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Research Methodology

The study utilised both primary and secondary data. For secondary data sources, it relied on newspapers, magazines, reports and documents published by government and non-governmental organisations, namely, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Action Network on Small Arms, Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights and Development (NDPEHRD), Center for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) and Internet document search.

Questionnaires, oral interviews and focused group discussion sessions were deployed to source primary data for the study. The study sites were Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States, the core Niger-delta states and the location of most of the youth-led insurgency in the Niger-delta. The sampling technique was largely purposive, due in part to the sensitivity of the issues investigated, which warranted utmost caution. In Bayelsa State, four local governments were sampled – Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Kolokumo. In Delta State, three local governments were sampled – Burutu, Sapele and Warri-South; and in Rivers State, five local governments were sampled – Obiakpor, Port Harcourt, Khana, Bonny and Gokana (Table 5).

There were two open-ended questionnaires. They were deployed to elicit two types of information about the conflict. The first, the General Sample (GS) questionnaire had, as its objective, the elicitation of general information about the conflict and was directed at community members, youths, women and elders. A total of 255 questionnaires were received from those distributed, (80 in Bayelsa, 100 in Delta and 75 in Rivers). The second questionnaire (key informant sample) sought in-depth, broad and sensitive information from more informed citizens of the region such as ethnic and community leaders, youth activists, past and present militants and opinion leaders. A total of 55 questionnaires were received here, 20 in Bayelsa State, 20 in Delta State and 15 in Rivers State). Oral interviews were also conducted. The objective was detailed information from youth and political leaders. About eight interviews were conducted in Bayelsa and Delta

States. For the focus group discussions, three (3) were conducted each in Bayelsa, Yenagoa, Delta and River States, with sample sizes of 12, 8 and 8 respectively (Table 4).

Social Characteristics of Respondents

Our general Sample respondents were drawn largely from the age grade 25-34 and 35-44 years, male, Christian, with a fair share of 'married' and 'not married' status (Table 6). They had mainly post-secondary and secondary educational qualifications and are public servants, private sector employees, business men and traders or self employed. Their income status was between low and middle class. They were mainly Ijaws, with a sprinkle of Ikweres, Ogonis, Urhobos and Itsekiris. The key informant sample comprised largely of those in the age sets 25-34 and 35-44, male, Christian, married and have secondary or post secondary education. They were mostly public servants and private sector employees, and within the low and middle income groups.

Table 4: Research Instrument, Target Samples and Sample Sizes

Instruments	Target Audience	Objectives	Sample Size (Bayelsa)	Sample Size (Delta)	Sample Size (Rivers)	Total
Open ended Questionnaires	Community Members, youths, women, elders	General information about the conflicts	80	100	75	255
Open-ended Questionnaires	Ethnic and community leaders, youth activists, past and present militants	Elicitation of more in-depth, broad and sensitive information from more informed citizens of the region	20	20	15	55
Focus Group Discussions	Ditto	Ditto	12	8	8	28
Oral Interviews	Informed and influential leaders	Elicitation of Detailed information	5	3	-	8

Table 5: Sampled States/Local Government: Areas and Communities

States	Local Government Areas	Communities
Bayelsa	Yenagoa Southern Ijaw Ekeremor Kolokumo	Yenagoa Oporoma Aleibiri Kaiama
Delta	Burutu Sapele Warri-South	Burutu Sapele Warri
Rivers	Obikpor Port Harcourt Khana Bonny Gokana	Zakpai Finima - Port Harcourt Bomu Bonny Bori

The research instruments addressed the central planks of the research: conceptions and perceptions of self determination and resource control, the problems and goals of the Niger-delta struggle, the causes or explanations of the conflict, the role and perceptions of the youth, the profile, perceptions and goals of the militias, the roles of traditional, political, business and community leaders and women, the methodology of the struggle, issues in the resolution of the conflicts and the effects of the conflicts.

The data elicited was analysed in the open-ended questionnaires by a question by question content analysis of responses. These were then categorised, and frequency counts and computation of percentages undertaken. These are presented in tables. The focus group and oral interviews were transcribed from tapes. Content analysis was then done to derive insightful comments. In all the instruments, and particularly in the key informant questionnaires, oral interviews and FGDs, important comments and arguments were identified and, where relevant, used as samplers.

Table 6: Social Characteristics of Respondents: Général Sample (GS)

	BAYELSA					Total
Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-	80
	12.5	53.75	27.5	6.25	-	
Sex	Male	Female				80
	64	16				
Religion	Christian	Muslim	Traditional			80
	7.6	-	0.4			
Marital Status	Married	Not Married				80
	3.9	4.1				
Education	None	Pri.	Secondary	Post Secon.		80
	0.25	13.5	3.25	2.25		
Occupation	Bus/ Trading	Govt/ Public	Private employed	Self/ Servant		
	13	18	--	11		
Income	Low	Middle	High			80
	6.25	0.3	0.6			
Ethnic Group	Ijaw	Others				100
	34	2				
LG	Southern/Ijaw	Yenogoa	Ekeremor	Brass		
	16	33	20	3		
??	Egbema	Others				80
	3	5				

Table 6: Social Characteristics of Respondents: Général Sample (Cont'd.)

	DELTA					Total
Age	15-24 11	25-34 48	35-44 28	45-54 11	55- 0	100
Sex	Male 7.8	Female 2.2				100
Religion	Christian 9.5	Muslim 0.5	Traditional -			100
Marital Status	Married 4.7	Not Married 5.3				100
Education	None -	Pri. 0.7	Secondary 0.3	Post Secon. 6.3		100
Occupation	Bus/ Trading 8	Govt/ Public 49	Private employed 17	Self/ Servant 7		100
Income	Low 4.7	Middle 4.9	High 0.4			100
Ethnic Group	Ijaw	Urhobo	Itsekiri			
LG	Bomadi 5	Sapele 43	Burutu 44	Warri		100
??	Others 2					

Table 6: Social Characteristics of Respondents: Général Sample (Cont'd.)

	RIVERS					Total
Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-	75
	0.4	4.5	2.2	0.4		
Sex	Male	Female				75
	4.5	0.3				
Religion	Christian	Muslim	Traditional			75
	75	2	-			
Marital Status	Married	Not Married				75
	3.8	3.7				
Education	None	Pri.	Secondary	Post Secon.		75
	-	0.5	1.6	5.4		
Occupation	Bus/ Trading	Govt/ Public	Private employed	Self/ Servant		75
	17	19	12	4		
Income	Low	Middle	High			75
	41	29	5			
Ethnic Group	Ijaw	Olwere	Ogoni	Urhobo	Others	75
LG	Port Harcourt	Phalga	Khana	Bunny		75
	19	3	12	30		
??	Gokana					
	11					

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (KIS)

	BAYELSA					Total
Age 1	15-24 2	25-34 10	35-44 5	45-55 3		20
Sex 2	Male 17	Female 3				20
Religion 3	Christian 16	Muslim -	Traditional Religion 4			20
Marital Status 4	Married 13	7				20
Educational qualification 5	None -	Primary -	Secondary 7	Post Secondary 13		20
Occupation 6	Business Trading 2	Civil/Public Servant 7	Private Sector 4	Self Employed 2	Unem ployed 5	20
Income Level 7	Low 5	Middle 15	High -			20
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw 20	-	-	Kolokumo		20
Local Govt. Areas 9	Venagoa 11	Southern Ijaw 5	Ekeremor 2	Opokuma 2		20

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (Cont'd.)

	DELTA					Total
Age 1	15-24 2 0.1	25-34 5 0.3	35-44 8 0.4	45-54 5 0.3	55- -	20
Sex 2	Male 15	Female 5				20
Religion 3	Christian 19	-	Muslim --	Traditional 1 0.1		20
Marital Status 4	Married 14	Not Married 6				20
Educational qualification 5	None -	Primary 1	Secondary 5	Post Secondary 14 0.7		20
Occupation 6	Business Trading -	Civil/Public Servant 9	Private Company 3	Self Employed 2 0.1	Not Employe d 6 0.3	20
Income Level 7	Low 8	Middle Income 10	High Income 2	-		20
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw 14	Urhobo 2	Itsekiri 2	Ukuam 1 0.1	Isoko 1 0.1	20
Local Govt. Areas 9	Burutu 9	Warri South 2	Patan 1	Sapele 8 0.4		20

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (Cont'd.)

	RIVERS					Total
Age 1	15-24 (1)	25-34 (3)	35-44 (4)	45-55 1(3)		7
Sex	Male 14	Female 1				7
Religion 3	Christian 15 10	Muslim -	Traditional Religion -			7
4	Married 4 (10)	Not married 3 11(5)				7
Educational qualification 5	None -	Primary -	Secondary (1)	Post Secondary (14) -		7
Occupation 6	Business Trading -	Civil/Public Servant 111(10)	Private 11 (2)	Self Employed -	Unemplo yed 111 (3)	7
Income Level 7	Low 11	Middle (4)	High -			7
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw (4)	Ikwere 2 0.3	Etehe 1 0.1	Ogba 111		7
Local Govt. Areas 9	Obiakpor 9 0.7	Khana 1 0.1	Talga 1 0.1	Port Harcourt 1	Others	7

Data Presentation

At the root of the agitation and conflicts are the issues of self determination and resource control.

Perception of Self Determination

The research sought to determine the self determination content of the youth struggles, by seeking responses to questions of perceptions and faith in the Nigerian state, grievances against the state, belief in the actualisation of their aspirations within Nigeria, and what they thought needs to be done in the re-constitution of Nigeria.

The Nigerian state, as seen by the General Sample (GS) is a great nation (11.3%); and richly endowed (16.9%) but that is dominantly failed and not working (21.4%); corrupt (24.6%) and plagued by bad leadership (11.3%) (Table 8).

By way of more graphic descriptions, the Nigerian state is seen as possessing huge potentials and opportunities, and abundant natural and human resources. But despite this, the nation is seen as failing, drifting, un-democratic, repressive, oppressive, exploitative, unstable, indifferent to the citizens sufferings, incapable of meeting basic needs and harnessing the abundant human and material resources. But this situation is largely attributed to a leadership that is corrupt, greedy, visionless, weak, insincere, ethnocentric, insensitive and that disregards the constitution and rule of law.

In relation to the Niger Delta region, we sought to know the existence of and nature of grievances in both samples, against the Nigerian state (Table). In both samples, the major grievances were the failure to develop the region and state misgovernance, as indicated by poor resource inflow, bad leadership and domination by majority ethnic groups. The neglect, scarce development and poor development attention to the region is linked to its huge resource endowment and contribution. According to some respondents, 'the other regions consume without producing to the national purse while we produce without consuming'; 'the Nigerian government too is a thief', 'they siphon our resources', 'they deprive us', 'when we protest, they ignore us and most times threaten us with...the military and police, 'when we fight back or revenge, they call us militants'.

Table 8: Perception of the Nigerian state (GS)

	BAYELSA		DELTA		R I V E R S		TOTAL	
Great	16 (20%)	20	4 (4%)		8 (11.76%)	11.8	28	11.29
Failed/Not Working	8 (10%)	10	26 (26%)	26	19 (27.94%)	27.94	53	(21.37%) 21.37
Richly Endowed	8 (10%)	10	30 (3%)	3	4 (5.88%)	5.9	43	(16.94%) 17.34
Corrupt	34 (42.5%)	42.5	21 (21%)	21	6 (8.82%)	8.82	61	(24.60%) 24.60
Partial	1 (1.25%)	1.25	2 (20)	20			3	(1.21%) 1.21
Has bad leaders	12 (15%)	15	7 (7%)	7	9 (13.24%)	13.23	28	(11.29%) 11.29
Under-Developed	1 (1.25%)	1.25	9 (9%)	9	4 (5.88%)	5.9	14	(5.65%) 5.65
Oppressive	-	-	1 (10)	1	18 (26.47%)	26.5	18	(7.66%) 7.25
Total	80		100		68		248	

Table 9: Grievances against the Nigerian State by Niger Delta People

GRIEVANCES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Failure to Develop the Region	45 (58.44%)	44 (44.4%)	12 (23.53)	101(44.49%)
Mis-government/Bad leadership towards the Region/poor resource inflow	10 (12.99%)	29 (29.29)	2 (3.92)	41(18.06)
Majority Ethnic Domination	3 (3.90%)	15 (15.15%)	7 (13.73)	25 (11.01%)
Corruption	11 (14.28%)	-	8 (15.69)	19 (8.37)
Unemployment	6 (7.79%)	8 (8,08%)	3 (4%) 5.88	17 (7.49)
Faulty Constitution/laws	1 (1.30%)	3 (3.03%)	7 (13.73)	11 (4.85)
Un-democratic	1 (1.30%)	-	- -	1 (04.44)
No effective Youth programme	-	- -	12 (16%) 23.53	12 (5.29)
	77	99	51	227

Table 9: Grievances against the Nigerian State by Niger Delta People, (KIS) (Cont'd.)

GRIEVANCES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	
Failure to Develop the Region	10 50%	12 60%	6 40%	28	50.91
Mis-government/Bad leadership towards the Region/poor resource inflow	3 15%	5 25%	6 40%	14	25.45
Majority Ethnic Domination	4 20%	3 15%	3 20%	10	18.18
Corruption					
Unemployment					
Faulty Constitution/laws	3 15%			3	5.45/
Un-democratic	-				
No effective Youth programme	-				
	20	20	15	55	

The grievances indicate an ethnic minority underpinning of the under-developed, marginalised Niger Delta people. According to several key informants, 'the Federal Government, dominated and controlled by the North, especially has Oppressed, exploited and de-humanized the Niger delta people for decades' 'with false laws skewed in the favour of the majority tribes and at the expense of the oil producing Niger-dDelta people'. In other words, undergirding state misgovernance and under-development in the region is the attitude of the majority ethnic group towards their minority counterparts in the region. The unfair, unjust and inequitable treatment of the region in terms of in flow of revenues, from its oil resources is seen as flowing from this. As one oral interviewee in Warri, Delta State put it 'Nigeria milks the Niger-delta to death and takes the milk to other places, leaving the area destitute'. Some respondents claimed that the state has been against the region in terms of laws and policies that disinherit and appropriate their oil and gas resources and oppress them.

In spite of the sensitive grievances, there is a huge faith in the Nigerian state. About 62.4 per cent of the GS and 74.5 per cent of KIS express belief in Nigeria. This is largely hinged on the greatness and potentials of the country (12.1%). Though existing problems deplete this greatness, some respondents believe such would be resolved and the potentials realized (35.2%). For those that do not believe in Nigeria, and this seemed highest in Bayelsa, the core Ijaw State, the reasons included in the GS, poor governance and corruption (22.1%), absence of justice, equity and fairness (8%), the partiality of the State (7%) and absence of true nationhood (5.5%).

For those who still believe in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, such faith was qualified with such provisos as: 'but the Nigerian state must develop the region'; or with conditions such as 'if justice and fairness is enthroned'; or with hopes such as 'the wrong can still be made right', 'one day, good leaders will emerge and get there in spite of problems' (Interviews in Bayelsa and Delta States June 2006).

Quite intriguing is the large proportion of those who have lost faith in Nigeria, particularly in Bayelsa State. The reasons given, such as 'Nigeria is the self business and property of those that rule', 'Nigeria has failed totally', and 'they have made us slaves in the country' indicate the feelings of the interviewees about the viability, performance, partiality and utility of the Nigerian state project. Some respondents hinted at the possibility of 'Nigeria's break up in no distant future' (Bonny) or 'heading for or near collapse or sitting on a time bomb' 'near anarchy' (Port-Harcourt).

The youth problematic is manifested in the expression or non-expression of faith in the Nigerian state. Some of the respondents have lost faith because, according to them 'the state does not consider the youths in her programmes' (Gokang), 'it does not consider their future and has no vision for them' (Khana), 'the youth has been neglected', 'unemployment is the order of the day' (Port Harcourt), 'the state is insensitive to the plight of the youth', 'in fact, the state has disappointed the youth in this part of the country' (Khana).

Further investigation of the attitude of Niger-deltans towards Nigeria was directed to their assessment of whether their aspirations could possibly be realised within Nigeria. About 81.4 per cent of the GS believe that their aspirations would be realised within the framework of Nigeria. The reasons given indicated that the response is conditional on the institution of good leadership (65.3%) true federalism (10.2%) and justice (10.2%). As some respondents put it, aspirations can be achieved 'if the Federal Government decides to be honest, and her leaders decide to be committed and willing to correct the anomalies in the region and if the ethnic nationalities are sincere with one another or decide to collaborate' (Khana; Rivers). However some respondents qualified the kind of aspirations that can be achieved. While the aspirations for better conditions and opportunities can be achieved, that for self-determination cannot. The reasons given for this are failed promises, corruption and marginalization.

These responses on the perceptions, faith in, grievances and realisation of aspirations within the Nigerian state indicate generally that though there are deep grievances, dissatisfaction, and discontent, the people of the region have considerable faith in Nigeria. Nigeria remains the nation-state framework for the realisation of their aspirations. This essentially means that the self determination content of the struggle, in spite of its recurrent hype on it, is low, particularly among the non-Ijaws. There is also a further suggestion that self determination, as generally conceived, is not separate existence but political autonomy within a reconfigured nation state.

The issues of what needs to be done to Nigeria were investigated. The responses reinforce our position on the content and direction of the self determination struggles. As Table 10 indicates, the central recommendation relates to the institution of a system that guarantees equitable and fair treatment of the region, true federalism and resource control, and the reformulation of the constitution through a national conference. From these responses emerges a clearer picture of the concept of self-determination in the region. It relates to a re-structured federation and federal practice that guarantees regional autonomy, control of resources and development, as well as fair and equitable treatment. The methodology for instituting this should be a new constitution that is made through dialogue and negotiation in a national conference of ethnic nationalities or sovereign national conference.

Table 10: Recommendations of Issues for Re-constituting/
Re-configuring the Nigerian State (GS)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference/New Constitution	16 (23.5)	8 (6.61)	25 (37.88)	49 (19.22)
True Federalism/Resource Control	4 (5.88%)	67 (55.3)	14 (21.21)	85 (33.33)
Good governance		3 (2.48)	4 (6.06)	7 (2.75)
Equitable and fair treatment of region	46 (67.65)	35 (28.93)	17(25.76)	98 (38.43)
Others	2 (2.94)	8 (6.61)	6 (9.09)	16 (6.27)
	68	121	66	255

Table 10: Recommendations of Issues for Re-constituting/
Re-configuring the Nigerian State (KIS) (Cont'd.)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference/New Constitution	3 (18.75)	3 (15%)	8 (53.33)	14 27.5
True Federalism/Resource Control	5 (31.25)	10 (50%)	3 (20%)	18 35.2
Good governance	7 (43.75)	6 (30%)	1 (6.67%)	14 27.5
Equitable and fair treatment of region	1 (6.25)	1 (5%)	2 (13.33)	4 7.84
Others	-	-	1 (6.67)	1 1.96
	16	20	15	51

Two of our interviewees in Warri, Delta State, express succinctly these views. According to them, 'if Nigeria must remain, give every region autonomy and let them control their resources' (Warri 13th June 2007); and except there is a people oriented constitutional conference, involving all the ethnic groups, to discuss the basis of our co-existence, peace will continue to elude us (Warri 19th June 2007).

Perception of Resource Control

Resource control is a major issue in the Niger-delta conflict. As such, we investigated the conception of resource control in the KIS. The responses indicate three contending perspectives. First is in terms of controlling and managing resources for self development. This is phrased by several respondents as: 'to control our natural resources, 'manage our own property the way we want it', and to control our God given resource to better the lot of the down trodden people'. Controlling the resources found in, under and on the land and waters of the people of the Niger-delta by the people themselves. The second perspective is in terms of claims to ownership. As some respondents in Bayelsa State put it 'it is to be in charge of what belongs to us' 'Give us what belongs to us'.

The third perspective is in terms of greater participation and greater sharing of oil resources. As one respondent put it, he wants to be a major stakeholder in the resources of the Niger Delta.

Table 11: Conception of Resource Control (KIS)

	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total
Controlling and managing resources for self development	11 (55%)	11 (55)	4 (26.66)	31 (56.4)
Claiming ownership of what belongs to you	5 (25%)	8 (40)	1 (6.67)	16 (29.1)
Directing/controlling own resources	4 (20%)	1 (05)	10(66.67)	8 (14.5)
Total	20	20	15	55

The first perception, ownership and control (56.40%) is perceived in a federal state, by some to mean reverting ownership from the Federal Government to the states and ethnic nationalities which then taxes and remits a proportion to the Federal Government. As one respondent in Bayelsa State put it, 'we don't want the Federal Government to assist us to control our resources; the Federal Government is an intruder'. This is a complete reversal of the current situation.

To define, more specifically, the kinds of ownership, control and sharing that the Niger-delta people want, there is the need to specify what percentages of oil resources they want or claim entitlement to. Our investigation in the KIS, reveal that in Bayelsa State, the respondents want 100 per cent control. As one of them put it, '100 per cent to the Niger-delta, while we contribute our quota to the Federal Government as a federating unit, in the fashion of the American model'. In Delta and Rivers StateS, the respondents prefer a share of between 31 and 50 per cent.

The other thing to note is that resource control is associated with the perceptions of equity and fairness. To several of them, it means equitable distribution and reward of the region, which is seen to derive from true federalism. According to one respondent (GS), 'there will never be equity, neither justice nor fairness except there is first resource control and true federalism'.

Perception of the Niger-delta Conflict

There is a central issue of what the conflict is all about, at least in the perception of the people. This relates to what the problems of the region area, what the goals of the struggle are and what the ethnic groups want from the struggle.

The investigation in the GS (Table 12) of the problems that undergird the struggle reveal that the main problems, are a poor status of development (infrastructures, social services) that is seen to be contingent on neglect and lack of developmental attention (29.88%), economic deprivation and exploitation that is related to the externalities of oil exploitation (degraded environments, endangered ecosystems, environmental hazards and destroyed sources of livelihood), poor revenue and benefits in flow (23.1%) and the absence of oil resource ownership, management and control (13.55%).

As one GS respondent put it, the Niger-delta people are not even recognised as the breadbasket of Nigeria. They are not given their rights as the oil producing area.

Table 12: Perceptions of Problems of the Niger Delta (GS)

Problems	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Neglect/Lack of Development	22 (28.57)	38 (44.71)	15 (16.85%)	75 (29.88%)
Economic Deprivation/Exploitation	22 (28.57%)	18 (21.18%)	18 (26.22%)	58 (23.10%)
Marginalization	4 (5.196%)	2 (2.35%)	16 (17.98%)	22 (8.76)
Ill treatment as minority groups	4 (5.19%)	2 (2.35%)	18 (20.22%)	24 (9.56)
Heavy unemployment	10 (12.99%)	11 (12.94%)	6 (6.74%)	28 (11.16)
Absence of resource control	15 (19.48%)	9 (10.59)	10 (14.495)	34
Poor Leadership	-	5 (5.88%)	6 (6.74)	10 (3.98)
Total	77	85	89	251

The other problems mentioned, marginalisation (8.76%) and ill treatment arising from their minority group status (9.56%), relate to issues of political representation, inclusion, resource distribution, equity, justice and fairness within the Nigerian State project. Of particular interest is the problem of heavy or mass unemployment. This arises from the negative externalities of oil, lack of development, economic deprivation and poor resource inflow, and benefits to the region, which are identified as undergirding the conflict.

The investigation of the goals of the struggle should add to our understanding of the conflicts (Table 13). The goals are identified as resource control (30.9%), equitable and just treatment (24.7%), developmental attention (16.6%) and inclusion and adequate representation (11.6%). These goals flow from the problems identified earlier. In sum, the region is seeking adequate attention, recognition and participation in its oil resource matters, adequate development and representation and fair, just and equitable treatment of the region and its citizens, as minority groups. All these issues relate to resource management governance and minority rights.

Table 13: The Goals of the Niger-delta Struggle (GS)

GOAL	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Developmental attention	15(21.74%)	13 (16.05%)	9 (20.45%)	37 (19.07%)
Inclusion and Adequate Representation	13 (18.84%)	10 (12.35%)	3 (6.82%)	26 (13.40%)
Resource Control	15 (21.74)	22 (27.16%)	3 (6.82)	40 (20.62%)
Self Determination	10 (14.49%)	3 (3.70%)	-	13 (6.70%)
Equitable and Just treatment	13 (18.84%)	28 (34.57)	14 (31.82%)	55 (28.35%)
Freedom/Emancipation	3 (4.34)	5 (6.17)	15 (34.07)	23 (11.86%)
Total	69	81	44	194

The study further investigated in the KIS what the Ijaws, the largest ethnic group in the region and the hotbed of the youth insurgency, and the other groups – Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiris, Ogoni, Ogbas, Ikwerres, Ilajes, Ndokwas, and others seek through the struggle. The results (Table 14) indicate the main demands as development, resource control or adequate derivation based funds within a better federal framework, equitable, fair and just treatment, freedom and self determination. These are congruent with the identified problems and goals. One of our key informants (Bayelsa State) put the demands this way: ‘We want development, employment and particularly, our resources should not be resources for the whole Nigeria... why should our resources be used to develop others at the expense of the Izons?’

Of particular interest is the demand for self determination (11.8%) and secession (2.7%). Self determination was identified earlier as one of the goals (5.8%) of the struggle (Table 13). It is also interesting to note that the above goal and the demands for self determination and secession is more dominant among the Ijaws. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that the Ijaws are the largest ethnic minority in the region and currently the most agitating and militant group. It is perhaps the most aggrieved as a large minority group with the greatest oil resource endowments. It typifies most the situation of the Niger-delta in terms of low resource in flow, poor development, low political representation and inclusion, poverty, unemployment and economic deprivation contingent to economic decline and negative oil externalities.

The demand for self determination was put this way by a key informant (Bayelsa State): ‘We want equity, fairness and justice. But since it is seemingly unattainable. We want a republic of our own. I mean, we want a country of our own’. However, we should note that self determination is largely equated to regional autonomy, self rule and self development. Secession is an extremist and minority conception in the region.

Youths and the Conflict

The conflict is essentially youth driven, in terms of the conduct of the struggle, the central actors and their foot soldiers. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how and why the youths emerged as the major actors in the conflict, the perception of youth roles in the conflict, youth perception of the conflict and the perception of what the youths want from the conflict.

The major reasons for the emergence of the youth as a central plank of the struggle are the loss of faith in the region’s elders and leaders (40%), and more specifically, the failure of the elders to secure much needed development from the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies (18.7%). Then the youth as a vibrant segment of the population (17.2%) began to seek greater involvement (6.4%) in a struggle for rights and entitlement (6.4%). There is also the factor of politics and particularly youth involvement in elections and campaigns, thereby tending towards engagement in the conflict (11.8%) (Table 15).

Table 14: Perceptions of What the Ijaws and other Groups in the Niger-delta Want

	Bayelsa		Delta		Rivers		TOTAL
	Ijaws %	Others	Ijaws	Others	Ijaws	Others	%
Development	7	7	5	12	4	5	40 36.36
Resources control/true	5	5	8	3	4	2	27 24.55
Federalism/Adequate derivation	-	-	2	2	1	4	9 8.18
Inclusion/belonging/Political Representation	1	5	3	3	1	2	15 13.63
Freedom/Equity/Fairness/justice	4	2	2	-	3	2	13 11.82
Self Determination	2	-	-	-	1	-	3 2.73
Secession Abrogation of obnoxious laws	1	1	-	-	1	-	3 2.73
Total	20	20	20	20	15	15	110

The content analysis of the responses here is quite instructive. It is presented as follows:

- The youth were disappointed with the elite and elders. The elite utilised methods (accommodation and incorporation) that failed to yield concrete results. The state and oil companies did not listen to them. The elders were not seen as active, committed and willing to fight the cause. They took things too easy. They were seen as weak, docile, corrupt and betraying the cause of the struggle.
- The elders could not accomplish the mission because they have taken enough money from the government and oil companies. The elders failed in their duties. Their ideas were no longer seen as the solution or capable of addressing the issues involved.
- The youths become frustrated, angry and discontented. They were increasingly hungry, miserable, suffering, idle and unemployed. Their future was bleak and probabilities of realising their aspirations narrow. They were at the receiving end of the deprivation in the region.
- The youth then emerged in the scene. They forced their way into the whole situation when they discovered that the nation does not hold any future for them. They could not allow their tomorrow to be completely destroyed before they could help it. They had to act, take over the struggle, forcefully. They had to pick up arms and fight for their rights.

Table 15: The Youth and the Crisis (GS)

Factors in the Emergence of Youths as major actors in the Struggle	FACTORS	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Loss of Faith in Elders	40 (57.14%)	31 (46.28%)	2 (3.03%)	73 (35.96%)
	Vibrant segment of population	15 (21.43%)	12 (17.9%)	8 (12.12)	35 (17.24)
	Failure of Elders to secure development	5 (7.14%)	12 (17.9%)	21 (31.82)	38 (18.71%)
	Search for greater involvement	10 (14.29)	3 (4.48%)	-	13 (6.40)
	Fighting for rights/entitlements	-	2 (2.99%)	11 (16.67%)	13 (6.40%)
	Politics	-	-	24 (36.36%)	24 (11.82%)
	Lack of government response	-	3 (4.48%)	-	3 (1.5%)
	Poverty/Unemployment	-	4 (5.97%)	-	4 (1.97%)
	Total	70	67	66	203
Perception of Youth Roles in the Niger Delta Struggle	YOUTH ROLES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Vanguard of the Struggle	26 (43.3%)	32 (57.14%)	31 (53.45)	99 (53.80%)
	Freedom fighters	34 (56.7%)	20 (35.71%)	16 (27.59)	70 (38.04)
	Criminal and Violent	-	3 (5.36%)	3 (5.17)	6 (3.26%)
	An Un-focused segment	-	-	5 (8.62)	5 (2.72%)
	The Only hope of the Struggle	-	1 (1.79)	3 (5.17)	4 (2.17%)
	Total	60	56	58	184
youth Perception of the Niger Delta Struggle	FACTORS	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	A fight for rights	10 (15.38%)	4 (4.94%)	4 (6.67%)	18 (8.74%)
	Struggle Against Injustice	35 (53.85%)	20 (24.69%)	6 (1%)	61 (29.61%)
	Focus and Purposeful Struggle	20 (30.77)	45 (55.55%)	20 (33.33)	85 (41.26%)
	Long but Continuous Struggle Until Aspirations are met	-	4 (4.94%)	23 (38.33)	27 (13.11%)
	Struggle for Survival and Livelihood	-	8 (9.88%)	7 (11.67%)	15 (7.28)
	Total	65	81	60	206
Perception of What the youths want from the Niger Delta Struggle	What The Youth Want	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Development	25 (33.78%)	46 (48.94)	15 (21.74%)	86 (36.29)
	Resource Control	24 (32.42)	12 (17.77%)	16 (23.19)	52 (21.94%)
	Employment	15 (20.27)	22 (23.40%)	10 (14.49)	47 (19.83%)
	Freedom fairness and Justice	-	7 (7.45%)	9 (13.04)	16 (6.75)
	Adequate attention and pride of place	10 (13.52%)	6 (6.38%)	18 (26.09%)	34 (14.36%)
	Political Representation	-	1 (1.06%)	1 (1.45%)	2 (0.845)
	Total	74	94	69	237

The investigation of the perception of youth roles in the struggle reveals that the youths are seen as vanguards (53.8%) and freedom fighters (38%). Some respondents see the youths driving the struggle as an active, brave, courageous, articulate and determined segment. Some respondents also see them as having raised awareness about the struggle, as having been instruments of change and development and as struggling for a better tomorrow in the region. They are seen also as the strength of society, as fighting for their possessions, and as having the courage and boldness to deliver the region. However, a few respondents see the youth as criminal and violent (3.3%) and unfocused (2.7%). Some respondents noted that the activities of the youths are becoming uncivilised, terrorist and criminal (Interviewees Sapele 15th June 2007; Yenagoa 8th June 2007).

The responses reveal that first; youth role is seeing in as a right, focused and purposeful struggle (41.3%), a struggle against injustice (29.6%) and a fight for rights (8.7%). These indicate that the struggle is perceived as right, just, purposeful and as directed against injustice, deprivation, abuse, exploitation and oppression. Quite interestingly, the struggle is further seen as possibly long, but that it would be contained until their aspirations are met (13.1%) (Table15). Besides these however, there is a self interest tinge. It is a struggle for survival and livelihood (17.3%).

The content analysis of our respondents in the GS Sample, oral interviews and FGDs, lends more credence to the responses. First the youths see the struggle as 'fighting for the people'. It is to liberate the people, to compel development and employment, to bring about desired changes, and particularly a better life for the region. Second, the struggle is seen as a just, sincere and genuine cause, a good fight, a noble struggle, a cause worth fighting for. It is a struggle for freedom and equal treatment. Third, the struggle is seen as necessary for claiming the right of the youth, a right that they and no one else could fight for. It is their time to fight. The struggle is their life. The youth, it is claimed, have a right to fight for what belongs to them. Fourth, the struggle is seen as the only way, the only choice and the best option in the circumstance, in order to redress the poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, frustration and other hazards confronting the region. The people have been pushed to the wall. Fifth, the struggle is seen as a task that must be done, or accomplished, a fight that will go on until the desired goals are achieved, a 'do or die' affair, a struggle that must be sustained, completed and pursued to its logical conclusion. Finally, the struggle is seen as that which is capable of yielding the desired returns for the people.

The responses as to what the youths want from the struggle indicate that what the youth need are development (36.3%), resource control (21.9%), employment (19.8%) and adequate attention and pride of place (14.3%) (Table 15). These responses reflect what the ethnic groups in the region want: massive development and a fair or reasonable share, or total control of the region's oil resources.

What is more poignant concerning what the youths want and which is more relevant to the youth can be discerned from the content analysis of responses. The youth want 'a better life and the eradicating of poverty' (Port Harcourt 18th June 2007), 'good education, scholarships, skills development opportunities, massive employment, employment opportunities, social and economic empowerment' (Port Harcourt 12th June 2007) 'a guarantee or some protection of their future life or of better life, living conditions, economic wellbeing, and meaningful living' (Ekeremor, Bayelsa 17th June 2007).

Youth Militias

The youth militias, as a major focus of the study, attracted considerable attention. The reasons for their emergence, profile, categories, sponsorship, goals and being genuine were investigated in both the GS and KIS and in the FGDs and oral interviews.

The youth militias are perceived to have emerged from a loss of confidence in the Nigerian state (19.3%) (Table 16), and regional/ethnic leaders that sought more accommodationist approaches. But apart from these, the militia phenomenon is founded on poverty and unemployment (17.9%), frustration and sense of oppression (14.5%) and persisting feelings of neglect and exploitation of the region (14%). Some of these poor, unemployed and frustrated youths have fallen prey to manipulation of political leaders, particularly in Rivers State (7.3%).

Table 16: Reasons for the Emergence of Youth Militias GS

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Loss of Confidence in the State	25 (34.25%)	11 (16.18%)	4 (6.06%)	40 (19.32%)
Loss of Confidence in Leaders/Elders	28 (38.35)	2 (2.94)	-	30 (14.49%)
Poverty and Unemployment	4 (5.48%)	19 (27.94%)	14 (21.21%)	37 (17.87%)
Frustration/Oppression	-	22 (32.35%)	8 (12.12%)	30 (14.49%)
Neglect/Exploitation of the Region	8 (10.96%)	11 (16.18%)	10 (15.15)	29 (14.01%)
Need for Resource Control	8 (10.96%)	1 (1.47%)	3 (4.54)	12 (5.80%)
Access to Guns Arms	-	-	5 (7.58)	5 (2.42%)
Selfish Motives	-	2 (2.94%)	3 (4.55%)	5 (2.42%)
Manipulation by Political Leaders	-	-	15 (22.73%)	15 (7.25%)
Fight for Justice/Good Cause	-	-	4 (6.06%)	4 (1.93%)
Total	73	68	66	207

The issue of loss of confidence in the elders and leaders has been considerably raised earlier. The elders are seen to have betrayed the struggle, too ready to sell off the struggle to satisfy self and family, and have only obtained 'paltry benefits' from their so-called 'peaceful negotiation and consultation'. Though the youths have been 'chesting out and taking the fight of the struggle' and 'realised that except you fight, nobody would fight for you', there is a base of degenerating poverty, mass unemployment, deprivation, long suffering and a rising mass of anger, frustration and discontentment that has pushed the youth towards militancy. It is also these conditions that has made the youths amenable to elite manipulation and use. The loss of confidence in the state arises from the persisting neglect and exploitation of the region, the failure to dialogue and negotiate, and the use of the military to maltreat the communities and citizens.

Insights from the content analysis of responses (KIS, GS, oral interviews and FGD) indicate that the militia phenomenon arose first from the failure of government to yield to demands. This perhaps led to loss of hope and confidence in the state. Second, political and ethnic/community leaders and state governments fund, arm, sponsor and use militias and cult groups, particularly during elections, but dump them afterwards. As one respondent in Bonny put it, 'they emerged from and are offshoots of government and opposition killer squads, thugs, and bouncers. They are monsters created by government' The exposure, recognition, funding and other supports during the elections, oriented the armed bands into not just political roles, but also the struggle for cheap funds, hostage taking and bunkering. Criminality among the armed youths grew in part out of this. The third element is that the militia arose as a response to state repression. A respondent in Bonny put this succinctly: 'they emerged after mass killing of the people by the Nigerian Military. They feel retaliation is the best way out'.

But who are the militias? What is their profile, and what are their categories? Answers to these questions can be found in Table 17.

The study found that militia groups are fairly hierarchically organised, command based (30%) and disciplined organisations (20%) that are also fairly enlightened, purposeful and focused (14%). However, they are violent and brutal (10%), self-centred and greedy (12%), and cultist (10%). They are not easily amenable to categorisation. They are numerous in categories (38.5%). But they are mainly in camps, armed bands and cults (23.1%). Some are however ethnic and community based militias (19.2%), sponsored (11.5%), or self sponsored (7.8%). There are also militias that are freedom fighters and others that are not.

The ethnic militias are larger groups. So also are militias that are freedom fighters, which are wider ethnically. Non-freedom fighters or those more permanently associated with non-Niger-delta interests are associated with bands and cults usually built around individuals. There are the ones that are more involved in piracy, bunkering and ransom taking. The sponsored militias are constructed around politicians and ethnic leaders and are devoted more to self centred objectives than the regional struggle. The non-sponsored militias are built around prominent militia men and activists of the struggle.

The militias are dominantly sponsored by political leaders (42.6%) and ethnic leaders (21.3%). But a considerable proportion is self sponsored (31.9%). There is a strong element of self sponsorship in terms of motivation, management and control. Diverse militia and camp leaders have groups that are trained, armed and funded by them through diverse sources, including security threats. The ethnic/community and political leaders component of sponsorship seems to relate to the arming and funding support that is linked to manipulation, teleguiding and utilisation of the militia groups for political and personal reasons. An oral interviewee in Delta State however averred that 'we have no sponsors or godfathers, but we compel most political leaders and elders, government

functionaries and very rich businessmen to give us money. Some political leaders may come and negotiate their political business with us and they pay us. I don't think that is sponsorship. We work and they pay us.' There may then be a sense in the remarks of a Delta State key informant who said that the militia groups 'are sponsored by individuals who use them to satisfy selfish ends and by communities and ethnic groups who see them as those fighting for their rights'.

According to some key informants and oral interviewees in Delta State, (Burutu, Sapele, Delta), they usually operate under a general commander (commandant), who ensures direction and common goals. Sometimes, there are component units outside the control of the commandant. Contrary to public opinion, some of the militias are enlightened people who have the feelings of the people at heart. They are a highly structured and organised network with a philosophy and a cause. They have mechanisms that check relations within and for disciplining erring members. They have administrative units, secretaries, spokesmen, spies and combatants, the latter constituting the largest segment. Those that are not educated are the Field Marshall. The Egbesu is the general name for the militias, but there are many sub-groups. In the Bayelsa State area, there are between 20 and 30 militia groups and camps.

The militias pursue diverse goals, the major ones been resource control and true federalism (29%), development (23.6%), equitable, fair and just treatment and respect for the collective rights of the ethnic groups (21.8%). Besides these altruistic goals however are selfish interests and personal aggrandisement (14.5%).

The genuineness of the motives and struggle of the militias was also investigated. It revealed three categories. There are the genuine militias who pursue the pure objectives of the Niger-delta struggle (36%), those that combine regional objectives with selfish struggles (30%), and then those that pursue selfish interests and survival and take the struggle as a struggle for livelihood (34%). The latter two groups are said to have derailed, by kidnapping to make money, pirating and creating havoc in the water ways, and bunkering oil. But even the genuine militias may digress from time to time to meet economic and arms needs of the struggle.

The question of how the militias are seen or perceived, the reasons for their proliferation and relative success, their involvement in inter-communal and ethnic wars, rather than the struggle and the problems or challenges, were also investigated. As Tables 17,18 and 19 reveal, the militants are youths, they mingle with the people and operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in the cities and towns. They are usually around in the towns and villages on weekends but return to their camps (office) during week days. They are often seen as activists or even as non-governmental organisation members, but Ijaw activists know them. The level of support and unity among the Ijaws is such that the militants are not seen as betrayers in any way. The militias are in camps, distant communities or virgin lands or islands in the creeks, and along the sea coast. These camps are numerous, established and owned by the bosses or commandants. Each camp may com-

prise of as many as 2,000 youth militia or more. Several volunteers are turned down because of the size and the ensuing problem of manageability of the camps. The commandants run the camp from resources obtained through extortion from state and local government councils, multinational oil companies and oil servicing companies (using security threats), bunkering and sale of oil in the high seas, and in some cases, kidnapping and ransom demands.

Most militia groups and bands are involved in bunkering. They use the money to run the camps to purchase arms. The distinguishing feature is that bunkering by genuine freedom fighting militias is for the sustenance of the struggle while bunkering by criminal militia groups and bands is for self enrichment. Then genuine militia groups are more subject to the influence and co-ordination of the apex Ijaw Youth Movement and the Ijaw Youth Council. Criminal bands, cults and militia groups operate less under such broad controls. There is however some level of intermingling or overlapping between the genuine and criminal militias. This is because, even within the militia groups, there are bands and cliques who perpetrate criminal activities without the knowledge, and outside the control, of the camp commandants. There has been more proliferation of the groups since 1999, and particularly since 2004. The main ethnic nationalistic and liberation driven militia leaders are losing control to others who are less driven by altruistic motives. With such proliferation, there have emerged criminal bands, cults and cliques, particularly in Rivers and Bayelsa States.

Most militants are initiates of the Egbesu deity. The initiation is done at Egbesu shrines and are presided over by Egbesu priests. The chief priest is usually also the head of the Supreme Egbesu Assembly. The militias believe in the invincibility of Egbesu and therefore take initiation baths or sprinkles before militant actions. Casualties are attributed to defilement due to disobedience of the codes of behaviour (for example, an Egbesu militant should not steal rape or desecrate sacred places).

The militia groups control territories in the water ways and creeks. Inter-militia fights are sometimes over control of territory. Territory is important because of the bunkering, access to multinational oil companies and even access to political leaders. The prominent militant groups in the western Delta are the Membutu Boys and Ijaw Liberation Heroes. The Niger-delta Vigilante and Niger-delta Volunteer Force Operate more in the eastern axis.

The popular support for the militants was quite high initially. Except for the criminal aspect, the militias were hailed, and a core militia was a kind of hero. However, the social acceptability is declining. Some are no more easily in social circles, unlike before when it was a thing of pride to be associated with the militias. Secondly, those involved in piracy and related crimes are not accepted, are resisted or even fought by community members, such as happened to some militant pirates who attempted to steal local government funds in Ekeremor. Thirdly, the open use and celebration of guns and militancy is not encouraged by IYC.

Table 17: Profiling the Militia (KIS)

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	%
Perception	-Political Thugs	-		1	1 (2.2)
	-Right/Freedom Fighters	3	12	4	29 (61.7)
	-Bold, Brave, Aggressive Youth/angry	2	3	-	5 (10.6)
	-Poor/Unemployed deprived youth	4	1	2	7 (14.9)
	-Self Interest	1	1	-	2 (4.2)
	-Criminal, indiscipline	-	3	-	3 (6.4)
		20	20	7	47
Organizational profile	-Disciplined	6	4	-	10 (20)
	-Hierarchical Command/Organization	8	3	4	15 (30)
	-Enlightened/purposeful focused	3	3	1	7 (14)
	-Not disciplined	-	2	-	2 (4)
	-Violent/Brutal	1	2	2	5 (100)
	-Self-interest/greedy/deviled	-	3	3	6 (12)
	-Cult groups	-	-	5	5 (10)
		18	17	15	50
Categorization	-Freedom Fighters	-	2	-	2 (7.8)
	-Sponsored Militias	-	2	1	3 (11.5)
	-Ethnic & Community Based	4	-	-	3 (19.2)
	-Camped/Armed Bands/Cultist	1	1	-	5 (23.1)
	-Numerous	1	1	4	6 (38.5)
		6	6	3	10
			12	8	26
Sponsorship	-Self-sponsored	7	8	-	15 (31.9)
	-Ethnic Leaders	3	3	4	10 (21.3)
	-Political Leaders	8	4	8	20 (42.6)
	-Oil Syndicates	-	-	1	1 (0.2)
	-Diaspora	18	15	-	1 (0.2)
			1	-	
			14	47	
Goals of the Militias	-Development	4	6	3	13 (23.6)
	-True Federalism/Resource Control	10	2	4	16 (29)
	-Regular/ethnic rights/emancipation equitable & just treatment.	2	6	4	12 (21.8)
	-Release of detained leaders	1	1	-	2 (3.6)
	-Selfish interests/aggrandizement	1	3	4	8 (14.5)
	-Others (abrogation of obnoxious business employment/better tomorrow	2	2	-	4 (7.2)
Totals		20	20	15	55
Genuineness of the litias struggle	-Pursue Niger Delta struggle	8	6	4	18 (36)
	-Pursuing selfish interests/survival/livelihood	3	5	9	17 (34)
	-Admixture of regional and selfish struggle	6	7	2	15 (30)
	Total				
Perception of involvement in Communal & ethnic conflicts	-Condemnable/unhealthy beyond bounds	2	10	5	17 (40.5)
	-Misplacement of focus/objectives.	3	1	2	6 (14.3)
	-Struggles over territory and oil	4	-	1	5 (11.9)
	-Bad leadership	4	2	2	8(19)
	-Creed/criminality/cultism sponsorship	1	-	5	6 (14.3)
	Total				
		14	13	15	42

Table 18: Perception of Reasons for Relative Success and the Challenges Faced by Militias (GS)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Liberation/freedom fighters Addressing Niger Delta Problem	53 (71.62%)	29 (46.03%)	17 (25.37%)	99 (48.5%)
Doing A Commendable/Good Job	10 (13.51%)	2 (3.17%)	11 (16.42%)	23 (11.3%)
Lack focus	-	1 (1.60%)	8 (11.94%)	9 (4.4%)
Fighting for Recognition and Benefits	11 (14.86%)	7 (11.11%)	8 (11.94%)	26 (12.8%)
Discipline/Well armed/Tactical	-	10 (15.87%)	5 (7.46%)	15 (7.4%)
Evil/Not Commendable	-	14 (22.22%)	13 (19.40%)	27 (13.2%)
Attracts Attention To Niger Delta	-	-	5 (7.46%)	5 (2.4%)
Total	74	63	67	204

Table 19: Perception of Reasons for Relative Success and the Challenges Faced by Militias (KIS)

REASON FOR PROLIFERATING & THRIVING OF MILITIAS	-DETERMINATION, FOCUS/UNITY OF PURPOSE	2	2	2	6 (12.25)
	-DEPRIVATION/SUFFERING/ UNEMPLOYMENT FRUSTRATION.	-	4	1	5 (10.20)
	-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES/FINANCIAL	-	-	4	4 (8.16)
	-PERSISTING NEGLECT UNDERDEVELOPMENT/MISGOVERNANCE.	7	6	3	16 (32.65)
	-SUPPORT OF PROMINENT PERSONS AND LOCALS	5	4	5	14 (28.57)
	-JUST STRUGGLE	3	1	-	4 (8.16)
	Total	17	17	15	49
Reasons for Relative Success of Militias	-Support of local the people	5	3	2	10 (20.4)
	-Funds raised from kidnapping & bunkering.	4	2	4	10 (20.4)
	-Internal character (determination/focus/unity/boldness/leadership)	5	4	2	11 (22.45)
	-Just cause & struggle for freedom	-	2	2	4 (8.16)
	-Traditional deities	3	1	1	5 (10.20)
	-Difficult terrain	2	1	2	5 (10.20)
	-Persisting unemployment and poverty.	-	3	1	4 (8.16)
Total	19	16	14	49	
Challenges and problems of the Militias	-Lack of understanding & betrayals by locals.	5	4	3	12 (21.81)
	-Greed/selfishness of community/militia members	2	-	-	2 (3.64)
	-Funding difficulties	2	3	3	8 (14.55)
	-Military suppression	10	7	5	22 (40)
	-Loss of lives/job hazards	-	3	3	6 (10.91)
	-Lack of proper co-ordination/leadership.	1	3	1	9.09
Total	20	20	15	55	

The militias are perceived dominantly by our KIS sample as freedom or rights fighters (61.7%) or as poor, unemployed and deprived youths (14.9%) that are bold, brave and aggressive (10.6%). In the GS sample, they are perceived as freedom fighters that are addressing the Niger-delta problem (48.5%). They are also described as fighting for regional benefits and recognition (12.8%) and as doing a commendable and good job of addressing the region's problems (11.2%). Some however see them as evil and not commendable (13.0%) and lacking focus (4.4%).

Thus, the general picture of the militias in the region is that of liberation and freedom fighters. Some of our GS in Sapele, Delta State, describe them as a 'group of able bodied men trained in the art of warfare and who, as freedom fighters, are combating through militant means all those behind the Niger-delta problem' in order to 'free the region's people from suffering'. An oral interviewee in Delta State described militias as 'a collection of angry, unemployed, aggrieved discontented but literate youths that have taken up arms. They are daring, fearless and brave young patriots, who are determined to emancipate the region from bondage and achieve resource control. The idea of the militia is to frustrate the Federal Government and gain freedom'. But some respondents tend to condone the negative aspects of the militia because of the problems and goals of the struggle. As one KIS respondents put it, 'the phenomenon of militia is not the best, but we have been taken for granted for too long (Bonny, Rivers 14th June 2007).

The militias have been relatively successful in seizing and holding on to oil installations, maintaining some territorial control in terms of camps and fairly successfully engaging the Nigerian military. We sought explanations as to what made this possible. There were three categories of responses here. The first is persisting neglect, under-development and misgovernance of the region (32.7%) and support of prominent persons and locals (28.6%). The relative success of the militias is also attributed to the internal character of the militia groups (22.4%). This is seen as indicating determination, focus, unity and boldness. There is also the support from the local people (20.4%) and funds raised from kidnapping and bunkering (20.4%). The Niger-delta's difficult terrain and the support of traditional deities are also factors that contributed to the strength of the militias.

If the picture of the militias is that of a liberation movement, concerned with regional and ethnic issues, why then have they been the soldiers in inter-communal and ethnic wars within the region?

The phenomenon is condemned by most of the respondents (Table 17). Such actions are seen as unhealthy and beyond bounds (38.6%), and arising out of bad leadership (10.2%), greed, criminality, elite sponsorship and cultism (18.2%) as

well as a misplacement of objectives and focus by the militias (13.6%). Our KIS samplers elaborate on the figures, and their comments include 'the entire Ijaw ethnic is in support of the militia struggles' and 'because they are fighting a just cause, the gods of the land are behind them'. But contrarywise, a key oral interviewee reveals: 'We have not recorded any success. The militants are suffering. They are only taking risks to survive. If you look at it from afar, you think they are making success, but if you come closer, it is suffering upon suffering that you see. Let me tell you. For about two years, I have not spent 30 minutes with my parents and my village is no longer comfortable for me'. The militias face numerous problems (Table 9). These major problems are military suppression, (40%), lack of understanding and betrayals by family (21.8%), funding difficulties (14.5%) and job hazards such as loss of lives (10.9%).

According to some oral interviewees, the militias experience frequent military attacks and a sense of insecurity outside their camps. These are expressed thus:

We are often confronted by government incessant attacks and killings. When we retaliate, they call us militants....they burn our homes.... The Federal Government is on our necks, looking for us as if we stole their property. Don't they enjoy it? Security officers are after us. Even our co-Ijaw (Izon) people, especially politicians and other jealous people, want some of us dead. Why?

Roles of Actors in the Struggle

The actors in the Niger-delta conflict were identified and their roles investigated in the GS (Table 20). The role of ethnic, political and business leaders in the conflict was investigated in the KIS (Table 21). The traditional rulers, community leaders and elders are seen as playing mediating advisory and peaceful roles. But they use the struggle for personal gains (26.6%) and take sides with the government (13.3%). The business and political leaders play fairly active roles, by giving material and political support (11.8%), but they tend to seek and derive personal gains from the struggle (44.7%). Women are seen as supporting the struggle, but they are largely inactive (31.8%). When active, the women only play mediating roles (27.7%). The youth are seen as vanguards of the struggle (45.60%) and freedom fighters (27.9%).

Table 20: The Roles of Actors in the Niger Delta Struggle (GS)

Roles	Bayelsa						Delta						Rivers					
	Traditional Leaders/Elders/Chief	Business Leaders/Political	Women	Youth	Traditional Leaders/Elders/Chief	Business Leaders/Political	Women	Youth	Traditional Leaders/Elders/Chief	Business Leaders/Political	Women	Youth	Traditional Leaders/Elders/Chief	Business Leaders/Political	Women	Youth		
Support/Part of the Struggle	5 (6.94%)	-	24 (32.43)	-	3 (5.36%)	10 (13.38%)	11 (18.33%)	12 (24%)	11 (15.31%)	11 (15.07%)	30 (41.10%)	-	19 (9.4)	22 (11.6)	65 (33.33)	12 (7.6)		
Play mediating/advisory/peace full roles	35 (48.61%)	-	25 (33.78%)	-	16 (28.57%)	4 (6.15%)	12 (20%)	-	12 (16.7)	9 (12.33%)	17 (23.29%)	-	63 (31.03)	13 (6.84)	54 (27.7)	-		
Give material/Political Support	-	22 (33.9)	-	9 (16.07%)	12 (18.46%)	-	13 (26%)	-	-	-	13 (26%)	-	12 (5.9)	22 (11.6)	13 (6.7)	9 (5.7)		
Use the Struggle for personal gains	15 (20.83)	27 (41.54)	-	-	14 (25%)	33 (50.72%)	-	-	25 (34.7%)	25 (34.25%)	1 (2.1)	-	54 (26.6)	85 (44.73)	1 (0.51)	-		
1.Take sides with government	5 (6.94%)	-	-	-	6 (10.71%)	2 (3.085)	-	-	16 (22.22%)	16 (21.925)	-	-	27 (13.3)	18 (9.47)	-	-		
2.Vanguard of the Struggle	-	-	-	36 (485)	-	-	-	2 (40%)	-	-	-	36 (53.735)	-	-	-	72 (45.6)		
3.freedom fighter	-	-	-	39 (46.4%)	-	-	-	5 (26.3)	-	-	-	63.15	-	-	-	44 (27.9)		
4.No active roles	12 (16.7)	16 (24.62%)	25 (33.8)	-	8 (13.6)	4 (7.5%)	37 (50.7%)	-	8 (11.11%)	10 (14.1%)	-	21 (36.8)	28 (13.8)	30 (15.8)	62 (31.8)	21 (13.3)		
TOTAL	72	65	74	84	59	53	73	19	72	71	48	57	203	190	195	158		

The KIS (Table 21) indicate that ethnic, political and business leaders are not generally active (24.5%); but when they are, they sponsor or fund militancy (28.3%) or seek peace and dialogue (10.2%), and this could be for selfish ends (12.2%). As some key informants presented the political elite, business, ethnic and influential leaders, 'some are indifferent and some use it as a profitable venture to make ends meet and prosper, irrespective of the consequences. So except for a few, they betray the struggle. Yet, they are always called upon to the settlement table at Abuja'.

Table: 21: The Role of Ethnic, Political and Business Leaders in the Niger-delta Conflict (KIS)

	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	
Support resource control Advice the youth	5	2	-	7	14.29%
Seek peace and dialogue	-	3	2	5	10.20%
Support/sponsor militancy and crisis	1	4	9	14	28.57%
Involvement for their selfish ends	6	-	-	6	12.24%
No active Role/indifferent	6	3	3	12	24.49%
Handicapped.	-	5	-	5	10.20%
Total	18	17	14	49	

A picture of the roles of the different actors, glimpsed from the KIS, is quite revealing. The elders, traditional rulers and chiefs are seen as lacking 'focus, direction and commitment to the struggle', experiencing a 'decline in the significance of their overall roles', 'selfish, opportunistic, sycophantic, corrupt and compromised'. They have 'lost integrity and confidence of the people'. They are no longer 'representing the interests of the people' nor are they custodians of culture'. They are 'all politicians representing the interests of government and self' (Bonny, Port Harcourt, June 2007).

The businesses, political and ethnic leaders, are seen as involved in the struggle mainly to 'pursue profit, contracts, appointments, personal recognition and selfish ambitions and gains'. Some of these leaders see the struggle as a 'business, a means of making money, a situation to be exploited. Though they perform some advisory roles and believe in peaceful agitation, they are also 'responsible for the proliferation of arms and ammunitions' and they use militants against their perceived enemies'. In many ways, they are 'the agents and mediums of the government and oil companies' and have often betrayed the people and the struggle (Bonny, Port Harcourt, June 2006).

The portrait of the women is that of a largely passive and helpless but supportive and concerned segment. Their non-active status is attributed to their socio-cultu-

ral standing and restraints. The women seek poverty alleviation and economic empowerment because their sources of livelihood have been more dislocated. But more importantly, the women are seen as the 'moral conscience' of the struggle. They provide moral support and morally moderate the struggle. It is in this role that they are engaged in dialogue and peace building.

Perception of Methods of Conflict

A critical issue in the investigation of the Niger-delta conflicts is the methodology for its conduct. The conflict has since the early 1990s been characterised by popular and criminal violence, state violence, militarisation and repression. Our investigation here is in two parts. The first relates to violence which has become the dominant method for conducting conflict. The second is the perception of the effectiveness of specific methods utilised in the conduct of the struggle. The methods of the struggle have increased, become aggressive, confrontational, combative and violent. We sought to know why in the GS (Table 22).

The reasons as expressed relate generally to the nature of state governance in the region. The government has failed to act (39.3%) and has been insensitive to the region's agitation (20.5%). Therefore, the conditions that warranted the agitation has persisted (9.40%). But more interesting is the fact that violence is seen to be more effective in obtaining results from the Nigerian state and MNCs (29%). Thus, violence is seen as a more potent instrument of struggle.

Further investigation of the perception of the role of violence in the struggle is even more revealing. The purpose of violence is to force government to dialogue (61%). In fact, it is initialised by the failure or unwillingness of government to dialogue (15.4%). But violence is not totally perceived as the solution or best method for conducting the conflict. Dialogue and negotiation is seen by a sizeable proportion (23.5%) as a better option.

The investigation of these issues in the other research instruments (FGD and oral interviews) and samplers from the GS respondents reveal a better portrait of the perception of and underlying factors in the dominance of violence in the conduct of the conflict. Violence has become more salient because the Federal Government has been non-responsive, insensitive and inattentive to the issues, nor yielded to the petitions and protests from the region. The problems of the region therefore persist. The people, having 'waited for so long without a change' have become disappointed and frustrated. The Federal Government considers protests as 'mere noise' according to some GS respondents in Yenagoa (1st June 2007 and Burutu (21st June 2007)/. When the petitions, protests and dialogues are not yielding better results, it is then 'not out of place to try militancy'. Besides, 'a situation which cannot be changed by constitutional means invites the use of violent measures'. Violence then was foisted on the struggle by the nature of state response and management of the conflict.

Table 22: Violence and the Niger Delta Conflict (GS)

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Reasons For Increasingly Violent Methods Of Agitation	Leadership/Government Failures to Act	35 (46.7%)	15 (18.29)	38 (56.72%)	88 (39.29)
	Insensitivity of Government/Leaders to agitation	21 (28%)	20 (24.39%)	5 (7.46%)	46 (20.54%)
	Persisting Developmental and related conditions	14 (18.7%)	7 (8.54)	-	21 (9.38%)
	Violent is more effective	5 (6.7%)	40 (48.78%)	20 (29.85%)	65 (29.01%)
	Militarization and arms proliferation	-	-	4 ((5.97%)	4 (1.78)
	Total	75	82	67	224
	The Role Of Violence In The Resolution Of The Conflict	Conducted by Government refusal to dialogue	7 (10.29%)	13 (27.08%)	3 (9.09%)
Force Government to dialogue		61 (89.71%)	20 (41.67%)	10 (30.30%)	91 (61.07%)
Dialogue and negotiation is better		-	15 (31.25%)	20 (60.61%)	35 (23.49%)
Total		68	48	33	149
Extent Of Potential Actions In Pursuance Of The Niger Delta Agenda Gs	Extent of Potential Action	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	1. Use every available action/Any extent necessary	32 (41.56%)	28 (34.57%)	20 (44.44%)	80 (39.44%)
	2. Act until government presence is felt	45 (58.44%)	25 (30.86%)	15 (33.33%)	85 (41.87%)
	3. Give material and moral Support to Militias	-	20 (24.69%)	7 (15.56%)	27 (13.30%)
	4. follow constitutional Process and Dialogue	-	8 (9.88%)	3 (6.67%)	11 (5.42%)
	Total	77	81	45	203

Finally, we tried to determine the potential for further violent acts of confrontation through the extent of potential actions that respondents are ready to undertake in pursuance of the struggle, in the GS and KIS. The results are disturbing. Only (4.9%) of GS respondents are ready to follow constitutional proceeds and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle, while 42.9 per cent are ready to continue actions and measures until government responds adequately through development. Furthermore, 38.4 per cent are ready to use every available option while 13.8 per cent are even ready to give material and moral support to the militias. In the KIS, about 24 per cent are ready to utilise constitutional means and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle. Another 24 per cent would continue or sustain present actions until government's positive response is felt. But the majority (52%) is ready to use every available means and go to any extent to achieve the objectives of the struggle.

These responses indicate that a considerable proportion of the respondents are willing to undertake any measures, including violence, sabotage and even secession in pursuance of the struggle. This spells a dangerous omen, as it means that the conflict may be prolonged, protracted and could escalate into a civil war or secession. The views expressed by our KIS and GIS respondents, further reveal this danger. According to some of them, they will push the struggle through constitutional and any available options: 'I will fight this cause till we break up, I will not hold my peace until the Niger-delta area is developed' (Yenegro, 12th June 2007); 'I will push the struggle up to the level of proclaiming a sovereign state for the Niger Delta' (Yenegro, 14th June 2007). A key informant in Bayelsa tied the issue of extent of potential actions to time and generational shift. According to him:

We can't tell the extent we will go, because as we grow old, the idea of the struggle will be taken over by the younger generation. Until all is well with us, we will not relent. We will continue to use whatever strength that is available to use against the Nigeria State.

A critical analysis of the responses indicate that violence is seen first as a response to state refusal to dialogue and its intimidation, excessive force and violence against the communities which toughened the youths and caused them to match violence for violence. Violence is therefore a last option and as a respondent in Sapele, Delta States put it, 'results from the Niger-delta being pushed to the wall' or as another in Warri (Delta State) put it, 'we never believed in violence but the government did'. Second, violence is assessed in terms of the results it achieves; it is seen as having compelled government responses and attention, and therefore the only method that works. Thirdly, violence is assessed in terms of the target; it is alright, for example, if it is directed at the state or MNOCs.

The second part of the analysis of methods of conflicts is the assessment of specific methods used, in terms of reasons, perceptions and effectiveness. Violent methods, such as hostage taking, kidnapping and pipeline vandalism instead of dialogue, peaceful and constitutional methods are seen as being more effective. Particularly, hostage taking and abduction are perceived as the most effective methods.

We investigated the perception of hostage taking and kidnapping as a tool of struggle. About 38 per cent saw it as quite effective in drawing government and international attention. Another 9.2 per cent saw it as obtaining quick response from the government. But besides the issue of effectiveness, some others assess it from the moral plank. To them, it is bad (24.5%) though it is the only option and it is criminal and illegal (21.5%).

An analysis of the details of the responses reveal that it is seen by some as 'inhuman, barbaric, criminal, wicked and a cheap and easy money making venture' (Respondents Sapele, Bonny and Gokhana). But it is alright as long as it is

Table 23: Perceptions of Methods of Youth Struggle

PERCEPTION	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	
	Seizure of Oil Facilities	2 (2.99%)	3 (4.55%)	1 (1.49%)	6 (3%)
Hostage taking/abduction	35 (52.24%)	45 (68.18%)	45 (67.16%)	125 (62.5%)	
Pipeline vandalism	8 (11.94%)	9 (13.64%)		17 (8.5%)	
Violence	22 (32.84%)		6 (8.96%)	28 (14%)	
Constitutional Peaceful Dialogue methods	-	9 (13.64%)	3 (4.5%)	12 (6%)	
None	-	-	12 (17.9%)	12 (6%)	
Total	67	66	67	200	
Perception of what has triggered the current phase of hostage taking	To demonstrate seriousness.	12 (17.91%)	2 (3.33%)	-	14 (7.25%)
	To embarrass/draw government attention	25 (37.31%)	6 (10%)	14 (21.21%)	45 (23.32%)
	To draw International attention	20 (29.85%)	24 (40%)	1 (1.52%)	45 (23.32%)
	To protest the arrest/brutality of leaders	5 (7.46%)	21 (35%)	30 (45.45%)	56 (29.02%)
	To protest non-adherence of MOUs by MNOCS	5 (7.46%)	1 (1.67%)	3 (4.55%)	9 (4.66%)
	Monetary gains	-	2 (3.33%)	8 (12.12%)	10 (5.2%)
	As a protest against persisting poor regional conditions	-	=	5 (7.58%)	5 (2.6%)
	Unemployment	-	4 (6.67%)	5 (7.58%)	9 (4.7%)
	Total	67	60	66	193
Perception of Hostage Taking and kidnapping as an instrument of struggle	1. Effective in drawing government/International attention	42 (63.64%)	25 (38.46%)	8 (12.31%)	33 (16.84%)
	2. Good	-	9 (13.85%)	4 (6.15%)	55 (28.06%)
	3. Bad but only option	12 (18.18%)	15 (23.08%)	21 (32.31%)	48 (24.49%)
	4. Obtains quick attention of government	9 (13.64%)	2 (3.07%)	7 (10.77%)	18 (9.18%)
	5. Criminal/Illegal	3 (4.55%)	14 (21.54%)	25 (38.46%)	42 (21.43%)
	6. self rewarding	-	-	-	-
	Total	66	65	65	196

‘targeted at the government and MNOCS’ and it is ‘achieving its goal which is to cripple the economy’. In a sense, some see kidnapping and ransom taking as ‘a good thing for now’ because of its very effects. In fact, it is seen as an ‘appropriate measure and it is for a good or genuine cause’ (Respondent Bonny, Sapele).

Finally, we investigated, the factors that may have triggered the current phase of hostage taking. What emerges (Table 23) is that hostage taking and kidnapping is first a form of protest against the arrest and brutalisation of leaders of the struggle such as Dokubo-Asari and D.S.P. Alamesieha (29%). It is also meant to

embarrass the Federal Government and draw its attention to the persisting and unresolved demands and problems (23.3%). It is also meant to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of the Niger-deltans (23.3%) and to demonstrate the seriousness of Niger-deltans about their grievances and demands (7.3%). Hostage taking then is a strategy to create public and international awareness to draw attention to the persisting plight and to demonstrate the seriousness of the youths in the pursuance of the goals of the struggle.

Effects of the Conflicts

What is fairly well known as the effects of the conflicts are those relating to shortfalls of oil production, the fluctuations of market prices, the deficits in Nigeria's revenues and the violence and deaths in the region. While these can be presented through secondary data, the more broad effects on communities, youths, inter-communal and inter-ethnic relations, crime and security and living conditions, have to be investigated.

The investigation of effects on the communities reveal that the youth driven conflicts have disarticulated communal social values and order (32.7%), intensified violence, insecurity and destructions (30.9%), created a regime of disrespect for elders, traditional institutions and governance systems, (20%), paralysed social and economic activities (7.3%) and restricted movements (9.1%). As some of our respondents in Bayelsa State put it, 'The peace and stability of community life is badly affected, lawlessness and lack of respect for elder and leaders, and general decay of social ethics is now the hallmark in our communities. Communities have been turned into battlefields of cult wars. There is increased rancour, acrimony and disunity within and between communities'.

Table 24: Effects of the Conflicts (KIS)

		Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	%
Effects on Communities	Disrespect for Traditional Institutions/Elders	4	4	3	11	20%
	destruction of community	8	5	5	18	32.7%
	Values and Social Order.	6	8	3	17	30.9%
	Intensified violence and destruction	2	1	2	5	9.1%
	Restricted movements	-	2	2	4	7.3%
	Paralyzed socio-economic activities.	20	20	15	55	
	Not much					
	Total					

Table 24: Effects of the Conflicts (KIS), Cont'd.

Effects on Youths	Made youths aggressive/violent/militancy/lawless	6	6	5	17	30.9%
	Untimely deaths	2	2	1	5	9.1%
	Less Schooling/more School dropouts.	1	2	3	6	10.9%
	Loss of jobs	2	4	1	7	12.7%
	Increases youth restiveness	4	3	2	9	16.4
	Made youth lazy	5	3	3	11	20%
	Total	20	20	15	55	
Effects on intercommunities & ethnic Relations	Increase suspicion/unfriendly relations.	9	4	7	20	36.4%
	Increased tension and violence in relations. Integrated/United them.	6	10	5	21	38.2%
	Restricted movements and trade	1	3	-	4	7.3%
	Cordial/friendly	1	2	2	5	9.1%
	Total	3	1	1	5	9.1%
		20	20	15	55	
Effects on Crime & Security	Increased crime and violence	12	10		31	56.4%
	Increased insecurity of life and property	4	6	9	15	27.3%
	Increased cultism	3	-	5	3	5.5%
	Made arms available	1	4	1	6	10.9%
	Total	20	20	15	55	
Effects on living Conditions & livelihood	Worsened living conditions	4	8	5	17	37.8%
	Slowed economic activities.	3	5	4	12	26.7%
	Increased cost of living.	2	1	2	5	11.1%
	Increased insecurity and destruction of life and property Homelessness	4	1	3	8	17.8%
	Increased illegitimate sources of income	1	1	1	3	6.7%
	Total	14	16	15	45	

The effects on the youth are as socially and economically pronounced. The conflicts have increased youth restiveness and made them lazy, aggressive, violent and lawless (30.9%). According to one KIS respondent in Bayelsa, 'the youths no longer believe in hard work as a virtue. They seek easy means to wealth'. Apart from these, the youths have lost jobs because of paralysed economic activities and have become victims of untimely deaths. The effects on inter-communal and ethnic group relations have been very adverse. The conflicts have increased tensions and violence in relations (38.2). This is apart from increased suspicion and unfriendly relations (36.4%). One respondent in Delta put it this way:

Sadly enough, this good cause has caused a lot of pains and tension in the region because the stronger ethnic groups fight the weaker ones to gain government attention.

Another respondents in Bayelsa State stated that the 'internal crisis within us is over who controls the major cities like Warri, to whom would SHELL pay compensations? Who collects the rents?'

The crisis has affected security and criminality in the region. There is increased crime and violence (56.4%) and the insecurity of lives and property (27.3%). There is also easy access to arms (10.9%) and increased presence and activities of cults and armed bands (5.5%) which are sometimes connected to crime and insecurity. The people now live in fear. The effects on the living conditions of the citizens of the region are very adverse. The conflicts have worsened living conditions (37.8%), slowed down economic activities (26.7%) increased insecurity of life and property (17.8%) and cost of living (11.1%).

More specifically, the effects of militia activities on the region were investigated in the GS (Table 25).

Table 25: Perception of Effects of Militia Activities on the Niger-delta

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Insecurity and Crime	9 (11.54%)	8 (11.94%)	15 (21.13%)	32 (14.8%)
Economic decline	25 (32.05%)	27 (40.30%)	21 (28.17%)	72 (33.3%)
Paralysis of Social and Economic Activities	35 (44.87%)	24 (36.82%)	13 (18.31%)	72 (33.3%)
Creates Fear and Grief	3 (3.855)	6 (8.96%)	12 (16.90%)	21 (9.7%)
Created Political Awareness	6 (7.69%)	2 (2.96%)	6 (8.45%)	14 (6.5)
Attracting Government infrastructures	-	-	65 (7.04%)	5 (2.34)
	78	67	71	216

The findings indicate that more importantly, there is economic decline (33.3%) and paralysis of social and economic activities (33.3%). A content analysis of responses reveals that there have been social and economic disruptions, collapse of businesses and closure of shops. As a result, there is economic hardship. Socio-economic services, infrastructures and development are crumbling in most towns and communities. There is also growing insecurity and crime (14.8%) which has occasioned grief and fear (9.7%) in the region. In the political front however, there seem to have been some gains. Political awareness has been raised (6.5%). The militia activities have also raised hopes and expectations, because of increased government attention through the set up of commissions and ad hoc agencies and measures to address the problems.

Thus in sum, the conflicts, apart from compelling state attention and raising awareness, have had disastrous consequences on the communities, the youths, intra- and inter- group relations, security and stability, living conditions, commerce and the economy of the region. But some respondents see these effects as temporary. A Khana (Rivers) respondent, for example, said 'I agree that their impact is negative for now. With this struggle, we shall be liberated one day.... It shall be positive'.

Analyses of the Causes of the Conflicts

We identified, from the literature, certain variables that have been indicated in several conflicts in Africa. These are environmental degradation, youth bulge, poverty, unemployment, elite manipulation, access to arms, tradition-nal and cultural factors, state governance and corporate governance.

Table 26: Perception of Causes of the Niger Delta Conflict

		Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	% Yes & No	Yes Ranking in Order of importance
Environmental Pollution	Yes	13	15	11	39	70.9	3
	No	7	5	4	6	29.1	
Poverty	Yes	16	13	14	43	78.2	1
	No	4	7	1	12	21.8	
Youth Bulge	Yes	4	8	4	16	29	6
	No	16	12	1	39	71	
Unemployment	Yes	15	12	14	42	76.4	2
	No	5	7	1	13	23.6	
Elite Manipulation	Yes	9	6	13	28	50.9	4
	No	11	14	2	27	50.1	
Accessibility to arms	Yes	6	5	10	21	38.2	5
	No	14	15	5	34	61.8	
Traditional Empowerment	Yes	6	5	4	15	27.3	7
	No	14	15	11	40	72.7	

The responses in the KIS reveal that the most important causal factors are poverty (78.2%) unemployment (71%) environmental pollution and scarcity (70.9%) and elite manipulation (50.9%).

The least important variables were traditional religion and empowerment, youth bulge, and accessibility to arms. In the GS sample, the most important factors were poor and unemployed youths (78.9%), corporate misgovernance (78.2%) governmental misgovernance (69.3%) and the struggle for resource opportunities and benefits (57.8%), The least important is traditional culture and religion (47.6%).

Table 27: Perception of Whether the Under-listed Factors Cause or Fuel the Conflict (GS)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	%	Ranking
Poor Unemployed youths						1
Yes	78 (35.94%)	66 (30.41%)	73 (33.64%)	17	78.9	
No	22	34	2	58	21.1	
Governmental Misgovernance						3
Yes	79 (40.51%)	43 (22.05%)	70 (35.90%)	192 (95.46%)	69.82	
No	21	57	5	83 (1.54%)	30.18	
Struggle for resource benefits opportunities						4
Yes	50 (27.93%)	48 (26.82%)	61 (34.08%)	159 (11.17%)	57.82	
No	50	52	14	160 (115)	42.18	
Corporate (MNOG) Mis-Governance						2
Yes	79 (36.74%)	64 (29.77%)	72 (33.49%)	215 (100%)	78.2	
No	21	36	3	60	21.82	
Culture and Traditional Religion						5
Yes	50 (24.04%)	35 (16.83%)	46 (22.12%)	131 (37.10%)	47.64	
No	50	56	29	144	52.36	

The critical factors indicated then as the causes of the conflict are poverty, unemployment, corporate and governmental misgovernance and environmental pollution. That poverty and unemployment are seen as central to the frustration, discontent and anger that undergird violent agitations is not surprising. As some of our respondents indicated, the youths are 'denied the opportunity of decent living' and 'deprived of productive sources of livelihood'. The youths are jobless, idle, hungry, miserable and frustrated. 'The youths are idle, and easy to mobilize' and 'even being a militant is like an employment' as 'the youths are paid to partake

in militant activities'. Some others claimed that 'the youths are ready to do anything that comes their ways because of idleness and poverty'. The social discontent, frustration and anger has fed into social vices, restiveness and violence. One GS respondent in Sapele, asked rhetorically, 'Do you think those rich youths would take up arms'.

That environmental degradation is seen as a major cause of the conflict reveals the depth of the oil based environmental crises and its linkage to land/water depletion, scarcity, unemployment, poverty and dislocated livelihoods in the region. This is quite glaring when some of the responses such as the following are highlighted: 'our sources of livelihood are polluted and degraded daily, hence fishing does not make meaning, and there is now lack of productive fertile lands'. Corporate and governmental misgovernance is strongly indicated in the GS. Further investigation of the phenomenon provides details as to how the Nigerian state and the oil companies are seen to source the conflicts.

Table 28: State and Corporate Governance and the Crisis

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
State Governance and Management of the Conflict	No concessions to agitation	-	2 (4.88%)	3 (4.84%)	5 (2.25%)
	Insensitive and Insincere	25 (21.01%)	10 (24.39%)	29 (46.77%)	64 (28.83%)
	Military suppression	15 (12.61%)	3 (7.32%)	15 (24.19%)	33 (14.9%)
	Persisting neglect and marginalization	-	12 (29.27%)	13 (20.97%)	25 (11.26%)
	Failure to keep promises	59 (49.58%)	9 (21.95%)	2 (3.23%)	70 (31.53%)
	Lack of dialogue	-	1 (2.44%)	-	1 (0.45%)
	Incorporation of regions elite	-	4 (9.76%)	-	4 (1.80%)
	Lack of Recognition of Minority rights	20 (16.81%)	-	-	20 (9%)
	Total	119	41	62	222
MNOC, contribution to violent conflicts	Divide and rule Strategies	3 (4.55%)	3 (4.84%)	20 (31.74%)	26 (13.61)
	None-implementation of agreement with communities	8 (12.12%)	2 (3.23%)	5 (7.94)	15 (7.8)
	Cause contentions over benefits and compensation	22 (33.33)	3 (4.84)	-	25 (13.1%)
	Inadequate/Uneven development	33 (50%)	40 (64.52%)	16 (25.4%)	89 (46.6%)
	None-employment of indigenes	-	12 (19.355)	9 (14.29)	19 (11%)
	Invitation of security agencies	-	-	4 (6.35%)	4 (2.1%)
	None Compensation	-	2 (3.23)	5 (7.94%)	7 (3.66%)
	Oppression of citizens	-	-	4 (6.35%)	4 (2.1%)
	Total	66	62	63	191

The state is seen as insensitive and insincere in its response to the region's problems (28.8%). It has not listened to the plight of the people, their yearnings and aspirations and has not given the people their due. Then, even more importantly, the state has failed to keep its promises and meet the expectations of the people of the region (31.5%). As a result, there is persisting neglect and marginalisation (11.3%), and military suppression of the youths (14.9%) is also seen as escalating the crisis.

The oil companies have not contributed significantly to the development of the region (46.6%). Yet, they have caused conflicts between and within communities through divide-and-rule strategies (13.6%) and raising contentions over resources, compensation and other oil based benefits (13.1%). More specifically, they are seen to 'support one group against the other' and to 'play the communities against each other due to unequal rewards and benefits' (KIS Respondent, Bonny 15th June 2007). Besides, they have not employed substantially the region's indigenes (11%), and therefore have not addressed the issue of huge unemployment.

In fact, the perception of the oil companies is fairly negative as they are seen to be inconsiderate and insensitive (23.5%), giving poor development attention (20.8%), collaborating with the Nigerian state, (13.7%), causing environmental degradation (13.6%), not adhering to agreements (12.6%) and not paying adequate and timely compensation (9.3%). Besides, the oil companies are not seen to have benefited the region, because of scanty development efforts (50.30%), poor benefits (22.2%) and poor employment of indigenes (20%). Also, they do not show 'full understanding of the communities' that they operate in. They sometimes 'bribe the traditional rulers and chiefs', 'sponsor youths to revolt against communal governance systems, and contribute to the militarisation and repression of the region through the use of military personnel in their facilities' (Respondents; Burutu, Yenogoa, Anassoa Camp, and Osokoma (7th & 15th June 2007).

However, the state is seen as the greater culprit in misgovernance, by creating an unhealthy political environment and executing bad laws and policies that set the framework for the misgovernance of the oil companies (KIS Respondent, Bayelsa).

Management and Resolution of the Conflicts

A critical issue in this study is conflict resolution and peace building. Given the intensity of the conflict and the consequences for the nation, the region and its minority peoples, and world energy supply and prices, the early resolution and particularly the path to resolution should attract immense scholarly, national and international concerns. The main state instrument for managing the conflict since the early 1990s is heavy military and police deployments, excessive force, confrontations and repression. The first issue we investigated is the perception of the military and security agencies and their roles in the region (GS).

In terms of roles, the military, though sent in to keep peace (9.6%) and resolve the conflict (6%) have actually escalated the crisis (82.4%). The military and security agencies are perceived quite negatively. They are seen as provoking the people (30.1%) and oppressing them (27.4%).

Table 29: The Role of the Military/Security Agencies in the Conflict

Perception of Nigerian security/Military Agencies Management of the conflict		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Protecting oil companies	-	2 (2.86%)	4 (5.71%)	6 (2.71%)
	Provokes the people	27 (34.185)	34 (48.57%)	5 (7.14%)	66 (30.11%)
	Biased Against the people	5 (6.35%)	1 (1.43%)	3 (4.29%)	9 (4.1%)
	Used to oppress the people	47 (59.495)	8 (11.43%)	5 (7.14%)	60 (27.4)
	Ineffective	-	9 (12.865)	12 (17.14%)	21 (9.6%)
	Aggravating Crisis	-	-	12 (17.14%)	12 (5.5)
	Fighting militias on behalf of government	-	-	13 (18.57%)	13 (5.94%)
	Criminals	-	-	4 (5.715)	4 (1.8%)
	Mediating the Conflict/keeping the peace	-	-	12 (17.14%)	28 (12.8%)
	Total	79	70	70	219
Perception of the Role of the Military/Security agencies in the conflict		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Keeping Peace	7 (10.455)	8 (13.56%)	4 (5.48%)	19 (9.6%)
	Escalating the crisis	60 (89.555)	39 (66.10%)	65 (89.04%)	164 (82.45)
	Resolving the problems	-	8 (13.56%)	4 (5.48%)	12 (6.%)
	None/Acting on orders	4 (6.78%)		4 (2.01%)	
	Total	67	59	73	199

As details from the content analysis of the responses indicate, this is because first, the military has not been 'a disciplined force'. They are seen as 'reckless, criminalized and irresponsible'. They have been involved in 'extortion, looting and rape'. They have been 'intimidating, oppressive and hostile'. They have been involved in 'indiscriminate shooting'. They have rather been 'benefiting from the oil companies and feeding fat from the struggle'. As a result of these, the military and security agencies have been ineffective (9.6%).

The efforts of the Obasanjo administration to resolve the conflict was investigated. His administration had promised at inception to address the conflict as a priority. The responses indicate that the respondents see the administration as having used autocratic style (33.3%), did not do much (20.6%) but rather paid more of lip service to the resolution of the conflict (19.4%). Though it instituted the derivation principle, and the Niger-delta development Commission (5.5%), the administration is rather seen as having aggravated the conflict (12.7%) or failed (5.5%).

Table 30: Perception of the Obasanjo's Administration Efforts in the Resolution of the Conflict

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Made considerable effort	-	7 (8.335)	-	7 (3%)
Aggravated the Conflict	21 (26.58%)	3 (3.575)	6 (8.11%)	30 (12.7%)
Did not do much	5 (6.335)	20 (23.8%)	24 (32.43%)	49 (20.7%)
Used autocratic style	25 (31.65%)	33 (39.29%)	21 (28.38%)	79 (33.3%)
Lip Service to the resolution of the conflict	28 (35.44/5)	8 (9.52%)	10 (13.51%)	46 (19.4%)
Established NDDC and instituted 13% Derivation	-	3 (3.57%)	10 (13.51%)	13 (5.45%)
Total Failure	-	10 (11.90%)	3 94.055)	13 (5.5%)
	79	84	74	237

According to some of our respondents, the Obasanjo administration 'did not show enough commitment and political will to resolve the conflict' and the 'communities have nothing to show' as dividends (Ekeremor, Bayelsa GS respondents). There were 'mere promises and plans that were not fulfilled or implemented'. Thus, government efforts are seen as feeble, scanty, weak, slow and disappointing.

We sought to know what, in the perception of the respondents, could resolve the conflicts.

Table 31: Perception of What can Resolve the Niger-delta Conflicts (GS)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference	18 (24.66%)	2 (2.53%)	3 (4.23%)	23 (10.31%)
Massive Accelerated Development	3 (4.11%)	25 (31.65%)	3 (4.23%)	31 (13.90%)
Resource Control & True Federal	28 (38.36%)	13 (13.92%)	28 (33.80%)	69 (28.25%)
Affirmative Action/Marshall Plan	22 (30.14%)	23 (29.11%)	5 (7.04%)	50 (22.42%)
Dialogue and agreements	2 (2.74%)	10 (12.66%)	26 (36.62%)	38 (17.04%)
Equity, Fairness and Justice	-	-	5 (7.04%)	5 ()
Political Representation	-	-	1 (1.41%)	1 (0.45%)
Meet the People Demand: Employment, education/release of detainees/abolition of obnoxious laws.	-	6 (7.59%)	-	6 (2.69%)
	73	79	71	223

Table 31: Perception of What can Resolve the Niger-delta Conflicts (KIS), (Cont'd.)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference	-	-	-	-
Massive Accelerated Development	8	10	3	46.7%
Resource Control & True Federal	10	4	6	44.4%
Affirmative Action/Marshall Plan	-	-	-	-
Dialogue and agreements	-	-	-	-
Equity, Fairness and Justice	-	2	2	8.9%
Political Representation				
Meet the People Demand: Employment, education/release of detainees/abolition of obnoxious laws.	-	-	-	-
	18	16	11	45

The responses indicate that in the GS, what is perceived that can resolve the conflict is resource control and federalism (28.3%), an affirmative action or Marshall plan or emergency and special efforts (22.4%), and massive development efforts (13.9%). The methodology for achieving some of these is preferably dialogue and agreements (17%) and possibly a national conference (10.3%). In the KIS, massive and accelerated development (46.7%) and resource control and true federalism (44.4%) are seen as the solutions to the conflict.

