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TRANSITION FROM CRISIS TO PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION: AN  
APPRAISAL OF THE NIGER DELTA  
AMNESTY PROGRAMME

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**Abstract**

The Niger Delta is the “honey land” of Nigeria where the honey has continually been milked and the bees left to sting the indigenes. The Niger Delta issue has become a perennial crisis, first because of the different positional views of involved stakeholders, the lack of willingness on the state to curb it and the non-recognition of the issue as a national problem leading to national insecurity. The thrust of this paper is to ascertain how far the amnesty initiative of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua has contributed in peace building within the post conflict Niger Delta region. It discusses the challenges of the amnesty programme with the view that amnesty is only a means to achieving durable peace and not an end in itself. The skepticisms of the amnesty programme are vividly discussed with the opinion that the programme may fail thus with great consequences for Nigeria. Recommendations are made for the amnesty to achieve its goals and by implication putting an end to the bitter lingering squabbles in the Niger Delta region which constitutes national insecurity for Nigeria.

*Keywords: Crisis, Peace, Amnesty and Niger Delta*

**Background to the Study**

The situation in the Niger Delta which has engaged the attention of this paper is veritably a typical instance of political crisis. A crisis is an “occurrence that sufficiently seizes the attention of an individual, community, nation, organization, and international system at large, and which must elicit (urgent) responses” (Sessay, 2009). It is characterized by uncertainty, fear, tension, suspense and danger (Aji, 2009).

From the point of view of sociologists, crisis is a function of unresolved conflict and social tension. As a social phenomenon, crisis is not spontaneous in occurrence. According to Roux-Dufort and Metais (in Sessay, 2009), “crises are not accidental phenomena but are the ultimate result of a long gestation period”. In effect, crisis begins, becomes and breeds. This has been the case in respect of the Niger Delta crisis. Indeed, the Niger Delta crisis has come a long way. In its dynamics of unfolding, it has represented the most critical threat to national security in contemporary Nigeria. From a somewhat negligible internal security concern, the crisis gravitated to a national emergency with far-reaching international implications (Okoli, 2007).

The tragedy of this crisis was that, at a point, it tended to have defied every remedy in its continuum and dynamics of degeneration. The proclamation of state amnesty for the militants of the Niger Delta has largely attenuated the crisis; yet it still subsists in new patterns and dimensions. There have been cases of oil theft, popularly known in Nigerian parlance as oil bunkering; sporadic assaults on law enforcement agents by the dissident militant; as well as high incident of piracy on the shores of the Niger Delta (Okoli, 2013).

The cessation of hostilities and the end of vocalized or overt violence does not mean the achievement of peace. Even peace agreements where they exist do not in themselves end wars and build sustainable peace. Rather these situations present an environment where with proper, delicate and committed leadership, the prospects of peace can be translated into lasting peace and the situations that threaten peace are eliminated. If we take the amnesty as a major milestone in the resolution of the conflict, then the region is in a transition to political stability and socio-economic transformation. (Malan, 2008).

#### Objective of the Study

To assess the effect of the amnesty initiative of late President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua on Peace Building and the development of the Niger Delta region

#### Literature Review

The effort of this paper is not to account historically the Niger Delta conflict but it is proper to state that conflict in the Niger Delta precedes formal colonialism, crude oil discovery and Nigerian independence. Ipso facto, it is well to assert that militancy has been in the region before crude oil discovery alas, the trend since then and now emanated from the struggle for wealth control among other things. Historians (Ayodele, 1999; Hargreaves, 1996; Tamuno, 1999) have traced the era of militancy in the Niger Delta to the time of Jaja of Opobo, Ovonramwem N'Ogbaisi of Benin establishing that the British interest in the Niger Delta or Oil Rivers goes back to 1851 earlier before the 1885 proclamation of the region as a British Protectorate. The militancy at this era was the resistance of British dominance and control of the oil palm trade by noble Delta kings like Jaja of Opobo.

However, the British dominated the Niger Delta trade without developing the region owing to its fragile, delicate and swampy topography. Oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in August 1956 at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State and exploration began in February 1958. There were 24 oil fields by 1967 and a production of 582, 025 barrels per day (bpd) (Etekpe 2007). The inception of oil exportation got the accompaniment of high hopes for massive development of the region. Pathetically the joy has become dysphoria as the natural endowed blessing has earned agony and penury to the people. The Niger Deltans have used a plethora of means to decry their plight which include petitions, civil agitations and now militant agitation. As a result, Adaka Boro resorted to revolts and nationalism in order to seize the state power to effect the development of Niger Delta. On February 23, 1966 he went far miles to declare the Niger Delta Republic which the federal government declared war against him, wrestled and conquered the insurrection within twelve days. In the 1990s, the emergence of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the activities of his group, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) gave a much leeway to the conflict. For Ken Saro-Wiwa, it was a struggle and quest for self-determination as expressed by Naanen (1995) and Osaghae (1997).

The arrest and death of the author Ken Saro-Wiwa gave the Niger Delta struggle an international status and instead of deterring others, myriad of militant groups started emerging. According to Ikelegbe (2010), the turning point in the transformation of demands into political and volatile ones and in the militant agitation for the demands was the Kaiama Declaration of December 1998 made by Ijaw youths. It was this declaration that put resource control in the front burner. It also was the commencement point of militant agitation and militia formation and engagements.

All these emergent militant groups have taken up arms to press home their demands. After waiting for over fifty years, they realized that oil has brought untold misfortune and severe misery. Their land has been over taken for exploitation and exploration, their rivers and waters polluted just like the air, and their occupation fishing and growing of crops has become impossibility without any alternative. The plight of the Niger Deltans is captured in the words of Ikelegbe Augustine inter alia;

The grievances of the region have been numerous. These have included disinheritance by federal government laws, loss of control over their resources, marginalization in the oil economy, marginality within the Nigerian federation and militarization and repression through the military and security agencies. In relation to the TNOCs, the region complains of environmental pollution, mistreatment, poor compensation practices, poor benefits, unfulfilled promises, failures to implement memoranda of understanding and inadequate employment and representation. Other grievances are the poverty, deprivation, high youth unemployment and hopelessness, the location of head offices of TNOCs outside the region and the takeover of oil benefits and oil blocks by non-indigenes of the region. (Ibid. 31).

These grievances true is inexhaustible and real facts. The response of the government and the TNOCs led by Shell to the crisis is severe repression, suppression, subjugation and inhumane. Each has a position on the essence of the crisis in the Niger Delta hence what security, peace and development means to the government and the TNOCs is inconsistent with that of the host communities. For the Nigerian state, the Niger Delta is security crisis and not underdevelopment and marginal representation. This explains the reason why the state has often used military confrontation against the poor and innocent people of the region. It equally offers reason why the state has restricted her attention to issues like; communal activities against oil companies, militant activities, murder of state security personnel, destruction of oil facilities, hostage taking and murder of oil workers among others. This further explains why the Nigerian state has christened these people 'vandals', 'criminals', 'saboteurs', 'murderers', 'miscreants', 'militants' and 'skelms'. The Nigerian state has at different times unleashed pain and violence on the people, the Umuechem Massacre of 1990 (Suberu, 1996); the Ogoni Genocide (The News, May 1993; Suberu, 1996); the Odi Massacre of 1999 (Aghalino, 2009) and Gbaramatu Massacre of 2009 (Adebayo, 2009) which has generally been nicknamed total crackdown. In these crackdowns, properties and lives were not only lost but many were raped, maimed, deformed, displaced or forced into exile. (Oshionebo, 2009).

#### Causes of Crisis in the Niger Delta

The roots of crisis in the Niger Delta are not farfetched from the prevailing social, political, economic and ecological dialectics of the region. This has to do with state predation and terrorism, corporate irresponsibility, environmental degradation and abuse, socio-economic and political deprivations and marginalization as well as mass impoverishment for which the Nigerian State and the oil multinationals are mutually culpable. A highlight of these issues is instructive in order to predicate the focus of this paper.

- a) **State Predation and Terrorism:** This comes in form of state repression of legitimate agitations as well as military invasion and occupation of host communities given the pretext of civil unrest. Cases in point in this respect include the invasion and occupation of Ogoniland by the Nigerian military forces in 1994; the murder of the 'Ogoni Nine' in 1995 by the Military Junta led by General Sani Abacha; the emergency rule and intensive military surveillance imposed on Bayelsa State in December 1998; the raiding of Opia and Ikiyam communities in Delta State in January, 1999 by Nigerian soldiers; the 'Odi massacre' of 1999, among others (Okonta, 2006; Wikipedia, 2007; Omadjohwoefe, 2007, etc.).

- b) **Corporate Irresponsibility:** This refers to the willful damage done to the ecosystem by the activities of oil multinationals, which include gas flaring, oil spillage, land expropriation and displacement of the peasants, intimidation of the local population, etc. (Epelle, 2004). This also refers to the gross neglect, dereliction and abdication by oil multinationals of their moral obligation to providing basic socio-economic amenities like gainful employment, good roads, electricity, portable water and schools to communities affected by their business activities (Epelle, 2004). The implication of this is economic exploitation without recompense, a situation that finds expression in acute infrastructural deficit as well as pervasive environmental deterioration in the Niger Delta.
- c) **Environmental Degradation and Abuse:** The Niger Delta is apparently the most degraded environment in Africa (Sumentari, 2003). This is as a result of gas flaring, oil spillage, deforestation, loss of bio-diversity and water pollution, all of which are associated with oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region. The impact of environmental degradation on the vegetation and population of the Niger Delta has been devastating (Aboribo, 2007; Ikenga, 2007). According to Akindele et al: Oil exploration affects people living in oil producing areas negatively. Most farmers are faced with the problem of resettlement after oil spills. Oil spills have also led to deforestation (in Aboribo, 2007). The incidence of oil spillage, gas flaring and industrial pollution in the Niger Delta contaminates the air and waters within the region thereby making them to be hazardous to public health.
- d) **Socio-economic Deprivation: Impoverishment** Socio-economic conditions of the Nigeria Delta are particularly disheartening. A World Bank Report of 1995 captured the scenario thus: Despite the huge resources accruing from oil resources, the region remains poor. Gross National Product (GNP) per capita is below the national average of US \$ 280. The region is characterized by unemployment, low level of education, high cost of living etc. (World Bank, 1995 in Ilagha, 2007. 135). The above trend has more or less subsisted over time. In effect, more recent facts tend to suggest some measure of degeneration in socio-economic conditions of the Niger delta people.
- e) **Political Marginalization:** This has to do with the perceived shortchanging of the Niger Delta in terms of political representation, resource allocation and resource control within the context of the Nigerian Federation. The peculiarities of Nigeria's federalism tend to encourage some sorts of inequities and imbalances in the processes of power and fiscal relations in the Nigerian Federation. The apparent peripheralization (Aboribo, 2007) and alienation of the Niger Delta vis-à-vis Nigeria's federalist relations is a crucial issue in the Niger Delta crisis (Ilagha, 2007; Nwagbara, 2007).

It can be inferred from the above discussion that the prevailing socio-political and ecological atmosphere of the Niger Delta has been bad enough to precipitate and fuel crisis. As people's life and wellbeing are continually jeopardized, usually with reckless abandon, they are forced to resort to desperate 'tactics' to redress the situation. As Omadjohwoefe (2007) rightly observes: Several decades of reckless multinational oil companies operations and the attendant incessant degradation of the environment breed frustrated expectations and foster widespread agitations. The host communities have decidedly adopted strategies, such as sabotage of oil installations, hostage taking, in drawing the attention of the multinational oil companies to the devastating impacts of their activities especially on their livelihood and the near inability of the environment to sustain life (corroborating Ogege, 2011). It is against the backdrop of the above that one can meaningfully appreciate the spate of civil unrest in the Niger Delta region. It must be noted, however, that the activism in the Niger Delta has gone beyond the level of legitimate or objective cause. Over time, the 'struggle' has been overtaken by crass adventurism and opportunism driven

by materialism, mischief and criminality.

Amnesty: Transition from Crisis to Peace in the Niger Delta

Ekumaoko (2013) said that it will be fair to acknowledge the non-confrontational response of the federal government to the Niger Delta conflict. Many committees and commissions have been instituted to consider the issue, while the committees have been empowered to proffer solutions in advisory capacity to the government; the commissions have been created to effect development in the region. The first major attempt at redressing the problem of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region was the establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961 (Aghalino, 2004) apart from the Willink commission Report before Nigeria's independence. By 1976 Decree No 37 established among other Basin Authorities, the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority to replace the NDDDB. Going the way of its predecessor, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Fund Committee was set up in 1986 principally to disburse the 1.5 per cent fund from Allocation of Revenue meant for the development of the area. However, the Supreme Court passed judgement not in favour of the committee aborting it prematurely. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida on 19 July, 1992 through Decree No. 23 established the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC).

To our day, we have the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in which life was fused into it by the National Assembly in accordance with section 58(a) and 5 of the 1999 constitution after President Olusegun Obasanjo's refusal to assent to the bill. This singular act seemed to be a resolute will by the government to effect development as special bodies were empowered to supervise and direct the activities of the commission. The NDDC, since its establishment on 5 June, 2000 has very little to account for the huge funds allocated to it for the region's development. Apart from these commissions myriad of committees have been set up to make recommendations on how to end the Niger Delta crisis by means of development. These committees include; Belgore Report 1992, Don Etiebet Report 1994, Popoola Report 1998, Ogomudia Report 2001 and the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, November, 2008 among other reports relating to the Niger Delta especially those of the United Nations and non-government organizations. In 2008 the ministry of Niger Delta was created to work with the NDDC in bringing about development within the region. In spite of all these commissions and committees, the Niger Delta has remained undeveloped and the crisis lingers to the level of low intensity war. For the Niger Deltans, the government has always and only assumed what their problems are but has never made effort to engage them in dialogue to know their true plight. Corruption, lack of political will and political intrigues between the federal government and oil state governments have had greater consequences in obfuscating and distracting these commissions from its statutory functions. The question to ask is do we need commissions and committees to develop Niger Delta? Aghalino (2004) answers viz;

The federal government does not need to set up commissions to address the Niger Delta crisis. Certainly no commission is needed by the federal government to direct the oil firms to give preference to the indigenes of the Niger Delta in their recruitment drive of the federal government and the oil firms. For example, the federal government massively developed Lagos without recourse to a commission. The federal government has spent billions of naira checking the ocean surge in Victoria Island, Lagos, without recourse to commission. What, perhaps is needed is political will devoid of intrigues and power-play between the federal government and the oil bearing states governments (Aghalino, 2014).

However, one of the committees, the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta which was headed by Barr. Ledum Mitee submitted its findings and recommendations to the federal government in November, 2008. One of the highlights is the recommendation of amnesty programme which took the President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua about seven months to announce.

Ekumaoko (2013) noted that the militants were given a 60 day unconditional amnesty period for the militants in the Niger Delta to surrender their arms. The government in return pledged its commitment to assist in their disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation. Furthermore, the Nigerian state also made provision for the reintegration of the militants to society. The amnesty is presently the current track on the transition from crisis to peace building in the Niger Delta.

#### The Amnesty Programme: An Appraisal

An amnesty is an exoneration and pardon from punishment for certain criminal, rebel and insurgent actions committed usually against the state and society. An amnesty is always backed by law and has a specified period of time for the assumed offenders to admit the offence and accept pardon. Amnesty guarantees an interregnum of peace, cessation of hostility and a state of unsecured quiet which necessitates a post conflict scenario for peace building. Post conflict transition ensures comprehensive changes in terms of structures, institutions, orientations and attitudes. It is very sensitive and involves socio-political engineering, economic recovery and military and security interventions. Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom (2006) have found that post conflict economic growth and economic recovery for example reduces substantially the risk of conflict reversion. Unresolved grievances, poverty, decay of trust, intention and confidence and unfocused leadership are among the factors which can cause relapse to conflict. Post conflict reversion is very costly and dreadful. Stages in the management of post conflict transition to peace are sequentially disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. (DDR).

Peace building is an all-encompassing whole process of facilitating and strengthening enduring peace. According to Fisher et al (2006) peace building involves “understanding programmes designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past and to promote long term stability and justice”. It is an effort to ensure socio-political and economic stability of the society. Peace building is proffering durable solution to a conflict ridden society to achieve durable peace. They further stated that peace building does not only address conflict behaviours but more importantly the underlying context behaviours that gave rise to violence (The causes and triggers).

Disarmament is a form of weapons control strategy both at production and circulation. In a post conflict society, it is the surrender of arms by ex-combatants at designated sites or camps which signifies end to fighting. Disarmament is essentially a military operation, designed to manage the instruments of violence (arms and ammunition) such that a secure and stable environment (Gwinyayi, 2007) is made possible for post conflict transition and implementation of peace agreements. The success of disarmament is determined first by the quantity of arms surrendered in relation to the estimated stockpiles and available arms, secondly by ensuring inaccessibility of arms and arms flow which guarantees no possibility of rearmament. While disarmament controls the physical tools of violence, demobilization controls the human tools of violence. Demobilization is the first step of transition from combat and militarized life to civilian life. It involves dismantling and disbandment of non-state fighting forces and paramilitary forces that are usually assembled in camps for a change of life orientation.

Ekumaoko (2013) posits that the transition process is usually managed through pre-discharging and post-discharging orientations which includes counseling on non-violent life and life career. Disarmament and demobilization are part of a military process but reintegration is a civilian process and the overall success depends on the proper execution of each phase. Reintegration involves the absorption of ex-combatants into the society through gainful training and empowerment. It is geared towards economic independence and self-empowerment and peaceful and civil roles of ex-combatants in the society. Reintegration addresses the specific needs of ex-combatants by offering support in terms of skills development, education, professional training, micro credit and assistance to return to peaceful and sustainable livelihoods. It is broader than disarmament and demobilization cutting across economic and social life of the demobilized

persons. Reintegration goes far beyond ex-combatants to include war veterans, families and communities of ex-combatants and veterans and disabled combatants. It takes years to achieve reintegration. The present difficulty lies in discussing how much the amnesty programme has achieved. Some scholars who wrote at the early stage of the amnesty were of the opinion that the Promised Land is near or has been reached, maybe because of the unsecured quiet it produced. Latter writers came to identify certain lapses especially in the implementation process and funding that will limit the amnesty from achieving its purpose. This paper shares this opinion and believes that it is only a thing of time for the region to revert to open violent conflict. This position may be judged and considered pessimistic, cynical, hasty, rash and tendentious but present conditions and events are more attuned to this stance. Except urgent efforts are made to refocus the drifting programme on the right course, again, it is only a thing of time for the region to revert to open violent conflict. The amnesty programme is now on the third stage of transition which is reintegration but what is worrisome is the success of disarmament and demobilization because the overall success is dependent on the success of each. Other worries include the legality of the amnesty, who and who are truly the militants? The amnesty is not backed by law or even a gazette meaning it is not an established policy. It is only a presidential proclamation without any legal status and in Nigeria where there is no policy continuation by succeeding governments what happens to amnesty and the militants when a new president assumes power. Imagine it! The militants have openly accepted criminality but their assumed pardon has no legal backing therefore they are liable to punitive justice. Ikelegbe (2010) put it this way;

It was in a sense, a form of surrender without losing the low intensity war. It was a great show of statesmanship by the president, a massive gamble on the path of government and a big risk taken by militants. This in essence is the greatest weakness and vulnerability of the programme. Surrender without defeat and without negotiated agreements and substantial efforts to address and resolution of grievances and problems that root the conflict, are an imposed and fragile peace that is highly susceptible to pushes beyond the precipice.

Again, the amnesty is one sided. The amnesty should also be for the Joint Task Force who equally engaged in criminal, atrocious and inhumane acts tantamount to crime against humanity in the Niger Delta. The military operations have been harassments, human rights abuses, brutality, rape, torture, arrests and detentions, extortion, plundering and destruction of properties. In Odi, Gbaramatu, Ogoni, Odioma, Choba, Ikon, Ikenyan and Umuechem all have suffered these forms of assault, criminality and violence from the government security forces. The attack on Odi in 1999 was estimated to have killed about 2,483 persons and displaced 20,000 people (Ukaogo, 2010). This is more than the number of deaths per annum in low intensity armed conflicts involving open hostilities.

Therefore, the amnesty is supposed to extend to these military personnel who have rudely indulged in crimes against innocent civilians. There is a juxtaposed opinion of underfunding and over funding. However, it will be appropriate to share the latter opinion and amend the former. The amnesty is not underfunded but has been misappropriated funds. This is not under funding.

Comparatively, graduates in National Youth Service Corps orientation camp are fed on N100 per meal three times a day and for the twelve months of service are paid about N19,975 per month, thus the amnesty is not in any way underfunded (Ekumaoko, 2013). This is about the militants not to talk about their leaders who have become billionaires overnight.

However, the above does not suggest under funding but misappropriation of funds that are meant for the amnesty programme. The amnesty has sharply deviated and has culminated into bribery of militants for peace. The effect is already manifesting as many jobless youths in the region and outside the region are agitating to partake in the amnesty banquet. Apart from the 6,166 militants

who were incorporated into the programme in November 2010 after the October 4, 2009 deadline another 3,642 persons have formed the third phase making up the number to 30,000 ex-militants now in the programme (Ibid. 38-39). This is a product of over funding and deviation from the objectives of the programme. It will not be a surprise that fourth, fifth and sixth batches will soon follow. Opeyemi (2012) states “this has made even the non-militant youths to begin to indulge in militancy in order to become beneficiaries of such economic packages that accompany the amnesty programme”. In a way it supposes that the Nigerian government after all is well buoyant to pay unemployment benefits to the Nigerian unemployed youths even if it is N 5,000 per month.

Another problem with the amnesty is that it tends to have a narrow scope perception of the agitation that is only based on militancy. Conflict transformation does not centre on people alone but also rehabilitates the torn community. The entire programme has been haphazardly designed, packaged and implemented. It is obvious that the programme has been ad hoc and has lacked a consistent permanent structure. The rehabilitation of the environment, destroyed communities and even other members of the community who are not ex-militant are not part of the programme. For the government, the amnesty is a success since daily oil production is at its peak but the root grievances remain unattended and the region undeveloped. To the focus of this paper it tends to discuss the efficiency of the amnesty programme since its implementation.

#### Effectiveness of the Amnesty Programme

The proclamation of state Amnesty on the Niger Delta militant in 2009 marked a water-shed in the search for a lasting resolution of the Niger Delta crisis. The Amnesty Programme was a well thought out policy designed to bring about cessation of active hostility in the Niger Delta region as well as disarming and reintegration of the militants into the society. The Amnesty Programme essentially derived from the policy focus of the late Yar adua's administration. In his maiden Presidential address to the nation, President Yar adua devoted ample space and time to dwell on the Niger Delta challenge. According to him, Okoli (2013) noted that: the crisis in the Niger Delta commands our urgent attention. Ending it is a matter of strategic importance to our country. I will use every resource available to me, with your help, to address this crisis in the spirit of fairness, justice, and cooperation. We have a good starting point because our predecessor already launched a master plan that can serve as a basis for a comprehensive examination of all the issues. We will involve all stakeholders in working out a solution. As part of this effort, we will quickly move to ensure security of life and property, and to make investments safe. In the meantime, we appeal to all aggrieved communities, groups, and individuals to immediately suspend all violent activities and respect law. Let us allow the impending dialogue to take place in a conducive atmosphere. We are all in this together, and we will find a way to achieve peace and justice (quoted in Ngare, 2012, Okoli (2013)).

It was the above policy direction that inspired the amnesty project. The proclamation of the Amnesty was greeted with public skepticism and ambivalence. Only a few Nigerians saw hope in the mechanism, and so there was a general atmosphere of pessimism and ambivalence on its efficacy. In the course of its implementation however, it became obvious that the Amnesty has some prospects at all. Contrary to the prevailing misgivings concerning the feasibility of the programme, scores of Niger Delta militant embraced the deal. They came out en masse to denounce violence and to surrender their instruments of aggression (Okoli 2013). In the immediate aftermath of the amnesty declaration, appreciable peace and stability which had hitherto eluded the Niger Delta, returned to the region. Consequently, oil production by Nigeria shot up from the low of about 700 barrels per day to more than 2,500 barrels in the early 2010. By the end of year 2010, activities of oil production in Niger Delta had almost normalized.

However, recent events tend to suggest that the peace process in respect of the Niger Delta debacle is yet to materialize. There appears to be a backlash leading to recrudescence of violence and



criminality in the region. These acts have been largely orchestrated by dissident and criminal elements in the ranks of the erstwhile militant formations that are hell bent on sabotaging the state in view of self-regarding or political Concerns.

In effect, there have been rising cases at organized crime, piracy, oil theft (oil bunkering), kidnapping and the likes in the Niger Delta region over the recent months. The implication of this is that the peace process in the Niger Delta is yet to be actualized.

This raises anxiety to the effect that the seeming gains of the amnesty project are being persistently jeopardized. The government must explore and further opportunities towards ensuring lasting peace and stability to the region. Overall, the prospects of the amnesty project have been threatened in the following Instances:

1. The rise of dissident militants and criminal element that are currently sabotaging the amnesty initiative.
2. Rising incidence of offshore criminality, such as piracy and oil theft
3. Renewed cases of anti-government hostility as exemplified in the abduction and killing of twelve (12) men of the Nigerian Police in April, 2013
4. Continued despoliation of land and environment of Niger Delta through oil spills and gas flaring
5. Bastardization of the Amnesty implementation through politicization and corruption
6. Sense of alienation and marginalization by a section of the Niger Delta youth who feel that they have been unjustly excluded or short-charged in the amnesty process.
7. The seeming lethargy of the government in addressing the fundamental development concerns of the Niger Delta through affirmative policies and actions, etc.

In addition to the above, there are some nagging outstanding issues which ought to be addressed too. However; no significant development has taken place apart from few developmental projects handled by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta. These are basically the construction and rehabilitation of roads. In the light of these setbacks, what is the prospect of the Amnesty deal? The position of this paper is that the answer lies with the steadfast of the government and relevant stakeholders in making the Amnesty work. The paper, however, makes a number of suggestions on the way forward. This is our concern in the following section.

#### Conclusion

The Niger Delta region is mix porridge of ills, misgivings, agony, penury, displeasure and disenchantment. The problem is perplexed and complex and the amnesty programme has achieved negative peace within the region. Unfortunately, the government has relaxed and felt accomplished creating a situation of possible reversion to open conflict. As much as the amnesty has secured an environment for maximum daily oil production, peace, security and development for the government has been achieved. But this is on the least the truth (Ekumaoko, 2013).

Unfortunately, the amnesty has proved incapable of bringing infrastructural and human development to the region as the government has indirectly accepted. For this reason, the amnesty programme will soon collapse except adequate effort is made to prevent the sad occurrence. By and large, the collapse of the amnesty is a relapse to open hostility and again reversion to conflict is very costly.

#### Recommendations

According to Ekumaoko (2013), the amnesty in a way has compounded the Niger Delta problem as will soon be the case. The huge funds spent on ex-militants and their leaders should have been used to assuage considerably the environmental and infrastructural demands of the people and

rehabilitate their communities. This is a true step to attaining true peace. After these militants get trained, their agitations for development will become more severe in violent and non-violent ways because they have fully been exposed to know their rights. However, the federal government has to adopt some measures to avoid this future conflict which is being incubated under the amnesty programme.

It is out of place to recommend establishment of commissions to develop the Niger Delta region because NDDC and its predecessors have proved dysfunctional. The first effort in solving the Niger Delta problem is to convene a dialogue that will encompass all the stakeholders involved. However this dialogue has to be convened by an independent third party with no alliance to the government or the TNOCs. This dialogue will provide the opportunity for the people to duly air their grievances and the preferential ways they want their problems to be solved. Again, the passing into law of Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) and its genuine implementation will go a long way in assuaging the plight of Niger Deltans.

However, the bill has to be reviewed in order to accommodate more of the demands of the people. "Another important thing is that the PIB will significantly address environmental challenges associated with exploration and drilling of oil... in the case of NNPC, the PIB will separate the NNPC as a business from also being the regulator. It would unbundle the NNPC so that the regulator will be different from the business" (The News, 2012b: 48-49). One important thing is that the Petroleum Industry Bill will make the oil communities stakeholders in the oil economy and will increase their participation and decision making in the oil economy. However, this paper recommends that the operating license of all the TNOCs in the Niger Delta be withdrawn immediately. The government should engage other companies that will be willing to explore oil in line with international best practices.

To this end, the new companies must avoid oil spillage, flaring and other dangerous and hazardous oil exploration practices. For any of the current companies operating in the region who may want to come back, such company should first clean up all spillages in its operating domain and pay compensations to the affected communities. Such company should enter into a new agreement with both the government and the host communities to live up to its corporate social responsibility. License withdrawal is a pragmatic measure in addressing the Niger Delta problem since none of the companies will like to stop enjoying the oil benefits from the region and at the same time knowing that many other companies will love to occupy their place.

Furthermore, many scholars have called for restructuring of the Nigerian federation and derivation formula as a way of addressing the Niger Delta problem. Revising revenue derivation and proper federal structure to accommodate and represent all the regions of the country will immensely help in solving this problem. This paper does not undermine the effectiveness of this measure in dousing the problem but its concern is that lack of political will by government will make it unachievable. However, it recommends that, the federal system of government in Nigeria should be jettisoned because it is dysfunctional and unsuitable for a society like Nigeria which is driven much by 'ethnic national' inclinations.

Incorporating equal development for the diverse parts of the country seems infeasible in the present system of government and has created deep feelings of sidelining and marginalization. It is recommended here, that Nigeria adopt a confederacy to facilitate the development of the diverse ethnic nationalities. First it will not only address the lapses of the federal system as practiced but will also address the question of self determination by the Niger Delta and other regions in Nigeria. It will also in a way resolve the issue of Land Act because the regions will determine their development being stronger than the centre.

As earlier stated, no commission or ministry is needed to be set up to bring development in the Niger Delta. The federal government should deploy tractors to the region to begin work on roads while good drinking water is provided for the people without waiting for NDDC or using any commission. It is better for the government to award contracts directly and hold the contractors responsible for non-execution than giving funds to the commissions only to be embezzled. Moreover, it is not just awarding contracts, but it should be awarded to reputable and well known companies with time limit for completion. Some contracts have been awarded in the past to companies that only existed on paper without offices and equipment. Massive infrastructural development of Niger Delta is the sure answer to the desired peace.

Lastly, there is the need to have a social reengineering of the Niger Delta area. So many abuses have been committed by the Nigerian security forces, loss of lives, properties, detentions, torture, rape and all the social ills. Many communities have experienced total crackdown and some militants are still held and being tried in law courts. These militants should be released in line with the amnesty programme as an effort in social reengineering of the region. The government should choose his choice of words when addressing these people because it tends to influence them and make them act in such manner in which they are addressed. They have been labeled as criminals instead of freedom fighters or at worst militants and this simply has shaped government's perception and actions. Families and communities should be rehabilitated and compensated to socially stabilize and reintegrate them back to the society (Ekumaoko, 2013).

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