

**ONELGA Security and Peace Advisory Committee: A Model for
Replication of Vigilantes in other Local Government Areas of Rivers
State, 2014–2024.**

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Abstract

The Ogba Egbema Ndoni local government area (ONELGA) has witnessed a high level of insecurity since 1999. This insecurity includes cultism, kidnapping, armed robbery, etc. Despite the presence of the state security agencies, like the Nigeria police force, Nigeria security and civil defence corps (NSCDC), Nigerian army, department of state security services, etc., the fight against insecurity was met with minimal success, leading to the formation of Onelga Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC). It is against this backdrop that this study examines OSPAC as a model worth promoting security and peace in other Local Government areas of Rivers State. The study adopts the qualitative research methodology in its data collection, making use mainly of primary and secondary sources. The information gathered was used through the historical descriptive and narrative presentation of the analysed facts. Findings from the research revealed that OSPAC has had a huge success in the fight against crime and has remained a model for replicating community policing in Rivers State. It also reveals that the pervasive insecurity and killings in the area led to the emergence of OSPAC. Furthermore, the success witnessed in ONELGA earned them invitations from other local government areas in Rivers State, which also brought relative peace. The paper concludes that OSPAC can serve as a good model for addressing security challenges in

other Local Government Areas of Rivers state that have not welcomed them.

Keywords: Vigilante, Security, OSPAC, Non-state security outfits

Introduction

The Ogba Egbema Ndoni local government is located in Rivers state and has faced with a lot of insecurity challenges ranging from cult killings, kidnapping, political killings, armed robbery, illegal bunkers, to mention but a few. Nigeria has grappled with various forms of insecurity, such as banditry, herdsmen in the North, militancy, agitation in the South, Biafra agitation, and unknown gunmen in the East.⁵²³ The state security agencies' inability to assert hegemony over security in the country shows the failures of internal security mechanisms. However, various means have been employed to tackle these security challenges, but their success has been met with little success. Most of these insecurities emanate from the activities of the politicians, who are responsible for the recruitment of thugs for election purposes. After the elections, they become a menace due to the weapons they acquired. The agitations for infrastructure and better life by the residents of Onelga and Niger Delta became a driver for arms and ammunition.

Insecurity in Onelga

One of the twenty-three local governments that are blessed with hydrocarbon is Onelga, who are a landlord to Agip oil company, Total E&P, Shell, Liquidities natural gas, etc. This has attracted different ethnic groups into the region. Thus, crimes became prevalent in the local

⁵²³ E. Akinyetu & Ambrose, (2023) Unknown Gunmen and Insecurity in Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink of State Fragility” *Security and Defence Quarterly*, Vol.42, 2 (2023)16-34.

government. One of the challenges that Onelga faces is insecurity emanating from youth able-bodies who are trying to cling to power and leadership positions in the local government, because of the benefits attached to the office. Thus, this squabble for power has made many of the youth affiliated with different cult groups like Iceland, Dream, dwell, Klansmen, Greenlanders, etc.⁵²⁴ The prevalence of these rival cult groups, set in cult rivalry in the Onelga, in 2014, the absence of nightlife, relocation of business, wake keeping was put on hold due to how dangerous the night has become. However, before any occasion like wedding or burial was carried out, permission from the cult group that dominate the area, must be obtained, this shows the extent of insecurity and controls by these criminals.⁵²⁵

The drivers of insecurity in ONELGA can be summarised as the clash of cult groups, conflicts emanating from political parties, youth agitations due to the marginalisation by the elders in the communities in Onelga local government and the suppression of the Federal and State governments, coupled with the exploitation of these oil companies and elections of youth bodies.⁵²⁶ In Obite town, residents fled their houses as more than 15 persons were killed as members of Iceland and Greenland clashed for supremacy in Ogbogwu, Akabuka, Obite and Erema in Egi clan on December 9 2015. Thus, this singular act led Governor Wike to fire the local government chairman.⁵²⁷ Furthermore, Mr Osere affirmed the fact

⁵²⁴ O. Malvin, Greenlander cultist aged 41 years, interviewed in Obirikom, 10/11,2024.

⁵²⁵ M. Ahiamdu, Deebam cultist, aged 32 years, interviewed in Omoku town, 31/11/ 2024

⁵²⁶ O. O. Ahiakwo & Amadi Sonny Nwonodi, (2021) "Insecurity and Socio-economic Activities in Onelga" *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* Vol 9, Issue 11 pp: 33-45.

⁵²⁷ D. Iheamnachor, (2016). "15 Feared Dead in Gruesome Cult Attacks as Wike Fires LG Chairs" *Vanguard Newspaper*, pp4.

that no person will be happy to return to the Onelga local government area as peace has not returned to the town.⁵²⁸ Politician supremacy is a major driver of insecurity in the area, as they tend to maintain a political structure.

Management of Security before the Advent of the ONELGA Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC)

Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area is located in Rivers State, it borders Delta State to the East, Ahoada to the south/west, Imo State to the north and Bayelsa to the south. Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government area is a hub for oil and gas as it is blessed with hydrocarbon. These resources attract all manner of people to Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government area, thereby posing security challenges to the law enforcement agencies. Since the inception of democracy in 1999, the incapacity of the security agencies, namely the Nigerian police and other paramilitary forces, who has been saddled with the responsibility of internal security operations, has been observed. The personnel complain of inefficient policing coverage due to the issues of inadequate manpower, lack of incentives to boost the morale of the officers, poor remuneration for officers and so on. These are the typical excuses being rendered by the state security personnel saddled with such responsibility.⁵²⁹

However, blaming the security agencies for not doing enough has always clouded our judgment. It is worth noting that the standard for policing by the United Nations should be 1 policeman to 450 citizens. If so, what is the population of ONELGA? The population of ONELGA is put at 407,400.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸ V. Osere, aged 43 years, taxi driver, was interviewed in Obite. 28/02/2020.

⁵²⁹ O. John, aged 39 years, Security Personnel interviewed at Ahoada, 19/04/23.

⁵³⁰ National network. "A Publication of Patriotic Citizens of ONELGA" accessed 10/10/2024 via <https://nationalnetworkonline.com/2024/03/20/a-publication-of-patriotic-citizens-of->

It means that ONELGA is supposed to have 906 active police officers, but the strength of police in ONELGA is put at 104 police personnel; this clearly shows the police are not up to the required number in the local government.⁵³¹ Onelga has 5 police stations in the local government, namely Ndoni Station, Okwuizi Station, Omoku Station, Area Command, Obite Station, and the Erema police station.⁵³² Each of these police stations in Onelga does not have more than 25 personnel; however, the population of Onelga is 407,400. Thus, the number of personnel and the population connotes that the number is not adequate to secure the local government.⁵³³ Crime in Onelga was managed by the vigilante groups and community associations, and age grades. The series of crimes before 1999 were little heard of as the consequences were always attached to spiritual consequences. Where there was a breaking and entry or intentional theft, the juju priest sounded the metal gong around the community, giving an ultimatum at the expiration.

Crime keeps evolving, as it keeps getting sophisticated daily. For instance, around 1999 crimes witnessed have changed from breaking and entry to armed robbery. Proliferation of small and light weapons has also intensified the crime that is characterised by resource control agitations. The reason for the government's failure to address the crime problem may be related to the inability to meet the infrastructural and development needs of the people, which in turn culminated into the various crimes which also

[onelga/#:~:text=The%20Ogba%2FEgbema%2FNdoni%20LocalGovernment,government%20area%20in%20Rivers%20State](#)

⁵³¹ Anonymous, 41 years, Police Personnel interviewed in Omoku, 26/10/2024.

⁵³² Chief Nwuche, aged 48 years, activist, was interviewed in Omoku on, 30/03/2023.

⁵³³ City population, "Ogba Ebema Ndoni" accessed 10/01/2025, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/rivers/NGA033016_ogba_egbema_ndoni/

overwhelmed the state security services. This made the residents to resort to self-help by providing their alternative policing to complement the state security agencies in Onelga local government area.⁵³⁴

Dissatisfaction with how the state security operatives saddled with internal security operations carried out the task of security was the paramount idea that gave birth to the formation of OSPAC in ONELGA. Equally, the success witnessed or recorded was the major reason other local governments invited them, even though they are non-state security. The non-state security OSPAC started as Omoku Youth Association, where it launched the program Operation Know Your Neighbour to ascertain the people living around and what they do for a living. It operated in the environment of Omoku. The success of the Omoku Youth Association motivated other communities and villages in Onelga to ask for support. However, the expansion precipitated the change in name from Omoku Youth Association to Onelga Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC) in 2015.⁵³⁵

OSPAC was therefore formed due to the increased violence and criminality, intensification of cult rivalry/supremacy, kidnapping, armed robbery, assassinations of political opponents, and incessant burning of cars parked on the street or cars that have broken down. However, the burning of cars has now made Omoku a fertile ground for scrap market, and other social vices that led, a lecturer of the Federal College of Education Technical, Omoku in Rivers State, Dr Maxwell Ahiakwo, to form the Onelga security

⁵³⁴ City population, 10/01/2025.

⁵³⁵ O. Awaza, aged 43 years, OSPAC Member, Vigilante, interviewed at Omoku, Oct 13 2023.

and peace advisory committee (OSPAC) in 2014.⁵³⁶ Before the formation of OSPAC, a good number of businesses closed down due to insecurity in ONELGA, and indigenes and non-indigenes had started relocating out of Omoku town and ONELGA. The success of OSPAC was due to the support of the local government caretaker chairman, barrister Osi Olisa, from 2015 up to 2018, and the traditional institution led by His Royal Eminence (HRE) Eze Chukwumenam Nnam Obi, to provide security in areas that were flash points of crime within the local government capital, Omoku. The success witnessed in Omoku precipitated the moves to other villages in the local government (ONELGA) and subsequently to other local governments in Rivers state.⁵³⁷

The relationship between insecurity and underdevelopment are interrelated. This because it is the problem caused by insecurity that necessitated the proliferation of non-state security, to drive home development in ONELGA, given the high level of insecurity. Prior to the emergence of OSPAC, there was incessant killing in ONELGA, to the point that Amnesty International (AI) lamented that the government is not doing enough in terms of security in the local government. Amnesty International went to say that in the year 2012, 60 persons were killed in ONELGA, in 2013 about 90 persons were missing or killed.⁵³⁸ According to Amnesty International (AI), despite these barbaric killings, proper investigation or justice for victims was lacking. Thus, the inability of the police to curb this insecurity in ONELGA has emboldened criminal gangs,

⁵³⁶ Popular news, (2023) "OSPAC Nigeria Gets New Leaders" *Popular News*, p3.

⁵³⁷ O. Ofor, & Okoroafor, (2020), "OSPAC and Crime Control in ONELGA, Rivers State", *South-South Journal of Humanities and International Studies*, vol.3, no.2260

⁵³⁸ Premium Times, (2015) "River's Cult Related Killings: Government not Doing Enough to Protect Communities- Amnesty International", *Premium Times*.p5.

who became confident that they could perpetrate crime and go scot-free in ONELGA. The vanguard pointed out the killing that also occurred in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area, by the groups suspected to be cultists, who allegedly came for a reprisal attack, in Obite, Ogbogwu, etc. This attack left about 11 people dead and also the group abducted two persons, including a renowned medical practitioner, Dr Erike. The clash was between the Icelanders and the Greenlanders. These attacks have become a recurrent decimal.⁵³⁹

The role of OSPAC includes, but is not limited to the provision of security in the local government, but also to other community service. Over some time most communities in ONELGA and Rivers state have experienced various degrees and forms of insecurity ranging from senseless killings by cultists, kidnapping, armed robbery, forceful conscription of members to partake in cult activities, by criminals like Igwe Dibia AKA Don Waney who murdered about twenty-three (23) persons on New Year Day breaking 1st January 2018. Igbedu was known as a notorious kidnapper and cultist etc.⁵⁴⁰ But the introduction of OSPAC yielded positive results as they maintain strategic checkpoints, arresting and handing over criminals to law enforcement agencies.⁵⁴¹

The motto of the group is sanity, they believe that they aim to sanitise the local government and community from crime. OSPAC's security goal is to create an environment free from risk, danger and safety of the people

⁵³⁹ D. Iheanachor, (2016). "15 feared dead in gruesome cult attacks as Wike fires LG chairs" *Vanguard Newspaper*, p6.

⁵⁴⁰ Vanguard (2018) "How Don Waney, New Year Days Massacre Mastermind, was killed" *Vanguard Newspaper*, p2.

⁵⁴¹ The Niger Delta Newspaper, (2023) "Still on the Activities of OSPAC in Rivers" *The Niger Delta Newspaper*, p1.

through information, strategic, tactical and operational planning. The OSPAC chairman went further to emphasize that their security vision is also to provide a high standard of security that fully satisfies the need and aspirations of not only ONELGA but Nigeria. The group also emphasises zero tolerance for drugs. Mr. Chinedu Amadike, the chief intelligence officer of OSPAC, posits that the group aims to ensure a better society by correcting youths in the locality who engaged in substance abuse.⁵⁴² The first squad of OSPAC consist of forty-five (45) people who volunteered themselves with Dr Maxwell Ahiakwo as the first and pioneer chairman.⁵⁴³

Organogram of ONELGA OSPAC.

The OSPAC was established by Dr Maxwell Ahiakwo, who was a lecturer in the Federal College of Education Technical, Omoku, and was supported by both the caretaker chairman of Onelga Local Government Area, Hon Osi Oliseh and His Royal Eminent (HRE) Eze Chukwumenam Nnam Obi, to promote security and peace in the area. The OSPAC comprises representatives who volunteer from different communities in ONELGA, with the traditional rulers overseeing the organisation. The organisational structure of OSPAC is hierarchical, with the traditional rulers and the security agencies overseeing their activities and furnishing them with every assistance needed. At the top of the hierarchy are the following officers:

⁵⁴² A. Chinedu,(2023)” Drug Abuse: OSPAC Denies abusing Human Rights of 29 Youths”, *Nigeria info Fm*.

⁵⁴³ Omoku city, (2020) “It’s been a year since Dr Maxwell Ahiakwo first OSPAC Chairman in Rivers state died “*Omoku city*, p4.

General Commander (GC), who is charged with the responsibility and accountability of OSPAC, oversees the day-to-day running of the organisation, and he is also liable for the six commands in ONELGA, which are Egi, Osomini, Omoku (central unit), Eburu, Ndoni, and Egbema.

However, the criteria for the selection of members of OSPAC is open to the general public who are not criminals or indulged in criminal activities, who are willing to volunteer to serve the society. It is important to note that majority of people who embraced OSPAC are repentant cultists who have decided not to be part of crime and have accepted the federal government, and state amnesty programmes.⁵⁴⁴ The weapons and equipments, such as dane guns, pump-action guns, were bought and licensed by ONELGA, the local government council boss, Bar Osi Olise.⁵⁴⁵

Administrative Officers (AO) these group are in charge of the smooth running of the organization, in terms of proper documentation, and reminders of daily activities. The AO also performs the work of a secretary, by taking minutes of meetings, writing the statements of culprits or people who have come to lay a complaint to the organization, and also document intelligence information, and goes as far as receiving correspondence on behalf of the organization.

The Public Relations Officer (PRO) the officer is saddled with the responsibility of repositioning and projecting the organization's image positively in the eye of society, to build the desired confidence because the mode of recruitment is voluntary, and most of the people who volunteer,

⁵⁴⁴ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, vigilante chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023.

⁵⁴⁵ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, October 13 2023.

where once cultists and criminals who were once members of various cult group and are tired of the senseless killing. PRO is to project and ensure a positive image and handle all media-related issues, including press briefings. Another executive of the OSPAC is the Armourer, this officer is in charge of ammunition owned by the non-state security outfit. Furthermore, he takes full stock of weapons that are functional and cognizant of the weapons that need replacement, and also ammunition that was given as a gift. The Chief intelligence officer (CIO) is saddled with the responsibility of gathering intelligence, within ONELGA and also synergies intelligence with other local governments and villages where OSPAC have their presence. The CIO also profiles strangers on arriving any community where there is OSPAC. This has made criminals to avoid any community where there is presence of OSPAC.⁵⁴⁶ Chief security officers (CSO) are saddled with the enforcement of discipline and checking the attitude of members of OSPAC. Even though their job is not limited to the enforcement of discipline, they served as the protocol, in charge of journey management, and also the planning and execution of operations falls within their power. Manor (OSPAC commander) noted that the chief security officers is divided into two for ease of duties, they are chief security officer I and chief security officer II. The chief security I is like military police, and the chief security officer II serves as regimental police and gives feed back to the chief security officer I on daily basis.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ Precious Weyinmi Ogholaja, (2011) "Drug Abuse: OSPAC Denies Abusing Human Right of 29 youths", *Nigeria info Fm*.

⁵⁴⁷ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, Vigilante Chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023.

Operations and Strategies of ONELGA Security and Peace Advisory Committee

OSPAC has devised strategies that have been effective in addressing security challenges in ONELGA. One of the key strategies employed by OSPAC is community policing. OSPAC has trained and empowered local vigilante groups to work with the security agencies to maintain law and order in the area. These vigilante groups comprise the youth and community leaders, who are adequately trained in the use of arms. The vigilante groups work with the police and other security agencies to monitor and arrest criminals in the area. OSPAC has also been able to engage cult groups to drop their arms and embrace peace. This engagement has led to some of the cult groups renouncing violence and surrendering their arms to OSPAC.⁵⁴⁸

Operation knows your neighbour is another strategy that was employed by OSPAC in ONELGA, where an audit and profiling was done with regards to everyone resident in ONELGA. This was carried out with the permission of the local government chairman and the chiefs and the residents within the local government area. This strategy was efficient as it exposed people who are criminals or internal collaborators of crime in ONELGA. Another strategy was zero tolerance to scrap which also played a part in the curbing of insecurity in ONELGA. Before the coming of OSPAC one of the major security challenge was the arbitrary burning of cars parked on the street of Omoku or cars that have broken down. However, Mr. James Ahiakwo was of the view that most of the arson were organized and had the backing of

⁵⁴⁸ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, Vigilante Chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023.

scrap buying who in turn commit these crimes so they can buy it. In this light the OSPAC had to place a ban on the buying of scrap in ONELGA.⁵⁴⁹

The use of voodoo is another operational strategy that was used by the OSPAC. The state security agencies operate within the ambit of modern policing where the use of charm and ritual are not part of their standard operating procedure (SOP). However, OSPAC have handled the issue of tradition with tradition as traditional crime related matters are handled with what is known as spiritual security, the use of charm, clairvoyance, talismans and amulet is allowed in OSPAC, which was used to possibly actualize the neutralization of Don Waney through the use of mystic. The intentional use of mystics to fight crime has sent a strong signal to the criminal and all those nurturing the ambition of committing crime; however, in traditional African society, the efficacy of mystics is known. The use of brute force and intimidation forms another strategies used by the Onelga security. This method has been criticised by human rights activists; it has been adjudged as a violation of the human rights of victims. The crocodile pattern of tying suspected criminals leaves an indelible mark on the victim's arm and has also led to the death of suspects in their custody.⁵⁵⁰

Nature of Relationship with OSPAC and Security Personnel in Rivers State

⁵⁴⁹ A. O. Okeoma & Amadi Sonny Nwonodi, (2021) "Insecurity and Socio-economic Activities in Onelga" *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* Vol 9, Issue 11 p: 33-45.

⁵⁵⁰ D. Aliegbe, aged 51 years, Pipe Fitter, was interviewed at Omoku, on 14/10/23.

Despite the good work the OSPAC have done in a bid to restore peace, they have also clashed with the state security agencies in the course of doing their work. Although, despite the strict screening of absorption of members into the non-state security outfit, there are recalcitrant members who violate and go against the principles of the outfit, thereby portraying OSPAC in a bad light. Thus, this has led to the constant clashes between the state security outfits and OSPAC in Rivers state. A good example is the protest by members of the Egbeda community against a construction company on Elele road, where the OSPAC warned the community not to embark on the protest. Members of OSPAC in Egbeda, including the commander, were arrested due to the stoppage of the protest by OSPAC on the 31st June 2024 that led to the death of Oregi through accidental discharge.⁵⁵¹

Numerous complaints have been made about the OSPAC in different parts of the state and clashes with other security agencies in the state. A good example is on the 9th of May, 2024, Alhaji Usman Saleh, the chairman of the Hausa group in ONELGA, reported that OSPAC abducted a member of the Hausa community in ONELGA. While the case was reported to the police, the commander Felix Nwaobakata refused to honour the Nigerian police force in ONELGA. However, Vanguard News gathered that OSPAC coordinated an attack, but was foiled by the police. Following this attack, a tactical team stormed the camp of OSPAC, where they arrested Cheta Benjamin, Joshua Ekwosa, Innocent Ahiakwo and four others.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ Dr. Naku, (2024), "One killed, nine arrested in Rivers clash" *Punch Newspaper*, pg. 4.

⁵⁵² D.Ihemnachor, (2024) "Police Nab Vigilante Leader in Rivers with Human Skull, other Parts" Vanguard newspaper, pg. 2.

Furthermore, the police apprehended Felix Nwaobakata with human skulls and bones on the 17th June 2024, in his hideout in Omoku.⁵⁵³

In another twist, the OSPAC security in Rivers state has also come into confrontation with the army at Ndele community, and also killed an Air Force personnel in Omanwa. This incident happened as Endurance of an Air Force personnel serving in Lagos, returned home for Christmas celebration, and heard that OSPAC detained his younger brother, Onyemachi, so he decided to inquire from the OSPAC commander, but he was obstructed and shot by an OSPAC member named Two Face.⁵⁵⁴

Due to their excesses around September 2020, the inspector general of police banned the use of guns by vigilantes, and OSPAC was affected, which led to the killing of 8 members of the group.⁵⁵⁵ The relationship between the state security and OSPAC, the proactive and potent nature of the group, has been observed when the unknown gunmen saga where police stations and police were attacked in Rivers state, the OSPAC were employed by the state police to guide their police stations in Elele, ONELGA in Rivers state.⁵⁵⁶

Challenges of OSPAC in ONELGA

⁵⁵³ D. Ihemnachor, (2024) "Police Nab Vigilante Leader in Rivers with Human Skull, other Parts" Vanguard newspaper, pg. 2.

⁵⁵⁴ D. Ihemnachor, (2024) "Police Nab Vigilante Leader in Rivers with Human Skull, other Parts" Vanguard newspaper, pg. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ D. Ihemnachor, "Rivers Police Vigilante Operatives in Panic as Cultists Kill Eight Members" Vanguard newspaper, September 14 2020, pg. 3

⁵⁵⁶ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, Vigilante Chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023.

The OSPAC, like every group, has their challenges, which in turn have demoralised their activities in ONELGA. Lacking firearms, the OSPAC is the only vigilante group that has gone out relentlessly against criminals. However, OSPAC is bedevilled by the following challenge.

Insufficient funding. OSPAC has faced with plethora of crises as it is a voluntary organisation and members have left their full-time jobs for community services of securing their local government. But the financial benefit is not commensurate with the good work they do, as their family is the one bearing the brunt. Gender insensitivity is another challenge facing the OSPAC, the OSPAC is an all-men organization that has not allowed women to be part of, but the job of the group cuts across both genders i.e. male and female, so most at times they have been arrested by the state police for violating and harassing women. On the other hands, their activities would have been better if they utilize women as intelligence officers.

OSPAC presence in Rivers state

The success was achieved in the Ogba Egbema Ndoni local government area, which was one of the turbulent local governments in Rivers State. Thus, their success has necessitated the formation of the Etche Security and Peace Advisory Committee (ESPAC), Rundeke Security and Peace Advisory Committee (RUSPAC), Akpor Security and Peace Advisory Committee (ASPAC), Iguruta Security and Peace Advisory Committee (ISPAC), Omanwa Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC),

Egbeda Security and Peace Advisory Committee (ESPAC) (Emeyono, 2023).⁵⁵⁷

To enable these security outfits to spread to other areas like the Egbeda, Rundele, Ahoada, Omanwa, etc., certain conditions were met at Omoku, before they were invited, for instance, the Omanwa community.

For the 8 villages that make up Omanwa, a sum of money was contributed, the men 200 thousand naira, and women 53 thousand naira per village to fund OSPAC activities. We agreed unilaterally to invite OSPAC, so let us join hand and work together.⁵⁵⁸

With the sum of 2,024,000 naira Omanwa community was able to invite a non-state security to protect them. The present strength of membership of OSPAC cannot be ascertained. Kingsley Ogwumike, the OSPAC general commander, puts the number at over 1000 (Douglas, 2021). Comparatively, putting this figure of 1000 and a population of 407,400, which brings the ratio of non-state security in Onelga to 1:407, which beats the United Nations ratio of 1:450.⁵⁵⁹

Impact of the Onelga Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC)

The establishment of the ONELGA security and peace advisory committee has far-reaching consequences in ONELGA. Before the establishment of OSPAC, various criminal gangs terrorized Omoku and its environs, there

⁵⁵⁷ Emeyono, aged 35 years, OSPAC member, interview in Rumuolmeni, 12/03/23

⁵⁵⁸ Chiang, aged 48 years, Omanwa CDC Chairman, interviewed in Omanwa, 6/January /22.

⁵⁵⁹ Douglas, (2023) "Ospac Profile over 1000 Security Operatives in Rivers State". Accessed 10/02/2024, <https://www.facebook.com/917wavefm/posts/ospac-profiles-1000-security-operatives-in-rivers-statebyobed-douglasthe-onelga-/3975288675906664/>

were daily cult killings and abductions and kidnappings in communities like Aga, Obite. individual and companies respectively are made to pay monthly tax to the gang. The reign of Igwe Dibia aka Don Waney, local businesses within Omoku and private houses were compelled by the threat to pay the levy. It is important to note that many businesses relocated out of ONELGA for fear of being killed, kidnapped, or robbed. In nightlife in ONELGA everything is dead; because when it is 7 pm it is like 1 pm in the night.⁵⁶⁰ The death of Johnson Igwe Dibia A.K.A Don Waney shows how potent OSPAC is. Don Waney was the architect of the New Year massacre that killed 23 persons in Omoku.⁵⁶¹ The death of Don Waney has brought considerable sanity and peace to ONELGA, as nightlife is gradually returning to ONELGA.⁵⁶²

The death of a notorious kidnapper cultist known as General Igbudu and 5 of his gang members killed by the Joint Task Force was facilitated by the intelligence provided by the OSPAC that brought an end to that dynasty/dean of robbers and kidnappers in the Ahoada area of Rivers State.⁵⁶³ The success of OSPAC has motivated other local governments to invite OSPAC to replicate the tactics and vision in their local government. Examples of the local governments where OSPAC can be found are Obio/Akpor, Etche local, Emuoha, Ikwerre, Khana, Gokana, Tai, Eleme, and partially in Ahoada.⁵⁶⁴ OSPAC has far-reaching consequences as the offshoot retained a similar or almost the same name, for example, in

⁵⁶⁰ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, Vigilante Chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023.

⁵⁶¹ Vanguard (2018) "How Don Waney, New Year Days Massacre Mastermind, was killed" *Vanguard Newspaper*, p2.

⁵⁶² James Ahiakwo, aged 53 years, occupation farmer, interview at Omoku, 10/05/24.

⁵⁶³ J. Onoyume, (2016)" Breaking News JTF Kills Notorious Kidnapper, five others in River's state" *Vanguard newspaper* 28, p4.

⁵⁶⁴ A. Ogwu, 43 years, OSPAC Member, Vigilante, interviewed at Omoku, oct 13 2023.

Ozuoba it is known as Akpor Security Peace Advisory Committee (ASPAC), in Rumupokwu it is called Rumupokwu Security and Peace Advisory Committee (RUSPAC), etc.⁵⁶⁵

The success of OSPAC is measured by the significant reduction of cult-related violence, armed robbery, and other security threats in ONELGA. Since the establishment of OSPAC, there has been a significant reduction in the number of cult clashes and other security challenges in the area. OSPAC has also been able to recover many illegal arms, which has further contributed to the relative peace in the area. The success of OSPAC can be attributed to its organisational structure, efficient operations, and strategies. The presence of OSPAC has facilitated the returned of economic activities in ONELGA. For instance, some of the businesses that were closed down have returned to ONELGA as a result of the activities of OSPAC in the local government. Food security has been ensured because of the the forest that was used as operational camps have been destroyed thereby bridging the gap of insecurity.⁵⁶⁶

Conclusion

OSPAC has been successful in drastically reducing cult-related violence, kidnapping, raping, armed robbery, and other security threats in the ONELGA. The success of OSPAC is a result of the checks and balances in the organogram and the strategy employed by these non-state actors. It is the success of ONELGA that motivated other local governments in rivers

⁵⁶⁵ K. O. Manor, age 49 years, OSPAC Commander Omoku, vigilante chairman, interviewed at Omoku, October 13 2023

⁵⁶⁶ O. James, aged 41 yrs, youth leader and former vigilante, was interviewed at Obogwu (ONELGA) on 10/05/24.

state, to seek their assistance in replicating similar outfits in their various community. This assistance include training collaboration and monitoring, which motivated other vigilante to seek for their assistance. This paper concludes that if OSPAC is also replicated in other states and local governments in Nigeria, there will be considerable peace, and it can serve as a good model in policing and also addressing security challenges in Nigeria.