

THE NIGER DELTA AND SECURITY CHALLENGES: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE  
AMNESTY PROGRAMME

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Abstract

*Nigeria's Niger Delta has been a subject of public discuss for several reasons. The explorational activities of multinational oil companies paid off in 1956 when oil was discovered in commercial quantity at Oloibiri. This discovery paved the way for exploitation activities that has affected the area in different ways. The Niger Delta people are of the view that they have contributed so much to the development of the nation without a corresponding attention in terms of development. To draw the Federal Government's attention to their plight, they have employed dialogue, propaganda, peaceful demonstration around the oil producing company's premises, vandalization of oil pipelines and lately kidnapping of oil company workers and their spouses or children and even wealthy Nigerians for ransom. It is this latter option of kidnapping and hostage taking that the Nigerian Government has tagged "Militancy" and has done a lot to douse or stop because of tis negative effect on the finances of the country. President Umaru Musa Yaradua took a bold step by granting unconditional amnesty to all Niger Delta Militants. As noble as the amnesty programme seemed and the achievement it has recorded, critiques mostly those from the Niger Delta have picked holes in the execution of the amnesty programme with particularly attention on the aims of its founders and ultimately posit if it has actually addressed the security challenges prevalent in the Niger Delta before the granting of the amnesty.*

JEL CODE 58 -SE

I. Introduction

Prior to the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the Niger Delta had a richly blessed soil, flora and fauna really favoured the region to be one of the best zones in the African sub-region, and this provided the basis on which the local economies effectively grew in agriculture and fishing. The production of palm oil and timber made this region strategic for both domestic and international trades. The people traded within and with distant neighbours. Before the arrival of the Portuguese on the shores of the Niger Delta, the Delta was majorly inhabited by the Ijaw people who lived in small, scattered fishing villages in tidal zones. Most of those from the North-west, claimed that they migrated from Benin, or rather away from Benin dominations. The migration history of the people will be better explained in the background history of the people.

At the domestic front, there were trade relations among the ethnic groups. For instance, in the Western Niger Delta. While the Ijaws were known for boat construction, canoes, paddles and sale of such articles of trade to other groups, the Iteskiri sold to the urhobhos and the Isokos, salt and fish, mat and earthen pots because of their proximity to water bodies. In return, both the Ijaws and the Iteskiris got their food stuff i.e. yam, maize, pepper, starch, bush-meat, cocoyam from both the Urhobo and Isoko groups. The group relations amongst the Niger Delta people will be better appreciated when the geography and the background of the people is known.

II. Niger Delta: Background, Geography and People

The Niger Delta is a region of paradox. This is so because different authorities have given different definition to the area. Ogbari submits that:

*The word Niger Delta is derived from the*

*River Niger, the longest river in the West African sub-region whose origin is traceable to the West African country of Guinea. p.2*

The Delta is a geographical landscape taking the shape of a triangle where a river through many branches and tributaries enters a sea. Therefore, the Niger delta is the region where the River Niger runs into the Atlantic Ocean through many tributaries, creeks and creeklets (Ogbari: Economic History of the Niger Delta: p.2) .

Hamadina and Nyananyo see the Niger Delta as formed from fluvo-marine deposit during the upper Cretaceous occasioned by the low-lying topography and meandering of the resultant tributaries of the River Niger-Benue and Niger-Benue/Orashi (Niger Delta Environment as Result and Reserve p.1).

Ibaba puts it more succinctly when he quotes the world bank report as:

*One of the world's largest wetlands, and Africa's largest delta covering some 70,000km formed the accumulation of sedimentary deposits transported by the Niger and Benue Rivers. (p.10)*

The Niger Delta contains a number of distinct ecological zones as coastal ridges, barriers, fresh water swamp forest and lowland rainforest.

A geo-political definition of the region states that the Niger Delta the region that borders the coastal waters of the Atlantic includes the oil producing states such as Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross rivers, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers States.

Sociologically the region would be defined as a society with people whose major economic activities revolves around coastal waters; they are the people who possess similar cultural similarities and relative convergence of history. The major economic activities of the people of this region include; fishing, farming and hunting. Though, fishing happens to be the most conspicuous economic activity among the major ethnic groups, Ijaw and Ilajes who are particularly known for their prowess in fishing will stand out in the fishing areas. In terms of the economic potentialities of the Niger Delta region, the region is said to have been the bedrock of Nigeria's gross domestic product since the time oil was first discovered, and exported into the metropolitan countries. **(Ngiabunagha: Yenagoa: 20 February, 2018).**

The broader Niger Delta region which includes all oil producing areas and others considered relevant for reason of administrative convenience, political expedience and development objectives, extends the land area to 75,000sq. The Niger Delta region is extremely heterogeneous with respect to the culture and ethnicity. The five major linguistic and cultural groups and the Ijaw, Edo Delta, Yoruba and Igbo each composed of numerous sub-groups of the region. The Ijaws, who are said to have the longest settlement history in the Niger Delta, are the most complex linguistically. Each of the numerous clans of this groups have some linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. In certain cases, villages in the same clan have linguistic differences. This groups which occupies virtually the whole of Bayelsa State is also found in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Edo and Ondo States.

Historically, it consists of the present day Bayelsa State and Rivers State. In the year 2000, however, President Obasanj's regime included Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross-River, Edo, Imo and Ondo States. Some 31 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups including the Bini, Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Iteskiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwani and Kalabari are among the inhabitants of the Niger Delta also known as the South-South Zone which includes present day Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States. The Niger Delta States lie in the area between the estuaries of the Bini Rivers to the West and the Cross River east of the Niger.

### **The Discovery of Oil in the Niger Delta**

Since the discovery of oil at Oloibiri, the Niger Delta has served as a major export zone in the oil production in Africa and the entire world. Interest in Nigeria Oil originated in 1914 with an ordinance making any oil and mineral rendered Nigeria soil legal property of the crown. By 1938, the Colonial government had granted the state sponsored company, SHELL monopoly over exploration of all minerals

and petroleum throughout the entire colony. In 1958, the company discovered oil in commercial quality at Oloibiri. The Oloibiri oilfields were quickly extracted and they were dried off. Nothing of tangible nature was put back in the place to indicate that "petrodollars" were carted away by the Federal Government and shell oil company. What could be said to be the only significance was a fenced land meant for the development of an oil museum which has not been done. The Ogoni and all other communities wherever oil was found had the same fate. Shell and the Federal Government recklessly exploited crude oil. High pressured pipelines are laid in their numbers on earth surface and at close proximity of human habitations.

Since oil exploration and exploitation began in the Niger Delta, there has been drastic changes in almost every sphere of the very existence of the Niger Delta. The impact of oil exploration and exploitation is served in environment, economic, and political angles of the region. Economically, the Niger Delta to some extent can be said to have some level of improvement (development) with the advent of oil exploration. There has been increased revenue allocation and the economic base and wealth of the region has experience a relative increase. However, the concentration which is now wholly on oil resulted to the neglect of other aspects of the economy base like agricultural, fishing etc. This is a step in the wrong direction because a productive and solid economy is supposed to be diversified and not centered on only one sector, Nigeria is now a mono-cultural economy. The cocoa and palm oil plantations as well as the groundnut pyramids that sustained the various regions before the discovery of oil have all disappeared. One major impact of oil in the economy of the Niger Delta is that it has led to the neglect of the other sectors of the economy. (Ogbari: p.21).

Environmentally, the region has suffered greatly, the most dangerous impact of oil exploration and exploitation is the environmental impact which has greatly affected on the population of Niger Delta. It is a matter of urgent concern what oil spillages has caused on the livelihood in the Niger Delta, not to mention that of gas flaring. Oil spillages destroyed aquatic life, killed fishes and other marine resources it also polluted the water and render it unfit for drinking because of some water borne diseases like typhoid, cholera etc. Oil spillage also affects the soil by contaminating it and making it unfit for agricultural purposes. This in turn affects the agricultural output of the Niger Delta region High presumed pipelines are laid in their numbers on the earth surface and at close proximity of human habitation. This resulted and is still resulting to environmental hazards which includes but not limited to incessant oil spills from corrosive, outdated pipes exposed to the sun and other natural agents. This has resulted in serious health and environmental challenges. Excessive gas flaring by Shell and other multi-national companies, which has been a major global concern, has caused untold havoc and hardship to the region.

Oil has managed to creep into the area of politics, wilding its influences in an unsuspecting manner with the wealth generated from oil, that single direction literally blinding their sight towards the nations agenda. Today, there is power play in both federal and state levels just to gain control of oil wealth. Leaders have lost track of their political purposes because of the quest and love for oil wealth. These multi-national oil companies sometimes carryout their operations with the confidence of impunity bestowed on them by the Political leaders.

The wealth from the oil resources became so attractive that one can rightly say that the purposeful minded leaders become entrenched into corrupt practices all because of oil money. Like a "cancerous tumor", corruption practically became one of the fundamental objectives of state policies in Nigeria.

### **Militancy and Amnesty in the Niger Delta**

For a proper appreciation of this subject-matter it is necessary to consider two major issues, the Niger Delta struggle and the Amnesty programme. Niger Delta struggle was as a result of perceived marginalization, poverty and the Negative impact of oil exploration and exploitation in the region. The Niger Delta struggle started with the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in present day Bayelsa state of Nigeria, the first place where oil was struck in commercial quantity in 1956. It is not only said but also heartbreaking to note that despite the fact that the region provides almost 90% of the nation's resource (oil) and revenue, 75% of the Niger Delta indigenes that are living in the rural areas are without pipe borne water, electricity, roads and health centers. The whole region is devastated by oil exploration and exploitation, water pollution as a result of daily oil spillage and the air poisoned by external gas flares. This situation led the people of the region to do something to draw attention to their plight. It brought about militant groups who through their activities drew government's attention to the region, and form part of the root causes

of what have today become known as the Niger Delta struggle. It is argued that since oil became the main stay of the Nigerian economy since 1956, the derivation principle reduced from 50% to 0% which the Niger Delta people saw as grossly unfair and as an “insult” to the sensibility of the Niger Delta people. This perceived injustice led the Niger Delta people to use different antics to draw the attention of the government to its plight but failed on several occasions. It was the frustration arising from this perceived injustice that led Isaac Adaka Boro to revolt against the Nigerian government in what is popularly termed the twelve day revolution. The revolution was able to bring the government to understand the frustration of the Niger Delta people but did nothing significant to change it. The renewed wave of agitation from youths of the region is what the Nigerian government refers to as “militancy” but the people from the region prefers to call it “the Niger Delta Struggle”. It is also argued by political analysts that the Nigerian civil war that raged from 1967 to 1970 was actually a fight to control the wealth deposited in the Niger Delta soil.

### **Oil and Violence in the Niger Delta**

Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri and many other parts of the Niger Delta, there have been repeated incidence of oil related violence in the region because of the insensitivity of multinational oil companies to the plight of the people in regards to job opportunities, environmental degradation and the activities of the military. Oil has undermined the local economies of the Niger Delta without the provision of viable alternatives and at the same time, modern development has eluded the people from the oil wealth. Indeed, the oil industry has not only fallen short of people’s expectations but has dashed the hope and aspirations of many who were expecting improvement in their living conditions and this has led to series of protest and violence. At the moment, it has climaxed to stoppages, blockages and sabotage of oil installations and kidnapping of oil company staff as well as highly placed government officials. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) being the flag-bearer of non-violence in the Niger Delta stated her approach through the instrumentality of the Ogoni Bill of Right (OBR) which she submitted to the Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida. MOSOP as the Ogoni’s were known has used the non-violence considered and accepted notwithstanding that the leadership was fully aware that in their non-violent struggle, more people died than in armed struggle of which its leader Kenule Besson Saro-Wiwa and eight others paid the supreme price. Even after the death of prominent Ogoni sons by the Abacha’s Administration, MOSOP has continued to preach peace and dialogue as a panacea of resolution of dispute in her dealings with the Federal government and Shell Development Company.

However, due largely to government’s antics of divide and rule in dealing with the Niger Delta people and the agitations from the Niger Delta “Militants” whose activities affected the oil production and ultimately the finances of the nation, the President Umaru Musa Yaradua’s administration introduced the amnesty programme.

### **The Amnesty Programme**

The President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yaradua on June 25, 2009, proclaimed a sixty (60) day unconditional amnesty period for militants in the Niger Delta as a step towards resolving the protracted insecurity in the region to both lives and properties and ultimately the Nigerian economy. The terms of the amnesty include the willingness and readiness of militants to surrender their arms, and unconditionally renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect (Amnesty Document). In return, the government pledged its commitment to institute programmes to assist their disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and provision of reintegration assistance to the militants. The amnesty with all its hiccups began on August 6, 2009 and lasted till October 4, 2009 giving the militants a 60-day period within which to lay down their arms and embrace the amnesty. Disarmament camps were established by the military in various locations in the Niger Delta with Enugu as the Operational Headquarters known as “Inter Agency Coordinating Centre (ICC)” where the operations and logistics for the amnesty process were coordinated. The inter-agency coordinating centre was headed by the Chief Coordinator, Air Marshal L.O. Ararile whose duties included amongst other things to provide the operational capacity to maintain effective coordination of the various camps. At the end of the

amnesty period, an estimated 20,192 militants registered and 3,760 weapons of various caliber and types were collected. Also collected were 18 gunboats and 387, 445 rounds of ammunitions (see Table 1 of the Presidential Amnesty Documents on its Operational Strategy). Having “successfully” gone through the disarmament stage of the amnesty, President Yaradua went ahead to setup a Presidential Committee headed by Maj. Gen. Godwin Abbe (rtd.) to handle the post-amnesty programme. The committee spent six months without achieving its mandate and was set aside at the removal of Maj. Gen. Abbe (rtd.) as minister of Defense in March, 2010. Emphasis however is that whereas the repentant militants, having played their part of disarming were kept in camps, hostels and amongst civil populace without any form of rehabilitation. Naturally, what this portrayed was that the ex-militants as they were called by the government were left without much supervision which consequences will be considered later in this paper.

However, the six months of Maj. Gen. Abbe’s committee’ non-functional supervision of the amnesty coincided with the death of President Umaru Musa Yaradua on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010. On assumption of office as Nigeria’s President on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in his maiden broadcast to the nation vowed to continue with the visionary programmes of the late President, one of which was the amnesty programme. In line with his pronouncement, President Jonathan in June, 2010, handed over the reins of leadership of the Presidential Committee on Amnesty to Chief Timi Alaibe with the mandate to decisively implement the post-amnesty programme to its logical conclusion without any further delay. The committee commenced work in June, 2010. The programme was conceived for implementation in the following phases:

1. **Disarmament/documentation and biometrics.**
2. **Demobilization and rehabilitation with priority given to women and children (7 months).**
3. **Reintegration activities (1-12 months except formal education, 1-4 years).**
4. **Wider development activities in line with the medium and long term national development framework (7 years) (see P4 of Presidential Amnesty Document).**

If the amnesty implementation had been followed by the committee as it was outlined, perhaps the last aspect of this effort would have been strictly talking of the positive aspect of the amnesty. Most of the militants after undergoing the disarmament/documentation as well as the biometric exercise were left to their fate. An experience by an ex-militant known as “Mr. Fix-it” as narrated to a pastor revealed that he came out from the creeks with his boss who for his influence was kept comfortably while most of his followers did not even have a place to sleep. The implication as he himself proffered was that he had to do anything to sustain himself. For those living in the Niger Delta mostly in Bayelsa State can attest to the fact that the “ex-militants” have severally taken to the major roads to inflict all sorts of pains on innocent citizens at any slight provocation. People are dispossessed of their valuables sometimes with the law enforcement officers helplessly watching. In most cases, the law enforcement agencies appeal to the ex-militants for them to leave the roads. Sometimes, it takes two to three hours of intimidation of innocent citizens before the militants finally yield to the appeals for them to leave the road. It is this aspect that has necessitated a review on the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria with its prospect and effects properly highlighted.

### **III. Implementation of the Amnesty Programme**

Before now, poverty, illiteracy and high rate of criminal activities ranging from piracy, armed robbery, oil pipeline vandalism and incessant attack on oil pipelines and platforms were the order of the day in the Niger Delta region. Criminal activities in the Niger Delta region resulting from the oil production which is the main source of revenue generation dropped to an all-time low rate of 70,000 barrels per day. This drop in oil production affected the Nigerian economy drastically.

The government of President Umaru Yaradua after weighing several options settled for the amnesty programme. So the first phase of the amnesty programme was actually started and supervised by President Yaradua before his demise. However, President Goodluck Jonathan, whom took over from Umaru Yar’adua as the President of Nigeria after the articulation of the Amnesty, decided to implement it. Thus, three years after the amnesty programme for Niger Delta militants, the man of the helm of its affairs, Kingsley Kuku, attributed the Glory to President Goodluck Jonathan, whom he said had pursued the programme with single-minded tenacity. The implementation of the programme has seen the growth of oil production in the Niger Delta region from a mere 700,000 barrels per day at the peak of the crisis in

the Niger Delta area to 2.6million barrels per day and a leap of its earnings. The militants who had been targeting oil installations apart from engaging in other forms of activities that made the area unsafe to live and do business were supposed to be rehabilitated in all ramifications. This was to be done using various institutions in Nigeria and abroad where they will learn both formal and informal skills. Several of the ex-militants went through various forms of skills acquisition training or formal education in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The career choices selected by the delegates, ranges from heavy duty operations, welding, agriculture, boat building, oil and gas techniques, entrepreneurship, automobile technology and aviation amongst others. The amnesty programme's trainees spread across the globe and 36 local training institutions in 10 states of the federation. No fewer than 5,067 of the skills acquisition fields such as 'welding and fabrication 1,847 entrepreneurship 1,607 pipeline fitting 150 carpentry and plumbing 206, oil drilling 32 electrical installation, 232 ict 125 marine relate courses 564 others 302. This study cannot get an accurate number of the ex-militants so far rehabilitated. Already, 95 delegates have been offered direct employment in various governmental and private establishments. Besides, the amnesty programme office is putting finishing touches to monitoring programmes that would see many of the graduates becoming self-employed and employ other youths. In addition, 6,280 delegates had already been processed for deployment to local and foreign training institutions to undergo courses ranging from aviation technicians, oil and gas technicians, marine technicians, entrepreneurial development programmes as well as formal education.

The implementation of the amnesty programme has resulted in the creating of peace and serenity in the region which has led to the production of between 2.4 million barrels of crude oil per day as against the abysmally low figure of between 700,000 and 8000,000 barrels per day at the peak of the Niger Delta Crisis in January, 2009.

#### **Achievements of the Amnesty Programme**

At the wake of 2009, militancy in the Niger Delta had reached its apogee and had virtually crippled Nigeria's economy. Investment inflow to the upstream sub-sector of the oil industry had dwindled drastically. The frequency of hostage taking and violation of oil facilities had reached on frightening dimension. Invariable foreign investors felt that since Nigeria's capacity as Africa's largest crude oil producer had been threatened Angola and Ghana and South Africa were preferred as investment destination to Nigeria. Intense militancy reduced, Shell Petroleum Development Company's Production dropped from one million BPD to about 250,000 bpd. Other oil major multinationals such as Exxonmobile, Total, Elf and Nigerian Agip Oil Company also experienced frightened violation of their facilities. Oil workers' union often embarked on strike to protest in secure working environment or the release of kidnapped workers. In 2008 alone, it was estimated that Nigeria lost over 31million Naira as a result of militancy in Niger Delta. Accordingly, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on June 25, 2009, proclaimed and granted unconditional amnesty included the willingness and readiness of militants to surrender their arms, renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect. In return, the government pledged its commitment to institute programs to assist the demobilization and rehabilitation and reintegration of repented militants.

The Amnesty Programme as headed by Kingsely Kuku, has attracted a high number of commendations due to its achievements. The Amnesty Programme has created tremendous impacts in terms of trained Niger Delta Youths and enhancing their capacities for a re-engineered economy in the region and by extension Nigeria. The Amnesty programme has been the most aggressive in terms of human capacity building in all ramifications. The Amnesty Programme has ensured that compatriots now see themselves as part of the society to which they have committed their time, talent and energy to serve. It has not only arrested the intermittent war in the creeks, but has also reintegrated old enemies into the society. It has also added to the productive capacity of the nation by on listing hitherto parasitic segments of the society to contribute their quota to society. This is rare in the annals of Nigeria, indeed African history, revering a for long situation that threatened to put an end to the notion of Nigeria as a nation. Women from Oil producing communities of the Niger Delta region, under the auspicious of Women Initiatives for Values Empowerment (WIVES), here commended the special adviser to President

Goodluck Jonathan on amnesty, Hon. Kingsley Kuku, for training over 26,000 youths in the amnesty training programme. The Women said the programme contributed immensely to the prevailing peace and security in the region and improved economic and social activities.

Kingsley Kuku-Chairman of the amnesty office said that the office has successfully placed no fewer than 11,525 former agitators in skills acquisition training offshore. He pointed out that 4,929 are being trained offshore while the balance of 6,382 have either been returned to formal education or have been placed in skill acquisition centers around the country. The Amnesty also succeeded in the reduction of abduction of oil workers on the high seas. Since the offer of the amnesty, there have been a drastic reduction in Armed JTF presence at the nook and crannies of the region, this has helped to sustain the fragile peace. Also, the Amnesty programme has helped in the return of social life back to the Niger Delta, as people go out freely without fear of any violent attack by the militants or the armed forces. Also, it has helped in reviving "night life" which used to be lively in the region as nightclubs now achieve full patronage as new ones sprang up. In spite of all these achievements, the Niger Delta amnesty had lots of challenges.

It is important to investigate the responses of the militants towards the Amnesty Programme. It tries to understand the feelings of the militants towards the Amnesty Programme. The Amnesty was said to have experienced many challenges in its implementation which also contributed to its failures. Many Niger Deltans and the amnesty analyst believed that the amnesty programme did not achieve its aims and objectives which is reason for the resurgence of militancy today. The factors that led to the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta will be discussed extensively. The evaluation of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme has been in the front burner for some time now. It is believed that it did not address the root causes of the region's agitation but only blew it out of proportion as various factors have currently emerged.

#### **IV. Evaluating the Amnesty Programme**

In evaluating the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to point out how useful and valuable the amnesty has been to the security situation in the Niger Delta, and also point out its problems. It took the decisive action of former Nigeria's President, Late Umar Yah' Adua to grant unconditional amnesty to Niger Delta combatants who renounced militancy and surrendered their arms. This at least provided a break and paved way for dialogue. Majority of the militants who had dropped their arms and embraced the amnesty were held in training camps where they were re-orientated preparatory to reintegration back into the civilian society. Kidnapping and hostage taking has considerably been reduced in the Niger Delta region. But many activists in the region still see the amnesty without a comprehensive diagnose and political will to decisively treat the systematic malady. The amnesty programme, based on the surrender of arms by militant groups in exchange for freedom from prosecution, is a homegrown disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiative that aims to achieve the cessation of armed conflict in the region. The Amnesty programme is fundamentally flawed with little potential for promoting security and human development in the Delta.

At the end of the twentieth century, DDR programme became a vital element in the peace building model used by prominent international institutions like the United Nation (UN). The DDR process is a product of the currently hegemonic security paradigm which centers on governmental monopolization of violence and aims for military institutions to be consensually transformed into peaceable citizens. Another critical point is the role that idle and unemployed youth play in the region. In the case of the amnesty programme, many took advantage of its monetary incentives by registering as militants in order to receive the monthly stipend. Thus, the amnesty provided an umbrella for thousands of jobless youths and wanted criminal seeking for an avenue to finding employment and escaping justice. The inclusion of youths who were not of militants in the training camps was another misstep as it raises concern about their possible radicalization and recruitment by the more political camp militants. Another flaw of the amnesty programme is the exclusive focus on demobilized ex-fighters in its design and implementation, which overlooks the desire and feelings of other local residents who also suffered from the regions deterioration. The wholesale bypassing of disaffected noncombatants not only left mostly intact what the grievances fueling areas of conflicts. It has also fueled widespread belief that government only responds to the law breakers with guns.

As noted by most critiques, although DDR process typically focused especially on ex-combatants, the main beneficiaries of the amnesty programme should ultimately be the wider community. Regardless of these observed laws in the design and implementation, the amnesty programme resulted in the surrender of the largest quantity of arms ever collected in the area. To sustain these critical disarmament gains, the state should redefine its peace strategy. The state should engage in comprehensive negotiations with all conflicting parties and stakeholders including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The amnesty programme, irrespective of the angle one looks at it from is a laudable programme, but the fact is that no white paper has been successfully implemented in the Niger Delta. A wise precaution will be to fully address the harsh conditions that gave birth to the militants in the area by creating jobs. The government must evolve a concrete effort to create employment opportunities for the youths in the region both in government and in the private sector especially the oil companies. The most important measure that will deal with the Niger Delta question is the issues of resource control and true federalism. Deliberate measures must be put in place by government to incorporate the local participation in the oil industry and effort should be made to allow the local people not chiefs to be directly involved in the business of the oil industry.

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