

From Amnesty to Empowerment: A Historical Analysis of Skill Acquisition Schemes and Militancy Prevention in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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This research investigates the historical assessment of the progression of the neo-empowerment strategy implemented by the Nigerian federal government in the Niger-Delta area with the aim of curbing militancy. It follows the path from the post-amnesty programme to the empowerment efforts initiated during President Yar'adua's tenure. Covering the years from 2009 to the contemporary period, the research evaluates the execution, impacts, and obstacles of these programs in fostering lasting peace and development. Through a thorough analysis of policy documents and reports published by institutions, the research uncovers the intricate dynamics between skill development and the prevention of militancy. It emphasizes both the achievements and shortcomings of these programs, illuminating the agency and resilience of former militants and local populations. This research enhances the understanding of the historical backdrop influencing the development of the Niger Delta region, highlighting the significance of empowerment and inclusivity in mitigating militancy. By reflecting on the past, this study aids in shaping policy choices and interventions that seek to encourage sustainable peace, economic progress, and social unity in the area.

Keywords:

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Background to the Study

One approach the Nigerian government has employed to tackle the ongoing militancy in the Niger Delta region is through youth empowerment initiatives. These empowerment programs aim to offer educational training and skill development as a means of rehabilitation, reintegration, and awareness, along with providing financial support to former militants. However, there seems to be a gap between the execution of the program and the actual circumstances on the ground. This is evident as the Niger Delta region has been persistently affected by militant actions since 2016. These disruptions manifest through petroleum theft, commonly referred to as oil bunkering. A review of Nigeria's energy crisis by the Financial Times (2024) highlights that the nation's failure to meet its Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production allocation "is not due to insufficient investment but rather a result of oil theft (Adeniyi, 2024:1). In August 2022, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) noted a decline in the country's oil production, dropping from 1,083,899 barrels per day in July to 972,394 barrels per day in August 2022. This represented a daily loss of about 111,505 barrels of crude oil in August 2022, amounting to a financial loss of approximately 3.3 billion dollars (Adeniyi, 2024:1). By August 2024, the "entire export pipeline network has been handed over to vandals and illegal bunkerers" in south-south Nigeria (Adeniyi, 2024), raising doubts about the effectiveness of the ex-militants' skills in monitoring Nigeria's energy infrastructure. This aligns with a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2023, which indicated that a majority of the incidences of abduction for payment and buccaneering attacks on ships within the jurisdiction of Gulf of Guinea (GoG) were hijackers whose state of origin is traceable Niger Delta region of Nigeria's (UNODC, 2023:6), with at least 54 individuals reported as hostages (IMB, 2023). It seems that the empowerment schemes following the amnesty program did not effectively resolve the youth unrest in the south-south area, as the value of oil thefts attributed to the ex-militants who received training has risen from 8.4 million barrels in 2009 to 39 million barrels in 2020. The fatalities resulting from politically motivated violence have increased since the final enrolment period for the PAP in 2012. While violence linked to ex-militants reduced from 1,000 in 2008 to 250 in 2009, it then rose to 500 between 2013 and 2015, reached a peak of 779 in 2017, and later stabilized between 450 and 600 annually from 2018 to 2020 after the Niger Delta Avengers were subdued (Magill, 2023).

The endeavours by communities in the Niger Delta to voice their dissatisfaction with the Nigerian government regarding their marginalized position within the country's political system have gone through several historical changes. The first major event occurred when civil organizations began to highlight specific issues of exploitation, which led to the formation of numerous grassroots movements tackling these problems (Ibeantu, 2006). The next phase saw the mobilization of rural residents against both the Nigerian government and oil companies operating in the Niger Delta area. The third phase shifted its focus from developmental concerns to political issues, mainly relating to resource control and the restructuring of Nigeria's unitary federation. The current stage of the struggle is characterized by increasing youth radicalism and instability, heightening tensions between oil-producing communities and the Nigerian state, along with its foreign associates (Osaghe et al., 2011).

The youth demographic now spearheads the ongoing conflict in the Niger Delta with the Nigerian government. They describe the methods of their struggle, formulate strategies and tactics to achieve their goals, and have embraced insurgency as the most effective and reasonable way to fulfil their community aspirations (Osaghe et al., 2011). In terms of age, this youth group generally falls within early adulthood, known for their participation in social activities, although they encounter certain societal limitations and experience a mix of dependency and autonomy (Ikelegbe, 2006). The notion of youth, seen as a socially defined category, relational framework, and collective of individuals, offers a targeted perspective for analysing social interactions both in Africa and globally. This lens allows for an examination of how relationships and power dynamics are changed, intertwined, and maintained as individuals assert their rights based on age, with such assertions being interdependent yet unequal (Decker et al., 1991; Durham, 2000; Galstyan, 2022). Looking at youth from this angle goes beyond their vulnerabilities and marginalization and "highlights the resistance strategies and agency displayed by Niger Delta militants." Marked by conflicts and struggles as a distinct social group, their demographic experiences various challenges that shape their journey from youth to adulthood. These conflicts reflect their quest for inclusion and identity within their environment. Ikelegbe (2006:88) posits that "these challenges and conflicts significantly affect how youth as a social group interact with society and the state, in terms of engagement or withdrawal, inclusion or exclusion, reconciliation or defiance, integration or deviance." The context that influences the attitudes and actions of youth in a specific region is shaped by the environment they experienced during their formative years transitioning into adulthood (Wyn and White, 1996).

Researchers argue that the pursuit of youth empowerment initiatives stems from years of disregard and the decline of their natural surroundings (Okafor, 2011; Oluwole, 2023; Ebiefie et al., 2025). Some have interpreted the responses of young people through the theoretical framework of ethnic dominance (Ibeanu, 1997; Ejebewah, 2000; Obi, 2001; Tomwarri & Igoli, 2024; Nnabuihe et al., 2025). A common agreement found in these works is the poverty of the rural communities that make up the oil producing areas. Additionally, some attribute the structural injustices to the distribution of oil revenue, which fails to account for the environmental damage inflicted on the Niger Delta regions due to the exploitation of their natural resources bestowed by God (Obi, 1997, 1999; Omege, 2004; Bosah, 2022; Johnson & Lafenwa, 2023). Records indicate that between 1976 and 1999, over 3,000 oil spill incidents were documented by oil companies operating in Nigeria. There were also cases of pipeline failures resulting in oil contaminating rivers and streams, thereby harming the ecosystems that the riverine communities rely on for their survival (Omotola, 2007; Chris et al., 2021; Obigbor, 2025).

The initiative to address historical wrongs experienced by the communities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria has mainly involved the formation of commissions with allocated funding. In 1960, the Nigerian government established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) to accelerate development in the region. The board was specifically mandated to focus on the advancement of the areas designated to it. While the NDDB spurred some limited

agricultural progress in select parts of the Niger Delta, its overall success was considered inadequate and was perceived by many as a strategy to improve the federal government's image, as there were no significant achievements associated with the 15% revenue allocation it received (Frynas, 2000; Ite, 2004). Furthermore, during the 1970s, when the Nigerian federal government began utilizing River Basin Commissions to foster rural development, the Niger Delta River Basin Commission (NDRBC) was created as the main instrument for rural development in Delta State. Additionally, a Presidential Task Force (PTF) called the 1.5 Percent Committee was instituted in 1979 by the military administration of Mohammed Buhari, along with the establishment of a special fund named the Revenue Act for Oil Producing Areas (RSOPA) in 1981, aimed at monitoring the 1.5 Percent Committee to ensure proper utilization of its funds (Ibeanu, 2006; Idemudia, 2009). The two military coups that succeeded the Shehu Shagari regime maintained the PTF, which received official backing to continue operating, yet, similar to the NDDB, it could not be associated with any significant improvements regarding the welfare of the people in the Niger Delta (Okafor, 2011).

This led the military administration of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida to create the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992. The regime designated OMPADEC with the goal of addressing the welfare concerns of the Niger Delta inhabitants; however, it deviated from its intended mission and encountered numerous allegations of corruption (Yishua, 2008). With a 3% allocation from the federal budget, OMPADEC was expected to obtain at least 1 billion naira every month for the development of the Niger Delta (Ibeanu, 2006). Nonetheless, competition among various ministries for influence frequently obstructed the realization of these funds. More critically, both military and civilian administrations sought to control and profit from the allocated resources, resulting in the enrichment of military associates and private families connected to the state, as well as contractors who benefited from the community's designated funds. By the time OMPADEC was dissolved, "it owed billions of naira to its contractors and had abandoned hundreds of projects," with over 300 of these projects scattered throughout Bayelsa state alone (Ibeanu, 2006:38-39).

It was against this backdrop of historical shortcomings and contradictions linked to the development agencies aimed at improving the lives of Niger Delta residents that the Nigerian government took steps to create the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. The Act established a specific fund to cover the expected expenses the NDDC would face in the future. This dedicated fund is expected to be financed from the following sources:

- (i) 15% of the federal government's statutory allocation.
- (ii) 3% of the annual estimated spending by Multinational Corporations (MNCs), both onshore and offshore.
- (iii) 50% of the ecological fund.
- (iv) periodic contributions from both federal and state governments (NDDC Act, 2000: part v).

These financial provisions could significantly benefit the Niger Delta region if executed correctly. However, it was not long after the NDDC was established that it raised concerns that the federal government and other contributing entities, such as MNCs, were failing to meet their financial responsibilities (Ebeku, 2020). An investigation revealed that the Commission had received approximately 40 billion dollars (15 trillion naira) since its formation, with some of the funds funneled into private accounts and used to settle political patrons within a clientelistic system. The audit also discovered that while the NDDC had completed 13,777 projects, a staggering 13,000 projects had been left uncompleted in the region since its inception. Additional issues included the inflation of contract values and the awarding of contracts to fictitious organizations (Premium Times, 2021; NDDC, 2020).

The circumstances led to a revival of militant activities among the youth. The increase in youth insurgency resulted in a decline of Nigeria's oil output from an average of 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd) to 700,000 bpd from 2007 to 2009, leading to a loss of roughly 8.7 billion naira that could have bolstered national revenue (NEXTIER, 2020). After Umaru Musa Yar'Adua assumed office, he initiated the Post-Amnesty Program (PAP) in 2009, designed to provide vocational training to former militants in exchange for abandoning criminal acts (Agba et al, 2020:15). The amnesty initiative was publicly declared in June 2009, with a stipulated timeframe for militants to hand over their weapons between August 6 and October 4, 2009. The terms of the amnesty explicitly stated that the state would pardon all previous crimes committed by the combatants; however, any future offenses would not be treated the same way. Ultimately, 20,192 militants surrendered during the initial phase in 2009. This was followed by 6,166 participants in 2010, and an additional 3,642 later, raising the total number of people engaged in the program to 30,000 (NEXTIER, 2020). The Post-Amnesty Program (PAP) mainly aims to improve the skills of individuals in the Niger Delta. Currently, several training facilities have been set up for skill enhancement:

- (i) A Maritime Vocational Training Centre located in Obooma, Rivers State.
- (ii) A Basic Skills Vocational Training Centre situated in Boro Town, Kaiama, Bayelsa State.
- (iii) A Power and Energy Vocational Training Centre found in Bomadi, Delta State.
- (iv) An Oil and Gas Vocational Training Centre located in Agadagba-Obon, Ondo State.
- (v) An Agricultural Vocational Training Centre located in Gelegele, Edo State (NEXTIER, 2020:15).

Generally, the Niger Delta region includes all states recognized as oil-producing areas in Nigeria. These states consist of Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Cross River, Bayelsa, Edo, Ondo, Imo, Anambra, Enugu, and Abia (NEXTIER, 2020). Nonetheless, this analysis focuses on the key oil-producing states within Nigeria's southern geopolitical zone, which comprises Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Cross River, Bayelsa, and Edo states.

Despite the numerous youth empowerment initiatives, militancy persists in the Niger Delta, necessitating a historical evaluation of how skill acquisition impacts the sustainable prevention of militancy in this region. Given this context, this study is timely for various

reasons, notably the challenge of achieving sustainable peace in the South-South region since the inception of the Post-Amnesty Program, amidst ongoing militia-related crises in the Niger Delta. It is crucial to mention that this study confines itself specifically to the skill acquisition and educational training aspects of the Post-Amnesty Program. In light of this, the research aims to determine whether the skill acquisition programs have contributed to sustainably preventing militancy among the youth of the Niger Delta.

Literature Review

The review of literature examines the empowerment of youth and the provision of manpower for ex-militants as a strategy to prevent young people in the Niger Delta from engaging in criminal activities. The presidential amnesty empowerment initiatives for ex-militants in the Niger Delta commenced in 2009 and continue to this day, providing ex-combatants with opportunities to pursue academics in Nigeria or abroad, acquire vocational skills, and receive monthly stipends. The ILO (2010, p.9) avers that the post-amnesty empowerment programs aim to contribute “to security and stability in a post-conflict environment so that recovery and development can begin” within the socio-economic framework. In communities undergoing reconstruction after severe conflict, high levels of unemployment among youths who have transitioned from combatants to civilians are particularly prevalent during the recovery phase. This specific issue is what reintegration initiatives seek to address. The main argument suggests that if engaging in armed conflict during civil wars is driven by economic motives, then peace-building efforts should focus on providing alternative economic opportunities, such as job training programs designed to prepare individuals for workforce participation (Munive, 2014; Umanah et al., 2023; Nte et al., 2024; Egbe, 2025).

The rationale behind this assertion is that “it is often claimed that young individuals who are poor and unemployed are more inclined to engage in fighting, rioting, theft, or joining extremist organizations” (Blattman and Ralston 2015, p.1; Allan et al., 2015; Taylor, 2020). As a result, the reintegration of former militants involves aiding their transition into civilian life by providing stable employment and income (United Nations, 2010). This initiative is expected to be bolstered by job skills training, the creation of new job opportunities, support for starting businesses, mental health assistance, and family support (Berdal 1996). Nonetheless, research indicates that reintegration initiatives frequently fail to establish enduring employment for ex-soldiers (Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Ohakam, 2018; Evans & Kelikume, 2019). The elevated unemployment rates among youth in the Niger Delta are often attributed to insufficient education and skills. Indeed, many young people involved in violent activities have cited the lack of job opportunities as a reason for their affiliation with armed groups (Oyefusi 2008, Olisemenogo et al., 2025, Obigbor, 2025). The objectives of the PAP were designed to improve access to both academic and vocational education to tackle this issue (Ajibola 2015).

The educational programs were intended to help former militants secure employment in the private sector (Kuku 2012). The socio-economic framework supporting the empowerment initiative is expected to be both inclusive and sustainable. This means that rather than merely

targeting individual ex-combatants and their leaders, the empowerment scheme should take into account the wider concerns of the impacted communities. Additionally, the initiatives were designed to benefit future generations within those communities, ensuring that they also gain from economic reintegration (ILO, 2010). If the empowered participants can attain meaningful jobs across different sectors, it will greatly address the economic needs of those who depend on the immediate beneficiaries of the initiative.

Researchers like Abonyi & Nima (2025), Jarikre (2025), and Attah (2025) have examined how the amnesty initiative was instrumental in promoting peace and supporting development following conflict in the Niger Delta. The main reason for emphasizing educational and vocational skills training in the amnesty initiative is the conviction that such training is essential for truly empowering the people of the Niger Delta. By developing these skills, many young individuals are expected to find jobs after completing their training, allowing them to provide for themselves and their families. Additionally, offering education and vocational training helps to engage young people, keeping them from being swayed by powerful external entities that frequently exploit them for their own political and personal gain. Reports show that a significant number of former fighters have completed their training programs. Over 9,192 individuals have finished skills training in diverse areas, with a particular focus on welding and fabrication, which encompasses all of these graduates. Additionally, approximately 2,204 individuals have completed entrepreneurship training, 2,798 have graduated from oil drilling courses, and 916 have participated in marine training. Among these graduates, 1,030 have finished training in crane operation and heavy machinery, 299 have completed boat building training, and 239 have gone through agriculture courses. By June 2014, the Amnesty program had trained 66 pilots for airplanes and helicopters, alongside 61 aviation maintenance engineers across various countries, including the United Kingdom, South Africa, the UAE, Jordan, and Greece. It is expected that all these graduates will play a vital role in Nigeria's economic sectors (Ebeide, 2018; Adunbi & Ololajulo, 2025; Abana et al., 2025).

Sule and Ebeh (2021) emphasize that the oil and gas industry plays a pivotal role in Nigeria's economy due to its substantial contribution to foreign earnings, and they also highlight the importance of private sector development in post-conflict scenarios across various nations. The training provided to the militants appeared to be influenced by their desires to address their perceived marginalization in essential sectors of Nigeria's economy. The oil and gas industries are highly specialized fields, especially in the areas of oil exploration and production (Akinyele, 2011). Due to the advanced and intricate machinery utilized in the oil sector, foreign personnel, commonly referred to as Multinational Oil Companies (MNOs), have largely controlled this industry. As a result, numerous policy analysts have recommended that efforts be made to foster the development of local experts who can oversee these operations when foreign workers are not available (Sule and Ebeh, 2021). Previous research has attempted to assess whether the empowerment initiatives have effectively incorporated trained youth into the essential sectors of the oil economy. Ebeide and Benson (2018) noted that one of the main reasons for the lack of employment of ex-

militants in these sectors is that the design of the reintegration program did not adequately consider the needs of private sector companies before deciding on the training for militants in formal or vocational settings. An ethnographic study by Ebeide (2017) revealed that despite the training being provided, there is a noticeable gap between what the training offered and the actual opportunities available in the South-South region of Nigeria. He also argued that the outcomes of the amnesty program in this region altered the dynamics of local governance, as ex-militants began to influence who would benefit from regional governance structures in the Niger Delta. This led the Stakeholders Democracy Networks (2021) to point out that one of the challenges facing the amnesty program is that the intended beneficiaries were not effectively reached during the delivery of empowerment initiatives. Due to the nature of the contracts available, ordinary individuals who underwent vocational training are often excluded, as they lack the connections necessary to pursue contract opportunities. It seems that these analysts miss the fundamental issues at the heart of the evaluation. The issue at hand is not whether the ex-militants have access to high-quality educational institutions; instead, the key point of debate is whether they will be able to find employment once they finish their training.

Empirical Assessment of Capacity development and the sustainable prevention of militancy in the South-South geopolitical zone

According to Morgan (2006), there are five major unique elements of capacity development, and they are:

- (i) Capacity development, which refers to the empowerment of people that allows an organisation or a system to grow and survive, and become complex. It also has to do with people acting together and taking control of their survival to achieve a societal goal.
- (ii) The ability of individuals, groups, and organizations to renew themselves. At this juncture, there is a concentration on improving the abilities and potential of individuals who make up such an organization.
- (iii) Capacity development also comes out of the dynamics involving a complex human activity, which cannot be addressed from an exclusively technical perspective.
- (iv) In most instances, capacity development entails retraining, acquiring additional skills, education, technical know-how, and exposure to different kinds of environments other than one's immediate areas of training.
- (v) Most importantly, it is about the creation of public value. This means that the essence of capacity development is to improve societal ways and manners of conducting their means of survival.

The federal government of Nigeria believed that the militarising of the Niger Delta region with different kinds of fraternal organisations is not unrelated to low capacities among the youth. See Table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Cult and Fraternal organizations banned under the Secret Cult Prohibition Law 2004

Names of the Cult groups	Names of the Cult groups	Names of the Cult groups
Agbaye	Eagle Club	Nite Hawks
Airwords	Egbe Dudu	Nite Rovers
Amazon	Eiye of Air Lords Fraternity	Odu Confraternity
Buccaneers (Sea Lords)	Elegemface	Osiri
Barracuda	Executioners	Ostrich Fraternity
Bas	Fangs	Panama Pyrate
Bees International	FF	Phoenix Predators
Big 20	Fliers	Red Devils
Black Axe	Frigates	Red Fishes
Black Beret Fraternity	Gentlemen's Club	Red Sea Horse
Black Brasserie	Green Berets Fraternity	Royal House of Peace
Black Brothers	Hard Candies	Royal Queens
Black Cats	Hell's Angels	Sailors
Black Cross	Hepos	Scavengers
Black Ladies	Himalayas	Scorpion
Black Ofals	Icelanders	Scorpion
Black Scorpions	Jaggare Confederation	Scorpion Fraternity
Black Sword	KGB	Sea Vipers
Blanchers	King Cobra	Soiree Fraternity
Black Bras	KlamKonfraternity	Soko
Blood Hunters	Klansman Ku Klux Klan	Sunmen
Blood Suckers	Knite Cade	Temple of Eden Fraternity
Brotherhood of Blood	Mafia Lords	Thomas Sankara Boys
Burkina Faso: Revolution	Mafioso Fraternity	Tikan Giants
Fraternity Canary	Malcolm X	Trojan Horses Fraternity
Cappa Vandetto	Maphites /Maphlate	Truth Seekers
Daughters of Jezebel	Mgba Mgba Brothers	Twin mate
Dey Gbam	Mob Stab	Vikings
Dey Well	Musketeers Fraternity	Vipers
Dogs	National Association of	Vultures
Dolphins	Adventurers	Walrus
Dragons	National Association of Sea	White Bishop
Dreaded Friends of Friends	Neo-Black Movement	
	Night Mates	

Source: Osaghe et al (2011, p 22)

The data in Table 1 demonstrates the existence of 94 different fraternities in the Niger Delta region contesting for supremacy. These cult activities shape both the dynamics of the local governance in various regions of the Niger Delta and determine to a large extent the nature of

individuals who engage in the national resources in that locality (Ebiede et al, 2022). The nature of their activities has no doubt foisted a climate of criminality in the region. It is therefore not surprising that within the same periods that these cult groups emerged, different kinds of criminality were reportedly linked with the above-identified Cult groups. See Table 2.

As these criminalities were going on, the administration of President Yar'adua in 2009 inaugurated the post-amnesty programme. A good number of the militants embraced the PAP and surrendered their arms and weapons. The process of disarmament, demobilisation process was designed to take the following steps:

Table 2: Skill Acquisition Programme of the Ex-militants

Area of specialisations	Number trained
Education:	
Nigerian Universities	1,620
Foreign Universities	1,454
Welding and fabrication	5,194
Entrepreneurship	2,798
Maritime	1,086
Crane and heavy-duty	1,030
Pipe lifting	250
Boat building	299
Agriculture	239
Automobile	207
Electrical installations	89
Engineers	138
Pilot fixed wing	71
Helicopter	21
Instructors	5
Diving	230
Drilling	197
Health, safety, and environment	104
Industry automation	86
Entertainment	60
Instrumentation	46

Source: Ebiede (2020)

The foregoing data presented in the foregoing tables demonstrate that there were various skill acquisition schemes and capacity building schemes that emanated from the post-amnesty initiatives. While 3074 individuals were sent out to acquire additional education in both local and foreign universities, others were trained in vocational skills such as fabrication. Still others were exposed to entrepreneurial capacity. Some of these vocational skills were meant to mainstream the trainees into the oil exploration, such as crane and heavy-duty lifting, maritime, boat building, electrical installations, and others. Within the periods that the trainings were conducted, there was a noticeable impact on the criminality in the Niger Delta as militancy abated. The relative reduction in the militancy also affected the amount of oil exploration and production in the region, thus translating to a huge amount of money for the federal government. Table 5 amplifies the changes observed in criminality and its impacts on the national economy.

Table 3: Changes in the Criminalities in the Niger Delta 2011-2015

Year	Value of oil export US\$ million)	Oil prices (US\$)	Amnesty program (US\$)	Militants Attacks	Oil producing output (thousands of barrels per day)
2011	99,878	8.704	531,720,080	0	2,550,000
2012	96,905	86.46	478,557,496	0	2,520,000
2013	97,818	91.17	407,942,541	0	2,367,000
2014	82,586	85.60	407,942,541	0	2,423,000
2015	45,365	41.85	378,918,705	0	2,317,000
2016	34,704	36.34	280,612,245	51	2,053,000

Source: Ediede (2020)

The foregoing data shows that within the first five years that the militants were engaged in skill acquisition, there was an immediate reduction in the number of criminal activities in the Niger Delta. As the column on criminality shows, there was no single reported criminality that occurred during the first five years of the amnesty programme. There was also an immediate increase in the revenue generation of the federal government of Nigeria. Nevertheless, in 2016, the story changed in a negative direction. There was no sign of sustained removal of the militancy as the year witnessed 51 different attacks by the militant groups, with immediate retraction on the amount of oil production and the revenue for the federal government of Nigeria. This development is not surprising, as 2016 witnessed the birth of another notorious militant group in the Niger Delta called the Niger Delta Avengers with a series of brutal attacks.

Discussion

A critical observation of the foregoing data indicates that the implementation of post amnesty programme in the Niger-Delta region had immediate effects both on the rural communities and the national economy. The tranquility of the community was restored for a while. During the periods of hostility in the Niger Delta, the residents were denied peace

(Nweke, 2022; Ebiede, 2022; Ogolo et al, 2024). In terms of favourable outcomes, empirical data presented also indicated that the spate of criminality, such as kidnappings and killings, had reduced, while the production of also increased. Despite the positive outcomes, low-level kidnapping, killings, and protests from disgruntled ex-militants who were not included in the DDR process continue to undermine the success of the process. This development is not unrelated to the inherent challenges associated with the conceptualisation of the programme in the first instance. For instance, those who conceptualised the programme did not care to identify the constituents of the militants at their local bases. In other words, these militants were not treated individually. The federal government approached them through a proxy. It is these proxies that determine the number of militants at any location. These proxies also determined whether a particular militant should be mobilised for capacity building and the nature of capacity building the individual should be mobilised towards accomplishing in the process. It was therefore more or less an issue of whether a particular militant is loyal to those at the helm of affairs; otherwise, they would be denied access to being part of the empowerment programmes. This critically affected the success of the programmes. The speed with which the militancy returned the moment the federal government reneged on the promises they made to the ex-militants appeared to suggest that there was already a pool of ready-made insurgents that were waiting to be deployed if the newly introduced system. These entrants were perhaps not mobilised by the federal government in the early period.

Another challenge that became obvious in the process of implementing the amnesty initiative is that these ex-militants were trained for the wrong reasons. What prompted the request of the militants to get retrained was that some of them began to romanticise the lifestyles of members of the Multi-National Corporation, and they felt that if they got training, they could also be mainstreamed into such lifestyles. But unfortunately for the ex-militants, oil exploration, production, and management are part of international politics where morality does not dictate who has a part in appropriating the resources of the state. Rather, it is dictated by the degree to which a country's means of production and the overall mode of production have reached.

As observed by Ajunwa (2011), the technical committee that recommended the introduction of a post-amnesty strategy recommended that the federal government of Nigeria adopt a bottom-up approach in the implementation of the programme. This implies that the people. Themselves, such as the market women, farmers, traditional rulers, age grade socio-cultural groups, and all the rural category determine the kind of intervention they want to be instituted at their environment, But, perhaps, due to the exigencies of the time and what was at stake, which the consistent depleting of the national economy through the militancy, the implementers failed to follow these guidelines and these affected the outcome of the post amnesty programme.

It is not out of place to contend that part of the challenges that returned the Niger Delta to the path of militancy is that criminality was more lucrative than living a normal lifestyle. The stipends that the federal government the ex-militants were enough to discourage those involved from continuing on the track of normal life. This is especially so when they consider

that state actors who are not from the Niger Delta region are living large at the expense of the resources found in their community. They would likely not distance themselves from the criminality of oil theft and other associated criminalities.

Concluding Remarks

We began by taking a historical appraisal of the efforts made by the federal government to empower the Niger-Delta since oil exploration began in their community. These efforts were to mitigate the environmental hazards that would inevitably occur in the community as a result of exploring oil in that region. The Niger Delta is a mangrove community. As a sea community, their source of livelihood revolves around fishing expeditions. We noted that the exploration of oil in these communities, which has sometimes led to the reclamation of lands for oil exploration, has deprived these communities of their critical means of livelihood. Those who did not suffer dispossession contend with the disruption that the oil spill has caused in the entire ecosystem. The oil spill has affected both the drinking water and the fish in the seas. Therefore, all the commissions set from the pre-colonial periods and the early post-colonial time, as well as the period of the military regime and during Nigeria's fourth republic, which began in 1999, are to provide commensurate compensation to the people of the Niger Delta for what they have lost. But given the character of the Nigerian state, these huge interventions ended in the private hands of those connected with the state power. The data we presented demonstrated that in the early period of the intervention, there was an amelioration of the militancy, but after some days had by, the criminality began again. This shows that there has not been a sustained redressing of the militancy in the Niger Delta by the introduction of the post-amnesty in the Niger-Delta. We recommend that the Nigerian state revisit the technical maps of the problems. Let the federal government take precious time to interact with the rural communities that bear most of the brunt of the militancy. The state should also develop the political will to develop the rural communities of the Niger Delta. Given the role the Niger Delta region plays in the national economy of Nigeria, its development and empowerment should be a national priority.

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