government areas like Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni unattended to. The local government area is currently under siege by criminals, who kidnap innocent victims (men, women and children) and destroy properties. This calls for an urgent need for peace education in resolving conflict and restoring economic development.

It is against this background that this paper has explored various means by which peace education of have helped to propagate and foster economic development in the state.

### **Concept of Economic Development**

Economic development, as one of the aspects of development has been regarded by Oni and Bello (1987) as cited in Onyeozu (2007) as:

*Qualitative and quantitative change in factors of production leading to increase in the quality and quantity of goods and services produced by a society, and increase in the quantity of such goods and services that every individual is opportuned to possess (p 12).*

This implies that every individual is of great value or importance, which may also be acted upon by factors of change. These factors of change in the case of youths in Rivers State has been the lack and degradation experienced by most rural areas in the state, as is the case with ONELGA, which has made the youths instead of contributing to economic development, are rather destroying it. This lack and degradation ranges from lack of provision of basic infrastructures such as good roads, portable drinking water etc. Thus, the youths became restive and got involved in the earlier mentioned social vices.

Economic development therefore is a state of continuous or progressive improvement of a society's factors of production—land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship that results in a measurable increase in the production of goods and services of a given society. This underscores the fact that the youths who make up a greater percentage of the population of the state have to be part of that improvement to contribute to the labour market. However, this can only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace.

### **Concept of Peace/Peace Education**

Peace has been defined as the absence of war or conflict; freedom from disagreement among people or groups of people; the absence of violence or disturbances within a state (Encarta, 2009). Ekpenyong (2006) citing Francis (2005) also outlined six general meanings of peace. They include:

1. Peace as the absence of war i.e. absence of direct violence;
2. Peace as justice and development i.e. absence of structural violence;
3. Peace as respect and tolerance between people;
4. Peace with the ecosphere;
5. Inner peace i.e. spiritual peace; and
6. Peace as 'wholeness' and making 'whole'.

An analysis of the above definitions of peace presents peace as a universal need that encompasses all aspects of the human life and its environs. These definitions of peace gives a proper understanding of the definition of peace education by the Peace Education Working Group at UNICEF as cited by UNESCO (2002) as thus:

*The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, national or international level.*

Peace education entails promoting the right knowledge, attitude, skills and values required by an individual to live in harmony with oneself and others in the environment he/she resides.

### **Definition of Youth**

Encarta Dictionaries (2009) defined youth as a time when some body is young: the period of human life between childhood and maturity. Oyewole (2006) similarly, defined youth from a biological point of view as any person between the ages of 15 and 24, qualifying it to be a phase a person moves from a time of dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood). However, Idris (2011) noted that the National Youth

Development Policy recognized the age of 12 – 30 as the age within which one can be termed as a youth.

The policy according to him categorizes youth into:

1. Youths of school age in school;
2. Youths of school age who are out of school;
3. Unemployed youths;
4. Unprivileged youths;
5. Handicapped youths;
6. Social misfits and fraudsters; and
7. Unemployed graduates and trained professionals.

For the purpose of this paper, youths are defined as those young persons who fall between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age and who Nzeneri (2010) grouped under the early adulthood stage, that are characterized by tension between commitment to self and others and avoidance of intimacy. According to him, each adult stage is associated with specific changes and challenges (i.e. life battles) which require adequate training in knowledge and skills to overcome. The youths under discourse who fall under this category are not exempted from challenges of life, hence the need for peace education.

### **Peace Education of Youths for Economic Development in Rivers State**

Nsereka (2005) observed that economic development is the desire of every nation or state, especially a developing one. Developing nations have a greater need for economic development for various reasons which include:

1. Increase in per capita income;
2. Continuous flow of goods and services;
3. Optimize the use of abundant human and natural resources; and
4. Ensure that inequalities and inequities in whatever form are eliminated.

The above listed reasons for economic development cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of insecurity, disunity, violence and acrimony. It is based on this that the need for the propagation of peace education is necessitated by the following strategic institutions.

### **The Family**

The family is regarded to be the first agent of socialization before transition to school (Dimkpa and Olori, 2012). As an agent of socialization, the family has an important role to play in imparting positive values in a child that would be of great benefit to the family and the society. Unfortunately, most families now have eroded values and can no longer impart in the child honest means of acquiring wealth, concepts of hate and love and conflict management techniques.

The high incidence of criminal activities indulged in by the youths these days attests to the fact that families have failed in their duties towards training the child properly. The society, of which the family is a part of, has become more materialistic, thereby neglecting morals. Youths have introduced a slogan which says, 'to make it by all means'. 'Making it' involves getting involved in social menace such as kidnapping and the like. No wonder Dimkpa and Olori (2012) argued that the ills of children and youths alike emanated from a wrong upbringing of a child at home. They submitted that these vices are inculcated in the child through observation and imitation from parents and other family members, electronic media and the child's immediate environment. This therefore places the family with an important role in propagating peace education.

### **Religion**

Adeboga (2011) stated that religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and world views that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and moral values. Religion has been known to preach peace and not violence. Incidentally religious leaders have also been known to be victims of these social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping etc.

In Nigeria, and Rivers State in particular, there are more Christians than Muslims. The churches scattered all over the state concentrate their preaching on prosperity rather than the gospel of peace as commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ. This has not helped the security situation in the state. The same youths who indulge in these crimes still bring back financial returns to the churches in the form of tithes and offerings, without the church leaders knowing the source. In a research conducted by Adeboga (2011), it was revealed that religious institutions had failed in their responsibility to inculcate the values of respect and peaceful living among youths, citing the Jos crisis as a case study.

### **Mass Media**

The mass media as an agent of socialization and learning have been viewed in different forms. The mass media in the process of socialization helps to unify the society by providing at least some common base of norms, of values, of collective experience and at the same time, the mass media helps the individuals to know the current base (Hasan, 2010). The effect of mass media messages on its audience helps in shaping public perceptions on important issues.

The mass media has the roles of educating, informing and entertaining the masses. It becomes imperative that media content should convey messages that will impart in the audience positive values and also portray peaceful co-existence of the people through its multiple programmes. For instance, during the Mass Mobilization

for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) drive by the Federal government of Nigeria during the military era, the mass media was quite indispensable (Adamolekun, 1989). Various strategies were employed to educate the masses on electoral matters and other issues. Such strategies can also be employed to propagate peace education to the youth in order to have a peaceful co-existence for economic development in the state.

### **Political Institutions**

Political institutions are usually concerned with activities of government and its citizenry. The political institutions in Rivers State in recent times are bedeviled with a lot of crisis which has destabilized the peace of the state. The youths instead are being used as agents of unrest, and also sponsored for the kidnap of political opponents in the state.

A typical example of this crisis situation is the PDP crisis in Rivers State where the New PDP was formed as against the old PDP that resulted in a lot of issues between the National Working Committee of PDP and the Rivers State government. This is not helping the security situation in the state but rather worsening it. Politicians and political institutions should portray a culture of peace in their dealings by incorporating peace skills and attitudes for the youths to emulate and put into practice.

### **Educational Institutions**

These are citadel of learning that imparts knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values in an individual for himself and for the benefit of the society which he belongs. It is believed that what was not learnt at the family level should be learnt in the school. This also includes teachers and students having a peaceful co-existence in the classrooms. Therefore, in creating a conducive atmosphere for learning, peace attitudes such as tolerance, respect, justice and equity, forgiveness, love, unity, co-operation and team spirit should be in the character of every teacher to enable the children to observe and imitate (Abid, 2006). Through such subjects as religious education, civic education and social studies, peace education can be imparted in the students.

### **Benefits of Peace Education**

Peace education has the following benefits which include:

1. Improved security conditions;
2. Improved quality of life – inner peace;
3. Dignity of labour;
4. Higher life expectancy;
5. Improved working conditions;
6. Increased employment opportunities;
7. Higher savings;
8. Better decision making.

### **Importance of Youths in Economic Development**

The potentially important role of youths in African's development can not be over emphasized. Youths are a source of labour inputs as well as human capital in production, which could improve total factor productivity in a region of the world where capital formation is limited (Gyimah–Brempon and Kimeyi, 2013). Youths when employed could be a reliable source of demand for the economy through their consumption activities.

In Rivers State, the greatest challenges for youth in economic development are employment, health and political participation. Their energy level, enthusiasm, innovation and dynamism are assets that when properly harnessed can bring about rapid economic development. These can be achieved when appropriate policies are put in place to deal with these issues.

It is in line with resolving these challenges that the Rivers State government under the administration of Governor Chibuike Amaechi set up the Rivers State Strategic Empowerment Committee (RSSE) to tackle the unemployment menace. The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) was also established to address the poverty issue in the state. Recently, about 13,201 teachers were recruited into primary and secondary schools to combat unemployment. In the health sector, 400 medical doctors were employed to man most of the health centres in the rural areas that were constructed under his administration (Eze, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Peace education promotes a culture of peace that will help in building a non-violent and just society for the inhabitants of the state. Peace education should be seen as a way of improving human relationship in the family, in schools, at the work place, within communities and across the globe.

To foster economic growth and development, peace education of youths should be pursued vigorously as they are the engine house for every economy. Their inculcation of peace skills will go a long way in curbing crime and creating a conducive atmosphere for businesses to thrive. Just like the popular Nigerian Television Authority jingle that says “Peace is the Answer”.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, the paper recommended that:

1. Government should fund youth empowerment programmes and also involve youths in the planning to increase youth participation;
2. Mass media organizations should be located in the rural areas so that the youths and people of the area can also feel their impact;



3. The National Orientation Agency should be utilized effectively in championing peace education;
4. Youths who are of exemplary character should be given peace awards by the state to encourage others to be peaceful;
5. Institutions such as the family, religion, educational and political should reiterate their efforts in propagating peace education.

### References

- Abid, B. (2006). The Concept and Perception of Peace Education in Gilgit Baltistan Pakistan: A Comparative Case Study. *The Peace and Conflict Review*, 7(1). ISSN: 1659-3995. Retrieved 1/10/2013 from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Adeboga, D.Y. (2011). *Teaching Young Women and Men about Difference and Diversity in Three Cultural Institutions*. Paper presented at the 2011 Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) Conference, Lokoja, November 21 – 22, 3011.
- Adamolekun, W. (1989). *Social Mobilization: Tool for Effective Grassroots Communication for National Transformation*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of African council on Education Communication (ACCE) held at the Conference Centre, University of Ibadan, October 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 1989.
- Dimkpa, E.E. & Olori, C.N. (2012). Mothers: An integral Part in Early Childhood Care and Education. *International Journal of Innovations in Education Methods*, 4(3), 118-122.
- Ekpenyong, E. (2006). Peace as a Vehicle for Unity among University Students. In V.O. Modo, A.J. ohiwabamide, O Akpan & A. Ekpa (Eds.) *Issues in Peace and Conflict Resolution*. (23-36). Lagos: Lisjohnson.
- Eze, C.E. (2013). Unemployment in Rivers and Amaechi's Magic Wand. *News reel- 2*, 9/9/13. Retrieved 28/10/13 from Nigeria master web.
- Gyimah – Brempong, K. & Kimeyi, M.S. (April, 2013). Youth Policy and the future of African Development. *African Growth Initiative Working Paper*, No. 9.
- Hasan, S. (2010). *Mass communication: Principles and Concepts*. New Delhi: CBS <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Idris, U.A. (2011). *Promoting Democratic Cultures through Political Education of Youths in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the 2011 Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) Conference held at Lokoja, November 21 – 22, 2011.

Microsoft Encarta (2009,DVD). Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

Nsereka, B.G. (2005): An Appraisal of Grassroots Sensitization by NOA through Traditional and Modern Media in South-East Nigeria. *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, No 15, 187-195

Nzeneri, I.S. (Oct, 2010). *Adults in Battle: Any Hope of Victory?* (Inaugural Lecture Series, No. 71). University of Port Harcourt.

Onyeozu, A. M. (2007). *Understanding Community Development*. Port Harcourt: Davidstones.

Oyewole, D. (2006). *Participation of Youths as Partners in Peace and Development in Africa. An Overview of Issues and Challenges*. Paper Presented at the Expert Group Meeting on Youth in Africa Held on 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> November, Windhoek, Namibia.

UNESCO (2002): *UNESCO: IBE Education Thesaurus* (6<sup>th</sup> Ed). Geneva, UNESCO International Bureau of Education.

Usman, Y.H. (2011). *Education for Consciousness Raising and Enhancing Good Neighbourliness among Unfriendly Cultures for Sustainable Livelihood and Democracy in Nigeria*. Paper presented at 2011 NNCAE Conference in Lokoja from Nov 21-22, 2011.

[www.ntanews24.tv](http://www.ntanews24.tv)