

## **Ogoni-Andoni War, 1993: The Role of Dialogue in Inter-Group Relations**

**Romokere Mgbowaji Benson, PhD**

Department of History and International Studies Faculty of Arts, Akwa Ibom State University,  
Nigeria

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijhphr.13/vol11n1617>

Published March 15 2023

---

**Citation:** Benson R. M. (2023) Ogoni-Andoni War, 1993: The Role of Dialogue in Inter-Group Relations, *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, Vol.11, No.1, pp.6-17

---

**ABSTRACT:** *The focus of this paper is to examine the Ogoni-Andoni war of 1993 with respect to the role of dialogue in inter-group relations. The Andoni and Ogoni are immediate neighbours in the Eastern Niger Delta of Nigeria. Both ethnic groups have aged long relationship characterized by peace, conflict, crisis and war. The immediate cause of the 1993 Ogoni-Andoni war was attributed to the violent activities of the militant wing of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People during their agitation for Ogoni Kingdom and other environmental issues. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the two ethnic groups fought wars at interval of twenty years; 1933, 1953, 1973, 1993. The war had great consequences on both ethnic groups which called for dialogue to end it. The paper explored primary and secondary sources to document the war history. This paper found out that the Ataba (Andoni)-Ogoni Peace Conference was the platform for the inter-ethnic dialogue which brought the war to an end by late 1994. Their relationship was restored fully by 1995. The Peace Conference forestalled subsequent crisis related development which would have snowballed into another full scale war between the Ogoni and Andoni in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It concluded that dialogue did not only end the war but it sustained and enhanced inter-group relations between Andoni and Ogoni over twenty years today.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ogoni, Andoni, role, dialogue, inter-group, relations.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ogoni territory constitutes the easternmost extension of the mainland fringe which borders the Eastern Niger Delta. It lies in an area between approximately latitude 4.05 North and longitudes 7.10 and 7.30. The Ogoni comprises six indigenous kingdoms which are Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Nyo-Khana, Ken-Khana and Tai.

As Ken Saro-Wiwa asserted, the Ogoni are both upland and coastal dwellers. Thus, they engage in farming and fishing. The Ogoni territory is also endowed with natural resources like crude oil

which was found in commercial quantity in Dere (misnamed Bomu oil field) in Gokana kingdom in 1958.<sup>1</sup>

The Obolo on their part occupy the territory which stretches from the Andoni River to the Qua Iboe River. The territory is bordered on the West by Bonny and Kalabari, to the North, are the Ogoni and Okrika, Ibibio to North- East, Ibeno to the East and in the South is the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>2</sup> The area is split into two by Imo River; which are Western Obolo and Eastern Obolo. However, the concern of this paper is the war between Western Obolo (Andoni) in Rivers State and the Coastal Ogoni communities in Gokana and Khana and not the entire Ogoni ethnic group. Thus, Obolo relationship with the Ogoni is traced to their geographical proximity. The settlement of the Ogoni in the Eastern Niger Delta laid the foundation of their contact with the Obolo who had earlier occupied the sub-region. Thus, the Ogoni established initial contact with the Obolo. This proximity made the two ethnic groups to share common boundary. Obolo ethnic group shares boundary with the Ogoni through the Ogoni coastal communities from three axes which are Ataba, Unyeada and Asarama.

From the Ataba axis, Bodo, Bomu, Lewe, Gbe, (Gokana), Kono-Buowe, Kereke (Khana) are the Ogoni coastal communities which share border with the Obolo. Unyeada axis has the southern Ogoni of Khana. They include Ataba-Ija/Kaa, Siin, while Asarama axis also share border with some Ogoni communities from Khana like Kpean.<sup>3</sup> The Ogoni people are traditionally farmers but these Ogoni coastal communities ventured into fishing occupation which is the exclusive traditional occupation of the Obolo. Through this fishing and trade by barter both ethnic groups established a formidable relationship that guaranteed their co-existence.

As the Ogoni settled in the Eastern Niger Delta further contact and interaction with the Obolo continued and closer relationship was promoted since they are new to the environment. With time the Obolo engaged the services of the Ogoni to perform some menial jobs for them and others became domestic servants. Some of these jobs included cutting sticks for fishing and roofing, filling and plastering of the walls of mud houses; and supply of materials needed to weave the fishing gears used by the Obolo fishermen. While living in Obolo communities doing their paid jobs and serving their Andoni fishermen faithfully, they realized that comparatively fishing and other marine resources can be harvested at any time and utilized. The harvested fish and sea food can be sold to generate revenue as well as used for home consumption. In contrast, farming does not yield immediate crops and some decay. The implication was that the Ogoni farmers usually experienced hardship during this long duration. Meanwhile the Andoni fishermen were doing well. With this experience, the Ogoni servants became influenced and interested in fishing occupation to augment their source of income. So they began to understudy their Andoni masters in both the fishing techniques and preparation of the Obolo fishing gears. Such fishing gadgets include *ewen* (fish fence), weaving and mending of net and screen net. They therefore adopted Obolo water tenure fish fence (*odik*) system and learnt how to throw net, used screen net and wire trap (*nkata*)

from the Obolo fishermen. Ever since the Ogoni realized the immediate harvest of the river, they opted to fish within the Obolo riverine territory outside their coastal environment. This influenced their desire to attempt to occupy Obolo fishing grounds. Their several attempts were always resisted by the Obolo people who considered it as an encroachment on their natural territory and occupation since they were naturally farmers. Though this created inter-ethnic relation between the Obolo and Ogoni, it was also the primary source of conflict, crises and wars between them.<sup>4</sup>

### **Frustration- Aggression Theory**

The Theory was propounded by John Dollard and his associates in 1939 and later expanded and modified by scholars such as Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962). It is the most suitable theory to explain the Ogoni- Andoni War of 1993. The theory indicates that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as realists and biological theorists assume, but is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead to such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them.<sup>5</sup>

From this assertion, it is apparent that Ogoni-Addoni war of 1993 occurred as a result of the frustration of the Ogoni to achieve their demands from both the oil companies particularly Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria to compensate them and improve on their environment and the Rivers State and Federal Government failure to respond positively to previous petitions about oil companies and its failure to protect the interests of the frustrated Ogoni people, led them to assert their right to self-determination to enable them to deal with the oil companies directly.<sup>6</sup>

The Ogoni frustration led to their aggressive attack on the Obolo (Andoni) who are their immediate neighbour. The Militant wing of MOSOP launched attack on the Andoni resident in different parts of Ogoni as students, travelers, businessmen and traders. They were confronted by the Ogoni youths who dispossessed them of their belongings. Consequently, Andoni students abandoned their ND and HND programmes at the then Bori Polytechnic (now Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic) and others WAEC examinations in Secondary Schools.

The climax of the Ogoni aggression was demonstrated when they invaded Ataba-Ija/Kaa Market where the Obolo (Andoni) carried out their economic activities and trading transactions. The unsuspecting Andoni indigenes were attacked by the armed Ogoni Militants which resulted in the destruction of property belonging to the Andoni people and other ethnic groups. One Agwut-Obolo indigene who was a student of Government Secondary School, Kaa was attacked and killed by the aggressive Ogoni mob on Wednesday, July 7, 1993. These developments compelled the Obolo (Andoni) to retaliate, especially avenging the death of their son, because the Obolo does not allow the killing of any of her people go unavenged.

### **The 1993 War and its Consequences**

The two ethnic groups continued their wars from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup>. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they did fight wars at interval of twenty years, 1933, 1953, 1973 and 1993. In a space of another twenty years, precisely Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1993 another Ogoni-Andoni war suddenly occurred. This war was described by both Ogoni and Obolo as senseless because no substantial reason could be deduced as the cause. The MOSOP leaders and the Ogoni in general believed that the Andoni retaliatory attacks on the Ogoni were instigated and financed by the oil companies with the support of the Rivers State and Federal Government. The Guardian editorial cited by Eghosa E. Osaghae states that...the two sides have said they have no case against each other.<sup>7</sup> However, the immediate incidence that triggered off the war was the violent attack of the militant wing of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) on the Obolo. The genuine intension of MOSOP was hijacked by the militant wing.

Obolo students in Ogoni secondary schools and Bori Polytechnic were attacked and their property looted. Their violent activities commenced from June 1993 during West African Examination Council examinations. The Obolo students who registered in various schools in different Ogoni communities abandoned their remaining subjects and fled Ogoni area. Bori Polytechnic students also abandoned their National Diploma and Higher National Diploma programmes and fled the institution for their dear life. Some Ogoni people attributed the 1993 Ogoni-Andoni war as political since federal government could not pacify Ken Saro-Wiwa to stop his environmental campaign and demand for autonomous Ogoni kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

The violence escalated by the day. On this fateful day, Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1993, MOSOP invaded Ataba-Ija/kaa market where the Obolo also attended school and carried out their business transactions. Their attack took a new dimension, it was targeted at the Obolo people and in course of their violent action; they looted, destroyed goods, property and killed a male Junior Secondary School student from Agwut-Obolo. They wounded some Obolo people as well. With this development Obolo people in the market also resisted them and inflicted wound on them. Expectedly, the Obolo who traditionally never allowed the death of any Obolo indigene go without being avenged, retaliated by killing some Ogoni men who went out on night fishing.<sup>9</sup>

With the Ogoni attack on the Obolo indigenes the stage was set for inter-ethnic war between the Ogoni and Andoni. Both ethnic groups recorded cases of victims who were ignorant of the war. For instance, a family from Ikuru Town (Andoni) based in Lagos were travelling home through Kono were killed by the Ogoni. Then the Ogoni-Cameroun fishermen and businessmen returning home through the Andoni river were intercepted around the Oyorokoto location in Andoni River by the Obolo people who also executed all the crew members except women and children. Their goods and boat were all destroyed.

The women were later brought to Ataba jetty in the evening from where they were conveyed to the nearby Ogoni coastal community in Gokana. This gesture was in keeping with the war law of *Aman-Obolo* (Obolo female deity) which forbids Obolo killing of women during war. The Ogoni account by Ken Saro-Wiwa recorded that notice had been given that on July 15, 1993, 132 Ogoni men, women and children returning from their abode in the Camerouns, had been waylaid on the Andoni River by an armed gang and cruelly murdered, leaving but two women to make a report.<sup>10</sup> From the Ogoni assertion, the figure may be exaggerated, women and children were not murdered but were freed based on the Obolo war belief as indicated by the Obolo eye witness account stated above. So, the struggle started from Ogoni kingdom to Ogoni-Andoni war of 1993.

The war differed from the previous wars involving Obolo and Ogoni. The approach, weapons, arms and ammunition, death toll and wanton destruction of communities in both territories was greater than the casualties recorded in the past wars. The war was not easy with both ethnic groups. The Obolo fought the war from three battle fields which were Ataba, Ajakajak/Samanga/Ibot Irem and Asarama but Ataba sector (Ubaile) was the major battle field where war was fought on daily basis. The Ogoni were determined to capture Ataba which they regarded as the strongest Obolo town militarily and who had caused several defeat, pains and destruction to them, especially Bodo and Bomu.

The war was not palatable to either side. So, efforts were made to end the hostility. The Rivers State government intervened to end the war and representatives of both ethnic groups were invited to a meeting at Government House to discuss measures to end the war. Chief Rufus Ada George, the then civilian Governor of Rivers State appointed Late Professor Claude Ake to head the Andoni-Ogoni Peace Committee. Ogoni representatives at the Peace Committee included Late Ken Sarro-Wiwa, Chiefs Albert Badey, Edward Kobani and Dr G. B. Leton.<sup>11</sup> Andoni was represented by Chief (Dr) Silas Eneyo (Out Obolo I-Andoni spokesman), HRM Sir (Dr) Benson Mgbowaji Hebron Egwenre Oruk XV Okan Ama of Ataba and others. The government efforts did not yield fruit. Ken Saro-Wiwa noted that the Peace Committee failed because of the change of government and the introduction of the Interim National Government on August 26, 1993.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, another Peace Conference between the Andoni and the Ogoni was constituted on October 4, 1993 and headed by Professor Elaigwu of the National Council on Inter- Governmental Relations. The Professor Elaigwu proposed "Accord" was rejected by MOSOP and the Ogoni people. Ken Saro-Wiwa refused to sign it.<sup>13</sup> In fact, in one of the meetings Late Ken Saro-Wiwa left the meeting unceremoniously. Unknown to the Obolo he went to mobilize his Ogoni people who later invaded Ajakajak, Samanga and Dema on Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1993 at low ebb. They killed several people including women and children, properties were wantonly destroyed. The killing was so pathetic; a pregnant woman was ripped of her baby and some others who took refuge in the church were not spared. They butchered people and placed their parts in the church offering tray. It was a retaliation to the earlier Obolo destruction of some Ogoni towns and villages in Khana. Ataba-Ija/Kaa was attacked by the Obolo and destroyed on Wednesday, August 4, and

Thursday, August 5, 1993 but the Government Secondary School buildings at Kaa could not be destroyed because of its solid nature. The Ogoni attack and destruction of these Obolo communities was devastating. The Obolo people then disregarded that meeting and never returned to the government negotiation table.<sup>14</sup>

Obolo became resolute to conquer some selected important Ogoni towns and villages. They began their invasion and destruction from kaa. Ataba-Ija/kaa was destroyed and burnt down on Wednesday and Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1993 respectively. Lives were also lost. A gun was ceased from the Ogoni warriors. The market was not spared. So the planned invasion of Ogoni continued. Obolo foot warriors invaded Eeken, Gwara and Nwiakara on Tuesday, September 14, 1993 and destroyed and their houses burnt down. Gwara in Khana and the home of Ogoni deity called Gbenebaka was also destroyed. With this invasion by the Obolo and considering the long distance the Obolo trekked to Gwara and Nwiakara, the nearby Ogoni towns fled their homes for fear of attack and destruction by the Andoni warriors. It was a successful attack without any casualty on the part of the Obolo.

Obolo men did not relent in their resolve to exterminate the Ogoni selected town. Thus, they took the war to the home town of Late Ken Saro-Wiwa; Banne. Banne, Kpean and Tenama were invaded by the Obolo foot warriors on Tuesday, September 21, 1993. These communities were destroyed by the mighty Obolo warriors. The Ogoni warriors also put up stiff resistance but they were finally defeated with heavy casualty on them. The Obolo war leader, Late Chief Mbira was shot and he later died at his home town Unyeada, the same day.

Before this Obolo invasion, the Ogoni had invaded Iyongorong Asarama on Monday, August 16, 1993 that shares land boundary with them and killed people and destroyed their houses. The Obolo made two attempts to enter kereke (Ogoni) on Thursday, September 9, 1993 and Wednesday, September 15, 1993 respectively but they were seriously resisted and could not enter the village. Ataba recorded three casualties and some other Obolo warriors had bullet wound and one of the Ataba war canoes was ceased by the Ogoni in their second attempt on Wednesday, September 15, 1993. Mr. Uboknkuisom Howells and Bethel Isaiah were shot dead while Bethel Lucky died of bullet injury in Ataba. Mr. Igoh Joseph and Mr. ThankGod Jonathan Unyene (now Chief T. J. Unyene) survived several bullets shots on their bodies. Kereke geographical location posed great difficulty to the Obolo invaders. It was the only community the Obolo could not enter and destroy. Though they had more casualties than Obolo because of the cannon shots fired into the area.<sup>15</sup>

The Ogoni documented account recorded that Andoni invaded some Ogoni communities, killed people and destroyed them. They included market village of Kaa invaded destroyed with sophisticated weapons on August 5 and 6, 1993. The villages of Eeken, Gwara and Kenwigbara were devastated between September 1 and 15, 1993. Ogoni claimed that over 100,000 people were

killed and about 20,000 became destitute. Other Ogoni villages including Kpean were attacked on September 21, 1993.<sup>16</sup>

The last conventional war was fought at the Ataba battle field (Ubaile) on Monday, August 23, 1993. This was a holiday period. It was the Ogoni first attempt to capture Ataba. On that day it was believed that students on holiday may have been lured into the war, couple with the hired non-indigenes. The Ogoni war team came en mass to enter Ataba. By this time the Obolo men were few and with few war-canoes from Ataba. At water ebb and seeing that the Ataba warriors were few they shouted aloud “Andoni people we are coming oh”. Immediately they started marching down through the tidal flat to Uyonoba before they will enter Ataba. Uyonoba serves as a buffer zone to Ataba. Fortunately, the already strategically positioned cannon canoes and the foot warriors started firing gun and cannon shots at the invading Ogoni after initial difficulty with the cannon. From the battle field reports more reinforcement came from Ataba and other Obolo people, the Ogoni crowd was chased back. They had several human casualties and that was the last open confrontation. The battle was regarded as the toughest. Subsequent ones were guerrilla attack until Saturday, December 25, 1993 when the Ataba selected warriors launched a direct attack on Bodo who occasionally sent messages of threat and attack to Ataba. They went in two fully armed 75 horse power engine boats. Although the Bodo people also fortified their water front with mines laid in the water for their defense. Bodo people exploded their mines, and were shooting at the Ataba team from their mangrove hideout. Ataba warriors were able to escape and exchanged gun shots with them until there was no response from Bodo. These determined Ataba warriors drove down to Bodo water front, invaded and shot sporadically into Bodo. Bodo people deserted their home town. Their delayed return was mounting tension in Ataba. As they returned the town came up alive again.<sup>17</sup>

This war drew the attention of the federal government under Chief Ernest Shonekan, Head of the Interim National Government. The federal government responded first by sending the ECOMOG military personnel who returned from Liberia to Obolo and Ogoni territories respectively to stop the Ogoni and Andoni war. The first batch of the Federal Peace Keeping Force arrived Ataba (Andoni) on Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1993. While the second and third batches arrived on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> October and Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1993 respectively.<sup>18</sup> Effort by the federal and state government to end the war was futile.

### **Dialogue and the Restoration of Ogoni-Andoni Relatins**

It became glaring that the government peace initiative could not bring the desired peace between the ethnic groups. In the circumstance dialogue was the last option to be explored. In this regard it therefore took the initiative of HRM Benson M.H. Egwenre

Oruk XV Okan-Ama (king) of Ataba who among other Obolo and Ataba people represented Obolo at Government House to suggest an isolated meeting between the two ethnic groups. His

suggestion was that Ataba and Bodo, Bomu, Lewe, Gbe and other Gokana coastal communities who are immediate neighbours and directly affected by the war should commence their separate meetings and negotiations to end the war. Then the Unyeada and Asarama axis who are immediate neighbours of Khana coastal and hinterland communities also meet separately and proffer solution to end the war as well. This idea was accepted by all including the government. The government further directed that Hon. Mike Oko Commissioner of Chieftaincy and Community Affairs to mediate to end the war. As a patriotic Ogoni son, he was committed to the course of peace and restoration of harmonious relationship between them.

The above initiative formed the basis of Ataba-Bodo, Bomu Peace Conference. The maiden meeting was held at Late Chief I.S. Kogbara's residence in Port Harcourt to chart the way forward. HRM B.M.H. Egwenre Oruk XV was accompanied by Dr. Aaron now the King of Ikuru Town since Ataba for fear of the unknown told him not to go. It was after this meeting that they formally inaugurated the committee. Chief I. S. Kogbara former Federal Minister was the Chairman while Mr. Joe Akpa from Ataba was the Secretary. Hon. Mike Oko Commissioner for Chieftaincy and Community Affairs represented the government. He is also from Bodo-Ogoni. Other members of equal representation were appointed from Bomu, Lewe, Gbe and Ataba had Mr. Eyorka F. Iwowari, then Chairman Ataba Town Council and others were members. Chief Tenalo of Bomu was also actively involved in the peace effort.

The conference which started by early 1994 was on rotational basis; first in Bodo and later in Ataba. Their meeting was fruitful as possible solution to end the war was reached. It brought respite to both ethnic groups. As part of effort to restore their relations they resolved to re-establish the lost Ogokan market due to the 1972/73 Ogoni-Andoni war, at a site to be chosen by the Ataba people. Also another market should be opened in Ataba territory and the location to be chosen by the Bodo, Bomu and other Gokana coastal communities. The Ogoni chose Agbakoroma area, a satellite village of Ataba.

Their meeting was also held in Ataba at the Okan-Ama palace. Chief Tenalo of Bomu led the Ogoni people while Chief I. S. Kogbara stayed back for obvious reasons, His Ogoni people prevailed on him not to attend the meeting in Ataba. Usually, the Ogoni came with palm wine their traditional drink while Ataba brought fish and prepared their native salad "*Ogo*" commonly called "Ataba salad". They were lavishly entertained. The jittery and fearful Ogoni people became comfortable and relaxed because of the quality of deliberation geared towards achieving peace. The meeting lasted till 9pm and the Ataba young men were mandated to accompany them back home.<sup>19</sup>

However, the presence of the Nigerian Army in both Andoni and Ogoni areas prevented further open confrontation. Also the devastating effect of the war on both sides though with heavier loss on the Ogoni, peace became inevitable. The committee pursued peace vigorously and relative

peace was achieved and both ethnic groups began their fishing occupation with, caution. The Ogoni started using dynamite to kill fish in Ataba river again. This was the era of “cold war”. On the contrary the committee was confronted with challenges. There were several reports of missing people from both sides even when the military patrolled the rivers. The use of dynamite attracted the attention of the military who chased them away to avoid resumption of any hostility again. So, on the day Obolo people assembled at Agwut-Obolo their religious headquarters from Thursday to Saturday, October 28-30, 1993 respectively to celebrate their victory over the Ogoni again in a traditional way called *iwulu oko*, late Mr. Friday Ogidi and Lucky Ibemere who went on fishing were captured and killed by the Ogoni people. Subsequently, Mr. Kakpoilo Fortunatus and Miss Kafram Sunday who went out on fishing were as well captured and killed.

Ataba retaliated and ambushed the Ogoni fishermen whom they also executed. In one of the situations five Bomu fishermen were caught by the angry Ataba warriors but two of them escaped and reported the incidence at home and to the soldiers. They took the military men to the place where they escaped execution. From that place, the military came straight to Ataba to ascertain the fact. Though they denied, the remaining persons could not be found. This was a serious danger to Ataba. When the situation was reported to Major Okuntimo, he decided to destroy Ataba. As part of his preparations, he withdrew his men from Ataba. Major Paul Okuntimo was appointed the chairman Rivers State Internal Security Task Force by his former school mate at the Nigerian Defence Academy, Lt. Col. Dauda Musa Komo who was incidentally the Military Administrator of appointed by Late Gen. Sani Abacha in November 1993.<sup>20</sup>

With this development several personalities within the rank and file in the army and government were approached to pacify Maj. Okuntimo but he remained adamant and resolute. The ingenuity and diplomatic approach of HRM B.M.H. Egwenre Oruk XV saved Ataba from the destruction plan of Major Okuntimo who was then resident at kpor in Gokana Local Government Area. Major Okuntimo then visited Ataba with his heavily armed men to address the community. That visit was to decide the fate of Ataba's existence. When Okuntimo became unrepentant the Okan-Ama (King) of Ataba decided to pass through Mrs. Priscilla Vikue, a prominent Ogoni woman from Bodo to reach the leaders of Gokana.

Fortunately, she accepted to contact their Gokana-Ogoni leaders like Chief I. S. Kogbara and others to appeal to Chief Tenalo of Bomu whose subjects were the victim to negotiate peace. On this ground, Gokana-Ogoni leaders and Ataba delegates commenced the peace meeting which ultimately resolved the issue amicably. After their resolution all of them including the traditional ruler of Bomu, Chief Tenalo paid courtesy on Major Okuntimo for two reasons. To congratulate him on his then promotion to the rank of Lt. Colonel and to inform him that Ataba and Bomu had resolved the issue peacefully. With the information he happily relaxed his plan. That was how the Lt. Col. Okuntimo's planned destruction of Ataba was forestalled. This joint meeting brought lasting peace between Andoni and Ogoni. The inter-communal meeting outlived the war.<sup>21</sup>

To further strengthen and sustain peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship between Obolo and Ogoni, Ataba and Lewe formed Ataba-Lewe Peace Conference also known as ATALE after the 1993 war. Membership comprised Ataba Clan Council of Chiefs, elders and opinion leaders and Lewe Council of Chiefs and Elders and political leaders. The ATALE meeting was held quarterly and on rotational basis. As part of effort to avoid friction capable of causing future crises or war, ATALE resolved to constitute a committee to resolve dynamite issue, since it was identified as one issue that results in incessant confrontations between the two communities.

The ATALE Peace Conference also contributed to the enduring socio-economic and political peaceful co-existence, diplomatic and cordial relationship between Ataba (Obolo) and Lewe (Ogoni) after the war. In the 6<sup>th</sup> ATALE Peace Conference held at Lewe on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1999, Chief Loodee of Lewe opined that we have achieved peace which was our main goal and affirmed the new millennium would certainly usher in the new market.<sup>22</sup>

The settlement between Ataba (Andoni) and Bodo, Bomu, Lewe and Gbe became the precursor that ended the general war between Ogoni and Andoni by late 1994. This peace that eluded both ethnic groups was celebrated. By 1995 inter-ethnic relations was renewed and restored. Socio-economic activities resume in earnest. Both neighbours began to fish, trade together, and travel through each other's territory. Since the massacre of the returning Ogoni-Cameroun fishermen by the Andoni, they are not passing through Andoni waterways again couple with the deportation of Nigerians Ogoni inclusive by the Cameroun government. The consequence of the war was evident in severe hardship experienced by both ethnic groups. The severity of economic hardship was more on the Ogoni since their markets where they sold their produce to the Andoni who patronized them were destroyed. Likewise, transportation enterprise was grounded and access to fish acquisition for commercial and home consumption in Ogoni was blocked. So this socio-economic hardship was also responsible for the resolution of the crisis and war; and restoration, of their relations.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the previous Ogoni-Andoni wars, traditional diplomacy of oath taking was abandoned for modern approach (dialogue) towards diplomatic relations. The continued existence of the inter-ethnic committee prevented an incident that would have degenerated into another crisis. Two Asarama (Obolo) fishermen resident at Ataba settlement called Emen-Okwan attacked two Bomu men killing fish with dynamite which has been prohibited by the Andoni. This confrontation led to the killing of one Bomu man. The survivor reported the incident at home. Naturally, Bomu was bitter with Ataba alleging their responsibility. They were planning a reprisal attack on Ataba and the voice of wisdom suggested that Ataba be consulted to ascertain the truth.

Chief Tenalo of Bomu and his people refused to heed. The saving grace was the determined and secret visit of the elder brother of the victim in company of a policeman to Ataba to demand for his copse for burial. He was taken to the palace of the Okan Ama, HRM B.M.H Egwenre Oruk XV who promised to expedite action to track down the perpetrators. The Okan-Ama and his chiefs in-Council emphatically told him that no Ataba son committed such act. This incident was reported

to the committee which also involved the Care Taker Committee Chairmen of both Andoni and Gokana Concils. Then Hon. Lucky Ayuwo was the Care Taker Committee Chairman of Andoni Local Government Council between 2006/2007.

After thorough investigation by the Obolo people, the two culprits were arrested and handed over to the police. The committee resolved that the Andoni should pay compensation to the victim's family whose wife put bed then. The Andoni council paid the sum of Two Million, Five Hundred Thousand Naira (₦ 2.5m) to the family in the interest of peaceful co-existence between the Andoni and the Ogoni. The inter-ethnic committee that had fostered greater unity and co-operation between them became moribund when Hon. Nda Aguma then Commissioner of Chieftaincy and Community Affairs took side with the Ogoni people in a boundary matter with Ataba. Ataba people lost confidence in his mediation in the matter and backed out. The death of Chief I. S. Kogbara contributed to its extinction too.<sup>24</sup>

## CONCLUSION

History provides mankind with common knowledge that war is destructive in all its ramifications but battered relationship can be restored and sustained for harmonious co-existence through dialogue. From the context of this paper, the 1993 Ogoni-Andoni war was a "child of circumstance" since no concrete reason was given as the cause of the war. The activities of the militant wing of MOSOP was a deviation from the initial agitation of the Ogoni people and their demand for Ogoni kingdom.

The devastating nature of the war and the wanton destruction on both ethnic groups particularly Ogoni called for an immediate end to the war. To this end, government effort to end the war was futile. However, the mechanism of dialogue applied during the war became a very effective instrument that facilitated the end of the war between Andoni and Ogoni in late 1994. By 1995 the peace that eluded both ethnic groups were restored. Their socio-economic relations were resumed and sustained till date even after twenty years of anticipated war. Indeed, dialogue strengthened the Andoni and Ogoni ethnic relations. They continued with their peace conference until 1999 especially the Ataba (Andoni)-Ogoni axis.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigera: The Ogoni Tragedy*, (Port Harcourt, Saro International Publishers, 1993), 11-12,24.

<sup>2</sup>N.C. Ejituwu, *A History of Obolo (Andoni) in the Niger Delta*, (Oron, Manson Publishing Company, 1991), xi

<sup>3</sup>Interviews with Comfort Bakpo, 44 years in Ogbogoro, Obio/Akpor L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on April 18, 2014, John B. Kpee 60+ years in Choba, Obio/Akpor L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on April 23, 2014.

<sup>4</sup>Interviews with Jackson O. Eneunye 75 years in Unyeada, Andoni L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on June 15, 2005, Eyorka Festus Iwowari 65 years Ex-CDC Chairman, Ataba in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, on May 25, 2014.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen Ademola Faleti. Theories of Social Conflict in S.G. Best(ed.) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in WestAfrica* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited 2006), 47-48.

<sup>6</sup>Eghosa E. Osaghae, The Ogoni Uprising: Oil Politics, Minority Agitation and the Future of the Nigerian State, *African Affairs*, 1995, 94, 333.

<sup>7</sup>*The Guardian*, 12 October, 1993, 8, Eghosa E. Osaghae, The Ogoni Uprising: Oil Politics, Minority Agitation and the Future of the Nigerian State, *African Affairs*, 1995, 94, 337. *A MOSOP Publication, Ken Saro-Wiwa's Last Words*, (Port Harcourt, 1B Plaza 2008), 19.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Biira Lebisi Nwate, 58 years, in Choba, Obio/Akpor L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on April 15, 2014. Kpee above 60 years, April 23, 2014.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Benson Mgbowaji Hebron Egwenre Oruk XV 64 years, Okan Ama of Ataba and Retired Civil Servant in Rumueme, Obio/Akpor L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on April 13, 2014.

<sup>10</sup>Ken Saro-Wiwa. *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*, (United Kingdom, Safari Books (Export) Limited in Association with Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan Nigeria, 1995), 238.

<sup>11</sup>*A MOSOP Publication, Ken Saro-Wiwa's Last Words*, 18-19.

<sup>12</sup>*A MOSOP Publication, Ken Saro-Wiwa's Last Words*, 19.

<sup>13</sup>*A MOSOP Publication, Ken Saro-Wiwa's Last Words*, 23

<sup>14</sup>Egwenre Oruk XV 64 years, April 13, 2014.

<sup>15</sup>Romokere Mgbowaji Benson, 42 years, eye witness account April 20, 2013 and a Chronicle of Ogoni-Andoni War, 1993 (MSS), 3, Abraham Benjamin Ogbologugo 43 years, eye witness account April 21, 2013. Atanfut Solomon Ogbidor 82 years, Chief Priest in Ataba, oral account in Ataba, Andoni L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria, on August 16, 2011, Iwowari 65 years, May 25, 2014.

<sup>16</sup>*A MOSOP Publication*, 17, 20-21.

<sup>17</sup>Ogbidor 82 years, Chief Priest in Ataba, August 16, 2011, Benson, 42 years, April 20, 2013, Ogbologugo, 43 years, April 21, 2013, Iwowari 65 years, May 25, 2014.

<sup>18</sup>Benson 42 years, April 20, 2013 and A Chronicle of Ogoni- Andoni war (1993 MSS), 3.

<sup>19</sup>Egwenre Oruk XV 64 years, April 13 2014, Iwowari 65 years, May 25, 2014.

<sup>20</sup>*AMOSOP Publication*, 24, 27.

<sup>21</sup>Egwenre Oruk XV 64 years, April 13, 2014.

<sup>22</sup>Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ataba- Lewe Peace Conference held at Lewe on Saturday, December 18, 1999.

<sup>23</sup>Nwate 58 years, April 15, 2014, kpee above 60 years April 23, 2014.

<sup>24</sup>Egwenre Oruk XV 64 years, April 13, 2014.