

## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA: A REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The activities of oil exploration by the multinational oil-company for over five decades in the Niger Delta has led to underdevelopment, environmental degradation and thus given rise to military, oil pollution, deepening poverty and sundry other challenges in the region. Militancy in the Niger delta has been having damaging effect on the economy of Nigeria and it has taken its tolls on the accrual from crude oil. In a bid to address this perennial problem, the federal government instituted presidential amnesty programme with its core elements of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to solve, if not all, the fall out of militancy in the region. The data for the study were content analysis and were derived from the available relevant secondary data. This study adopted Marxist political economy approach as its framework of analysis; it is an approach with a holistic view point on the contradictory nature of relationship that underlie social formation, the social law of distribution and production in the society. This study evaluated the presidential amnesty programme with a view to determine the extent of its implementation in the Niger Delta. It concluded that the presidential amnesty programme implemented in the Niger Delta just like other previous governments interventionist programmes, has not adequately fulfilled its stated objectives due to inherent flaws in the implementation process. The study made recommendations for the creation of more employment opportunities for the millions of jobless youths, feasible poverty reduction scheme and adoption of human security framework that is people centred in the Niger Delta.

**Keywords:** Niger Delta, Crude Oil, Underdevelopment, Militancy, Amnesty, Reintegration.

### **Introduction**

Niger Delta is an oil gas rich region that is also well endowed in biodiversity and located in the southern part of Nigeria. According to Alaimieyeseigha (2004) laid credence to the importance

of Niger Delta, by posited that oil and gas revenue from the region accounts for about 90% of Nigeria's annual income. It is deducible that, revenue from crude oil from the region remains a centrality to Nigerian federation economic survival. Dafinone (2008) laid credence to the strategic economic importance of the region, by saying that whatever happens in the Niger Delta has a direct impact on the world's energy supply.

In spite of its economic as the treasure base of Nigeria, the region could be apply described as environmental degraded, underdeveloped and violence-prone. Thus, in an attempt to break the cycle of violence, economic sabotage and also to protect oil facilities located in the region, the federal government under the administration of Late Yaradua Umaru in 2009 decided to implement presidential amnesty programme in the region. The questions arising and which may be explored as background of this study are as follows: Apart from the desire to halt miliitancy, what area the other reasons why the amnesty was adopted? What are the elements of the presidential amnesty programme? What are the Objectives/targets of each elements?

The presidential amnesty programme was a conflict transformation and management policy that was adopted by the Nigerian government in 2009 as interventionist measure to stop the acts of violence, insecurity, oil-economic sabotage and militancy been perpetrated by the restive youths in the Niger Delta because all these various acts have crippling effects on the national economic and its survival due to its oil-driven nature. In addition, the amnesty programme was adopted by the Nigerian government with the aim to address inherent and persistent developmental and environmental challenges in the region since the commencement of oil exploration in Oloibiri in 1958. Also, it was adopted as a socio-economic policy to harness the potentials and boost manpower development of the youths and people of the Niger Della. The major elements and objectives or targets of each element are encompassed within disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) framework which forms the core of the presidential amnesty programme. Several scholars and organizations have acknowledged the imperative of DDR framework as cardinal elements of amnesty. United Nations (2005), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2011), Imorgan (2015), United Nations (2000), Berdal (1996), Humprev and Winsten (2009), Muggah (2009), and Achodo (2015) have all explicitly stated it in their various literatures.

Disarmament was the starting phase and an integral element of the presidential amnesty programme that lasted between 611'August, 2009 till 4th October, 2009. It was an element that had objective of collection, control and disposal of weapons willingly submitted by the ex-militants to the armed forces representatives of the federal government. Demobilization and rehabilitation phase was another essential element of the presidential amnesty programme that lasted for twelve months. It is an element that had objectives of debriefing, guidance and counseling of ex militants in order to facilitate and enhance their adoption back into the Nigerian society.

Reintegration phase is an element that supposedly marked the concluding aspect of the amnesty programme which was stated to last for a period of five years, that is 2010- 2015. Reintegration has targeted objectives, which include acquisition of educational, technical and entrepreneurial skills by the ex-militants. Thus, this is to enable the ex-militants fit in socially and economically, be productive and serve as change facilitators in their various oil-producing communities in post-amnesty Niger Delta.

In the course of the discourse, the aforementioned reasons, elements and the objectives of each element would be evaluated vis-a-vis the implementation of amnesty programme in Nigeria. Oil wealth derived from the various oil fields in the Niger Delta has enhanced the prosperity and socio-economic development attained by the Nigerian-state in the last five decades, paradoxically, it has unfavourable impacts on the well-being and the development of the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta. Several scholars and researchers in the field of political science, peace and conflict studies, sociology and development studies have identified various problems especially underdevelopment and environmental pollution as a result of oil production, militancy, the struggle for resource, control and self-determination by the people of the Niger Delta( Ikelegbe ,2005;Obi,2010; Oluwaniyi,2011).

In addition, the various interventionists programmes embarked upon by the Nigerian state to provide remedy and lasting solutions to the various insecurity, environmental and socioeconomic problems confronting the people of the Niger Delta have not provided the expected dividend to the people as a result of corruption, misplaced priority and the inability to generate feedback through effective evaluation of such programmes by the federal government. Thus, without feedback mechanism such programmes could not be properly evaluated for the benefits of the oil-producing communities in the region.

Key and Phillips (2007) explicitly stated that 1.5 million tons of oil has spilled into the Niger Delta over the past fifty years, making the region one of the five most polluted location on earth. It is unarguable that exploration of crude oil and gas in commercial quantities has been more of a curse than a blessing to the people of Niger Delta.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The political economy approach by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels remains a reference point and the classical basis of analyzing the nature of society and politics. According to Marx and Engels (1848) the history of all hitherto society existing society is the history of class struggles. In addition, they postulated that human actions and social institutions are economically determined would serve the basis of theoretical framework of this research study. It is an approach which is based on historical materialism and takes into consideration the social

relations, class struggle and the relationship between the economy and politics. Several scholars have further buttressed the Marxian Perspective of the Political economy. Lange (1974), Ihonvbere (1989), Anifowose and Enemuo (1999), all these scholars takes into consideration the interconnection of social relations, class conflict and the organic relationship between the sub-structure (economy) and the superstructure (politics) and concluded that it is the economy which determines the politics.

The pattern of social relations, underdevelopment and agitation for resource control by the people of Niger Delta and the over-centralized and dominant nature of the federal government coupled with the exploitative tendency of the oil- multinational companies in the region can be situated within the political economy analysis.

The political economy approach provides theoretical underpinning of Nigerian state over dependency on oil- driven and rentier economy, oil-related conflicts, militancy and the neglect suffered by the oil-producing communities in the region within the framework of Nigerian federation.

Summary of Previous Federal Government Interventions in the Niger Delta Prior to the implementation of the presidential amnesty programme in 2009 in the Niger Delta, the federal government of Nigeria had earlier implemented various socio-economic, environmental and sustainable interventionist policies in the region as panacea to address the myriads of developmental challenges in the Niger Delta.

Ajibola (2015) and Imoukhuede *and Akinkurolere* (2011) identified the various development-oriented interventionists efforts in the Niger Delta by successive administrations in Nigeria such as, Willink's Commission of 1958, the 1960 Niger Delta River Basin Development Authorities of 1980, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission of 1992, the Niger Delta Development Commission of 2000 and the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry by the federal government in 2009.

It is unarguable that all theses previous interventionists programmes by the federal government have failed to allay the fear of domination of the minorities oil producing ethnic groups in the Niger Delta; they were unable to provide lasting solutions to the neglect, underdevelopment, poverty, environmental degradation, violence and militancy in the region. These failures and policy inadequacies could be attributed to insincerity, corruption and superficial nature of such programmes which ultimately in reality do not achieve stated objectives. Also, Okonta (2000) acknowledged that previous attempt at tackling the problems of The "Mitee's led the' Niger Delta – Technical Committee made are commendation for an increase allocation derive from oil and

gas revenue specifically - to the Niger Delta states up to the tune of 25% within a framework that would be dedicated to establish new infrastructures and sustainable development of the region.

### **Generation of Employment for the Youths in the Niger Delta**

The report of the Niger Delta Technical Committee made a recommendation that target holistic youth employment in the Niger Delta, thus, ;if recommended the establishment of a direct labour Youth Employment Scheme (YES) which would entails the involvement of the states and local governments /in the Niger Delta that will employ minimum of two thousands youths per local government in the region.

### **Security Reform**

The committee in its wisdom realizes and lay emphasis-on the-need for peace and security of the Niger Delta. Thus, it made recommendation to improve to improve the- integrity and operations of security forces in the region, re-orientate "the "military "and-eliminate all forms of abuses' by security organizations and assures smooth business, operations by organizations. All this are to ensure demilitarization-, sensitization and accountability of all security operatives- in the Niger Delta.

### **Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta**

Amnesty refers to a pardon for wrong doing or willingness by government of a nation to overlook and forgive an-offender. Brvan (2009) conceptualized amnesty as a pardon extended by the; government to a group or class of persons usually for a political offence or as the .act of-a sovereign power-officially forgiving certain classes of persons who are subject to trial but have not yet been convicted.

In an attempt to provide a nonviolent counter insurgent policy as a solution to 'the . economic sabotage, bunkering, insecurity, crisis of poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, Late Musa Yaradua granted sixty days unconditional amnesty period between 6<sup>th</sup> August to. 4<sup>th</sup> October2009 to militants: who are willing-today down their arms eschew militancy and embrace amnesty programme' of the, federal government., Ibadan (2011 acknowledge that the United Nations and other similar bodies have applied amnesty as an instrument for .achieving sustainable peace. The presidential amnesty programme in Nigeria has its basic goal to contribute to security and stabilization in the Niger Delta through disarmament, rehabilitation, and sustainable re-integration of ex-militants as a precondition for medium and long-term development in the region.

The presidential amnesty programme in the Niger Delta was based on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration agenda. Thus, it was patterned along the United Nations conflict transformation programme (United Nations 2005), The three key aspect of disarmament demobilization and reintegration are as follows.

**Disarmament:** Is the collection documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition explosives light and heavy weapons of combatants and often from civilian population.

**Demobilization:** Is the formal and control discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups.

**Reintegration:** Is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income.

**Table I: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Agenda of Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta.**

<b>Disarmament</b>	<b>Demobilization</b>	<b>Reintegration</b>
Duration; August 6 <sup>th</sup> October 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2009.	Rehabilitation Duration: 6 12 months	Duration: Up to 5 years
<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Key Activities,</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
Collection of Arms and Ammunition, explosives etc.	Ex-militants reports to Camp	Knowledge and skills acquisition
Documentation and Biometrics	Verification and Documentation .	Financial empowerment
	Transformational training	Micro-credit
	Peace building and conflict resolution	Reconciliation with local community
	Counseling	Conflict resolution framework

<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
	Career guidance	Mechanism
	Wellness assessment	Monitoring and evaluation
	Reintegration classification	Exit of amnesty
	Education and vocational placement	
	Graduation and demobilization	
<b>Key Enablers</b>	<b>Key Enablers</b>	<b>Key Enablers</b>

Disarmament camps	Transformational training centres	Partnering government agencies, NGOs and private organizations
Massive campaign	Rehabilitation camps	Tracking and support framework

**Source:** Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta,

**Table II: Participants’ Demography of Ex-Militants**

SN	STATES	MALE	FEMALE	REGISTERED
1	Akwalbom	155	8	163
2	Bayelsa	6500	61	6961
3	Cross River	159	1	160
4	Delta	3361	-	3361
5	Edo	450	-	450
6	Imo	297	3	300
7	Ondo	1198	2	1200
8	NDDC	571	19	600
Total		20049	113	20192

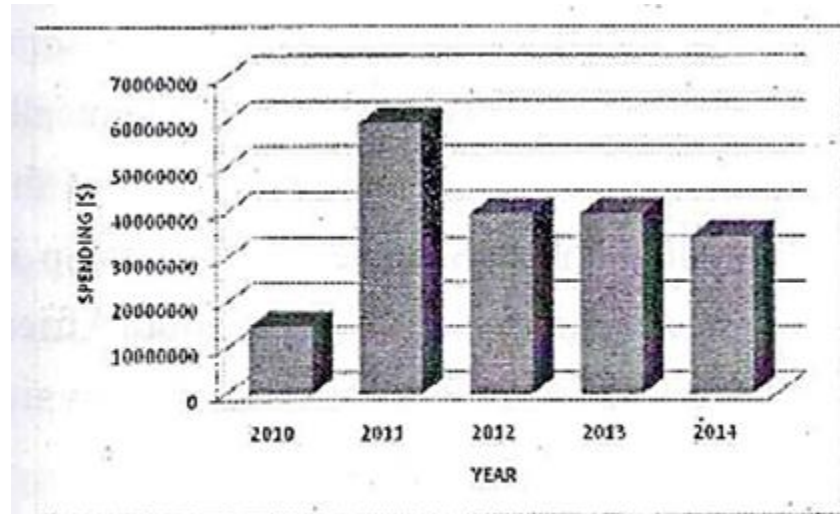
**Source:** Imoukhuede and Akinkurolere (2011),

**Table III: Ex-Militants Trained in Vocational Skills**

SN	SKILLS	NUMBERS
1	Agriculture	239
2	Automobile	207
3	Welding and Fabrication	2204
4	Entrepreneurship	2998
5	Capentry and Plumbing	298
6	Oil drilling and Marine	916
7	Electrical Installation	89
8	Information Communication Technology	273
9	Crane and Heavy Duty Machine	1030
10	Boat Building	299
11	Pipe fitting	250
12	Entertainment	60
13	Others	618
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9192</b>

**Source:** Ikelegbe and Umokoro (2014).

**Chart I: Nigeria Presidential Amnesty Budgetary Allocation 2010 2014**



**Source:** Kuku, K (2014).

### **ANALYSIS**

The various tables and charts in this section of the study illustrate and indicate the total number of ex-militants that have embraced the presidential amnesty programme under the framework of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the Niger Delta. Also, it shows the statistics of total number of ex-militants that have been trained and given education and vocational placement and the billions of naira that have been expended under the presidential amnesty scheme in the Niger Delta by the federal government of Nigeria.

### **Evaluation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta, Nigeria**

Evaluation is the major aspect or theme of the research work, it is an attempt to appraise through the systematic and objective assessment of the presidential amnesty programme in the Niger Delta between 2009-2015. UNODC (2016) defined evaluation as a systematic and objective assessment of on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. Evaluation is highly imperative in nature and it allows for the opportunity to enable the government to get a feedback about the success or failure of the socio-economic programme implemented by the government. Adelabu (2016) acknowledged the imperative of evaluation. According to him, an essential ingredient in the measurement of a nation's development, it is the ability to get every process evaluated objectively to ensure relevance in terms of content and delivery system.



The presidential amnesty program is unique in nature and a pragmatic effort by the Nigerian government towards conflict transformation through non-violent measure. Ushie (2013) viewed the amnesty programme as a sharp departure from the typical use of state violence to suppress dissent and signified a realization that the Niger Delta crisis required a democratic, participatory solution and not one that legitimized militarization and brutal oppression of impoverished maritime communities. Over twenty thousands of ex-militants that laid down their arms and embraced peace within the sixty days ultimatum of surrendering willingly were given unconditional pardon as freemen under the presidential amnesty programme in the Niger Delta.

In addition the Nigerian government earmarked for ex-militants amount of sixty five thousand naira monthly for three months of post-amnesty period for their sustenance in order to realize the stated objectives of the presidential amnesty programme in - the Niger Delta. These process were imperative towards debriefing, retraining and reintegration of the repentant militants back to the civil society which they have hitherto turned their back on. Thus, they were major preconditions of addressing socio-economic challenges in the region.

In furtherance of the implementation of the presidential amnesty programme, the ex-militants were also trained in areas of vocational skills such as oil drilling and marine, welding and fabrication, agriculture, plumbing, information communication and technology. Also, some of the ex-militants that were academically inclined were given the opportunity of full schooling through amnesty scholarship in overseas tertiary institutions in South Africa, United Kingdom, Russia, Malaysia, Singapore etc.

In evaluating the implementation of the presidential amnesty programme in Nigeria since its inception in late 2009, the programme has contributed towards relative peace till 2015 in the region. It led to reduction in bombing, kidnapping, destruction of oil facilities in the Niger Delta. Scholars like Ojione (2013) and Imongan(2015) agreed that there were series of attacks on oil facilities on oil facilities and installations by militants which drastically brought down oil production to 700,000 barrels in 2009 but the post amnesty production level has significantly risen to about 2.6 million barrels per day.

Thus, the amnesty programme has enhanced stability in oil production in Nigeria.

Anatsui and Fagbemi (2014) further identified the strengths of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, noting that the amnesty promoted active listening, assertive communication and affirming environment of dialogue, circulation of illegal weapons was reduced, if not eliminated and also promoted reconciliation between the militants and the offended residents who want peace to reign. Thus, the presidential amnesty programme by its implementation has immensely paved way for relative peace, reduction in the destruction of oil facilities and militancy in the

Niger Delta. The presidential amnesty programme allowed room for communication and negotiation among the various stakeholders boosted the hope for a peaceful and prosperous Niger Delta.

However, the presidential amnesty programme in its implementation in the Niger Delta suffered policy inadequacy at addressing holistically the issue of insecurity, environmental and socio-economic challenges confronting the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. In addition, the amnesty programme failed to fulfilled its vision statement of a Niger Delta region populated with modern cities with leading edge environmental management practices, economic prosperity, health people and social harmony because the region remains poverty stricken and environmentally degraded.

Several critics were raised against the poor impact of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. Oluwatoyin (2011), observed that major critical issues such as the roots of alienation, marginalization, exploitation, corruption, unemployment, poverty, youth and women's issues are still not dealt with and they jeopardize the possibility of future peace, security and development in the Niger Delta region. The presidential amnesty programme in its approach and implementation was unable to bring all stakeholders on board especially the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), one of the major militant groups in the region. This scenario constitutes serious threats to peace and security in the region. Also, it heightened fears that the amnesty programme had only secured temporary peace which may not be enduring in the region.

The presidential amnesty programme in its implementation in the Niger Delta suffered policy inadequacy and was unable to address holistically the challenges of environmental pollution and socio-economic problems confronting the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta.

Several criticisms were raised against the poor implementation of the presidential amnesty programme in the region. Oluwatoyin (2011), observed that major critical issues such as the roots of alienation, marginalization economic exploitation, unemployment, corruption, poverty, youth and women's issues are still not dealt with and they jeopardize the possibility of future peace, security and development in the Niger Delta region.

Another inherent weakness of the presidential amnesty programme is the fact that it was a top-down approach by the Nigerian government and the militant commanders, while the majority of ex-militant foot soldiers were cut off in the sharing formula of contracts and monetary compensation. This scenario provoked anger among the ex-militant and further pose as threats to peace and security in the Niger Delta.

Another major flaw of the presidential amnesty programme in its implementation is the inability of the representative of the federal government to bring all stakeholders on board especially the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other major militant groups in the region. This scenario constitutes serious threats to peace and security in the region. This error of omission heightened fears of the people that the amnesty programme had only secured temporary peace which may not be enduring in the Niger Delta.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the course of the study, it is deducible that the problems of militancy, violence, insecurity, underdevelopment and environmental pollution in the Niger Delta arose due to the collective failure and compromise of the Nigerian state, the ruling elites in the oil producing states and the multinational oil companies to address with sincerity the socio-economic challenges in the Niger Delta.

Also, it is obvious that the availability of abundant crude oil and gas and its exploration and production has not been of actual immense benefits to the people in the Niger Delta and the previous efforts of the federal government at providing interventionist programme has not achieved its stated objectives in the region. They were not holistic in nature and only served as symptomatic relief and not a lasting solution to the problems of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the findings of the study, the following feasible policy options are hereby recommended as a way forward at complimenting the efforts of the presidential amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. It is imperative that the Nigerian government need to implement and not isolate the recommendations of the Ledum Mitee's Technical Report which was the road map for the presidential amnesty programme. The Ledum Mitee's Technical Report which was submitted in 2009 to the federal government which was holistic in nature and aimed to provide lasting solution to development challenges in the Niger Delta.

In addition, the issue of security of all stakeholders in the region should remain paramount, that is oil-producing communities, people and oil facilities in the region. It is imperative to enhance security, thus the Nigerian government must implement human security framework in the Niger Delta. This is in tandem with Deepayan cited in Imoukhuede (2013), which posits that human security is people-centered, multidimensional, interconnected and universal in nature. Efforts should be made to approach diplomatically and bring on board all other aggrieved militants and stakeholders and accommodate them within an extended amnesty programme with a definite

time-frame. This approach will make those that are aggrieved to embrace peace and work towards security and development of the Niger Delta.

The presidential amnesty programme must be successively built on to continually address the challenges of governance in the Niger Delta region; Thus, without addressing and providing solutions to the challenges of governance in the region, the federal government of Nigeria would only be at risk of re-escalation of violence, insecurity and militancy in the Niger Delta.

On a final analysis, opportunities for entrepreneurship scheme and employment both at private and public enterprises should be provided for the beneficiaries of the presidential amnesty programme. This approach should be targeted those ex-militants that have gained both vocational empowerment and educational training through the amnesty programme, this is in order to allow their empowerment to have positive linkages and value.

The presidential amnesty programmed must be successively built on to continually address the challenges of governance in the Niger Delta region; Thus, without addressing and providing solutions to the challenges of governance in the region, the federal government of Nigeria would only be at risk of re-escalation of violence, insecurity and militancy in the Niger Delta.

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