

**15 YEARS AFTER: EVALUATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
AMNESTY PROGRAMME ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGER
DELTA REGION**

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Abstract

Up to 90% of Nigeria's export revenue comes from its huge crude oil deposits, which are the reason the Niger Delta is so well-known worldwide. Despite producing a larger proportion of Nigeria's riches, the Niger Delta region is still largely undeveloped. This has led to youth restiveness and other nefarious actions in the region. The Amnesty deal was thus carried out by Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to address these problems by pardoning the militants from the Niger Delta in October 2009 and ensuring the stability of Nigeria oil economy. How effective the policy has been in addressing the problem of the region is the focus of this paper. Using a qualitative historical design method and anchored on the Peace-building theory, the study's conclusion indicates that, while the amnesty deal was indeed a welcome idea, it is fraught with some anomalies that has reduced its effectiveness in addressing restiveness in the region. Among other things, it recommends that a focus on the environment which was rarely the focus of the amnesty deal will not only address the root cause of the problem but will also reduce tension in the region.

Keywords: Amnesty, Militants, Militancy, Niger Delta, Oil, Deprivation

Introduction

Cross-River, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa-Ibom Rivers, Edo, Abia, Ondo, and Imo are the nine states that make up the Niger Delta area and they are all located in three of the six geopolitical regions in the country, namely Nigeria's South-South, South-West and South East geopolitical zone (Edo, Clark & Etemike, 2023). Nigeria has vast reserves of crude oil, which makes the Niger Delta region famous across the globe as the country was the 9th biggest oil exporter in the world as at 2021 (Statista, 2022). This account for almost 90% of Nigeria's export earnings (Statista, 2022). The region is also rich in solid minerals, agriculture, aquaculture, and the prime swamp area in the world according to the Niger Delta Amnesty Office (NDAO, 2014, cited in Odubo & Tobor, 2016, p. 1). In addition to contributing over 90% of the GDP, crude oil generates more than 95% of the expected revenue used to create national budget forecasts (Statista, 2022). The national treasury has benefited greatly from the Niger Delta region. It follows that indigenous people should reasonably anticipate that this new economic system will significantly improve their lot in life through more work opportunities, the building of infrastructure, a higher standard of living, and—most importantly—sustainable development. Madume (1992), who argues that any community with oil in its earth crust had its gods sanctified for the specific blessings, emphasises this excitement and expectation.

Like the oil-curse notion, however, the vast minerals and oil deposits in the area have caused more problems than they have benefited the community. As a result, the Niger Delta region continues to be extremely underdeveloped despite producing a larger percentage of Nigeria's total revenue. Extreme poverty, deteriorating health, cultural instability, economic hardship, exploitation, inadequate infrastructure, a poor educational system, deprivation, missed opportunities for livelihood, and total disregard for the region by the Nigerian state are the main characteristics of the area (Edo, Etemike, & Clark, 2022; Abdulwaheed, 2022; Isiaq & Lawal, 2023; Ogbodo, 2010; Badmus, 2010, Paki & Ebienna, 2011; Idowu, 2012; Okpo & Eze, 2012. Anele & Omoro, 2012). As a result of the continued neglect, the neighborhood's residents—especially the youth—became restless. Youth in particular had a sense of hopelessness due to prolonged neglect and war, as many saw warfare as a way to escape deprivation (UNDP, 2006). Consequently, the government's crackdown on these youth was openly backed, promoted, and coordinated with the International Oil Companies (IOCs). This resulted in the conviction of the Ogoni eight led by KenSaro-Wiwa in November 1995 following General Sani Abacha's unfair trial (Oshionebo, 2009). Violence against the Nigerian

state and the oil firms in the Niger Delta escalated after the killing of Saro-Wiwa. As a result, there were violent disputes in the zone which resulted to insecurity that translate to kidnappings and abductions of oil workers, especially foreigners. This violence included the kidnapping of foreign employees by various militant organisations, the destruction and interruption of gas and crude oil installations, and the damage of oil pipelines. The Freedom Fighters, The Egbesu Boys, the Joint Revolutionary Council, the Arogbo, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSEIN) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), were a few of the militant organisations who vied for political space and recognition with the federal government of Nigeria.

The grasslands, forests, and waterways of the region were all used by the militants in their combat. The output of crude oil fell precipitously as a result of the nation's dependency on oil, from 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2004 to roughly 0.80 million bpd in the first quarter of 2009 (Etekpe, 2012:1)

This had a detrimental impact on the nation's revenue. This terrible state of affairs persisted until 2009, when President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua made the diplomatic and peaceful decision to pardon the rebels. This action was taken in an attempt to lessen the escalating security threats and declining oil income in Nigeria that the militancy in the Niger Delta oil region was causing. Therefore, the "doctrine of necessity" brought about by the militants' massive attacks on oil infrastructure and their kidnapping of both Nigerians and foreigners was the basis for the Federal Government's October 2009 amnesty drive (Biakpara, 2009). The amnesty was announced on June 25, 2009, and it was supposed to run for sixty days, from August 6 to October 4, 2009. The amnesty was declared after proper discussions with the Council of State and other relevant parties, such as governors, stakeholders, and community leaders in the Niger Delta. Components of the amnesty scheme were the disarmament, rehabilitation, reintegration, and governmental pardon of the militants to encourage their voluntary cessation of hostilities. The programme's goal was to alter the militants' perspective and make it easier for them to acclimatise to normal civil life. As a result, at the Orientation and Rehabilitation Camp in Obubra, Cross River State, Nigeria, they were given group instruction in entrepreneurship and other skill sets. First offered on June 1st, 2010, the training programme lasted for 13 months. Using the relative peace that the programme had brought about, President Goodluck Jonathan, Yar'Adua's successor, announced numerous major sustainable development programmes and projects in the region.

During the amnesty programme's reintegration phase, former combatants received psychological counselling and had the chance to choose the type of career or educational path they wanted to take (Udegbunam, 2013). As part of the plan, the ex-militants were also given business financing and other essential support. This study evaluates the Federal Government of Nigeria's amnesty plan and the long-term reintegration of former militants into Nigerian society and how these efforts have contributed to the development of the Niger Delta Region.

Problem Statement

The geophysical environment of the places where natural resource exploration and extraction are conducted has always been known to be impacted and altered by these activities. As a result of how oil production has affected the ecology, the fragile ecosystem of Nigeria's Niger Delta has been severely damaged making the region "one of the world's most severely petroleum impacted ecosystems and one of the five most petroleum-polluted environments in the world" (Mähler, 2010). Nigeria is a prime example of the burden that comes with having natural resources (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001). The poverty level in the Niger Delta region and across Nigeria has not decreased, even though commercial oil extraction began in present-day Bayelsa State in 1958 resulting in increased revenue for the federation. Since they rely on aquatic resources for their livelihoods, majority of the population in the Niger Delta region live below the poverty line.

To promote the socioeconomic development of the area, the Nigerian government has implemented a number of developmental efforts, such as the creation of development boards and the provision of basic infrastructure. Although some of these initiatives are commendable and should receive additional support (Ukiwo, 2010), the failure to address the underlying causes of the conflicts in the region has prevented them from bringing about lasting peace in the Niger Delta. Ikenga, Edo & Ighoshemu (2022) have theorized that the near absence of environmental concern in many of these initiatives is primarily responsible for the failure of these developmental and interventionist agencies to address the underlying causes of conflicts in the region. The relationship between environmental disasters and poverty have not informed governmental policies or are deliberately ignored and as such superstructural solutions such as the provision of roads, bridges, scholarships, hospitals, and so on while laudable are not intricate enough to bring about lasting peace coupled with economic growth and development to the Niger delta region.

This situation led to a rise in criminal and insurgency activities in the Niger Delta region. Actually, sabotage, oil bunkering, and bloodshed cost the government \$23.7

billion between January and September 2008; almost 1,000 people perished as a result, and 300 hostages were taken prisoner. (Technical Committee Report on the Niger Delta, 2008). Apart from the Nigerian government's incapability to meet its OPEC share and other adverse effects on the economy, the fights have allegedly cost the oil multinational corporations (MNCs) billions of dollars in losses.

As a result, rather than blessing and prosperity, the oil wealth has caused poverty and deadly skirmishes in the region. The most confusing absurdity is that instead of the oil wealth helping the host people in the Niger Delta region, it is in actuality worked against them. Most of the host communities in the area, it seems, have some gloomy tale to talk about on the horrible treatment they endured at the hands of the foreign oil companies in return for the privilege of mining crude oil from their lands. It is to address the volatile nature in the region and to address the fracture relationship between the host communities and oil companies that the federal government rolled out the amnesty programme.

The Nigeria Federal Government granting amnesty to insurgents from the Niger Delta in June 2009, was contingent upon their disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The continued quest for sustainable peace in the region informed the decision to take this action in the hope of bringing about a lasting peace in the area. The belief that real development in the Niger Delta could only occur in the context of peace served as another driving force for this initiative.

However, militants returned to the creeks in 2016 and began bombing and vandalising oil pipelines while the amnesty was still in place. Additionally, they ceased interfering with oil drilling efforts in the Niger Delta, which resulted in a decline in Nigeria's production and export of crude oil. Certain militant groups, including as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), resumed their vandalism, claiming that their members were not being treated fairly in the camps and that the amnesty proposal was not sufficiently resolving their grievances. They also charged the Federal Government and the Office of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme of corruption. This impacted the reintegration phase in particular and severely hindered the government's attempts to implement the amnesty policy.

Once more, from the time of its announcement to the completion of this study, the amnesty scheme would have been in place for close to 15 years. Despite the fact that the programme has been funded and implemented with billions of Naira, the militants are not completely reintegrated into their home communities despite receiving training and rehabilitation. This poses a serious threat to the long-term, permanent peace that is intended for the Niger Delta because it exposes the former

fighters to the same conditions that drove them into the creeks in the first place, and when they return, the situation will probably be worse than it was prior to the amnesty plan. It is in light of the above that this paper is driven by two core objectives namely

- (i) Whether the vocational training programme offered by the Amnesty Programme has been successful in equipping former combatants with the skills they need to work for themselves.
- (ii) If the Amnesty programme has been able to address the conflict in the region, ensuring peace and stability.

The Nigerian Amnesty Programme

As part of implementing the 2008 Mittee Committee report, Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua proposed the Amnesty initiative on June 25, 2009, having practically exhausted all other alternatives for ensuring peace in the Niger Delta region. (Technical Committee Report on the Niger Delta, 2008). The militants' willingness and readiness to surrender any illegally obtained weapons they may have in their possession and to fully abandon militancy in all of its manifestations within a 60-day period beginning on August 6 and ending on October 4, 2009, was a prerequisite for the amnesty offer. In light of this, the Presidential Committee on Amnesty was established to create the programme's structure. The three main programmes that comprised the amnesty package were disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (Oyadogha, 2009; Ikenga, 2023).

The declaration promised that no one, not even militants who collaborated with this programme, would face legal consequences for the atrocities committed during the agitation that devastated Nigeria's oil economy. It was planned that the amnesty project would last from 2010 to 2015. The former fighters were also expected to take part in local and foreign training programmes for a range of occupational skills, as well as receive a monthly income of N65,000. This was done in an attempt to assist them in reintegrating into society and locating lucrative employment following their training. There were two stages to the reintegration programme. During the first phase, which lasted 13 months, almost 19,000 former fighters received training at Obubra Camp as part of the rehabilitation programme. In the second stage, ex-militants receive psychological counselling and are given the chance to choose the type of career or educational path they want to take (Udegbonam, 2013).

Theory

The analysis of this study was theoretically underpinned by Paul Lederach's peace-building theory (PBT), which he established in 1997. The goal of Paul Lederach's concept is to foster long-lasting peace and provide sustainable solutions to societal problems (UN Peace-building Commission, 2005).

Lederach (1997) asserts that "sustainable reconciliation" is the cornerstone of peace-building. It is regarded as a comprehensive idea that includes all of the steps and procedures needed to change a conflict-ridden society into one that is peaceful and well-sustainable. The five pillars of the tenets are: resources, coordination, reconciliation, procedure, and structure.

- Structure is a fundamental component designed to tackle the key concerns of the disputes.
- The long-term character of the conflict and its causes are the process.
- Reconciliation emphasises how essential relationships are to transformation in all of their psychological facets.
- Resources focused on the idea that, while financial support is essential, cultivating fresh perspectives, assigning new roles, and making a calculated commitment to peace-building are more crucial.

For the mechanism to communicate and cooperate in order to accomplish its objectives, coordination places a strong emphasis on the necessity of a support system. By addressing the root cause of the violence, Adams (2008) claims that the PBT helps to ease tension between parties involved in conflict. An evaluation of the amnesty programme can be conducted using peace-building theory, which provides a suitable framework for analysing whether the programme really assisted the former combatants in their successful transition into non-violent roles. The philosophy of peace-building prioritises addressing the root causes of conflict rather than just terminating it. Thus, the goal of peace-building is to address the underlying social, economic, or political issues in order to maintain peace, in addition to putting an end to violence

Peace-building is generally understood to be the process that addresses the reasons and consequences of conflict through institutional reforms, political and economic transformation, and reconciliation in order to help establish a lasting peace and try to stop violence from happening again. This covers a variety of structural, social, and physical measures that are often critical in the aftermath of a conflict for the

purposes of rehabilitation and reconstruction. It represents a variety of strategies, actions, and initiatives meant to sustain peace for a long time with emphasis on reducing the possibility of a conflict re-occurring. It is beneficial to understand peace-building as a more all-encompassing framework for policy that improves the co-operation among the related activities of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace-keeping, regaining, and development as part of a concerted and tenacious determination to attain lasting peace. Peek (2016) argues that in order for peace-building to be genuinely effective, it needs to involve all-encompassing efforts to identify and support structures that have the tendency to solidify peace and improve people's sense of confidence and well-being.

Furthermore, Boutros-Ghali, referenced in Adekanye (2007), stated that peace-building leads to conflict transformation, which is ultimately the responsibility of the parties involved in the conflict. Building peace entails establishing both material and immaterial prerequisites for a society that has historically been prone to conflict to become peaceful. In order to establish peace, it is necessary to have a workable infrastructure or foundation. For this reason, peace-building efforts involve developing infrastructure that benefits not only former fighters but also other stakeholders in the Niger Delta region as well as future generations. In order to ensure that the peace established in a given region is maintained, the peace building framework for peace and conflict resolution, among other things, takes into account the basic needs of all parties involved in the Niger Delta with a view to prevent the chaos of the past from recurring. This includes caring for the combatants who took part in the amnesty programme. In order to provide a sustainable peaceful environment, the study can address the issues brought up by the former combatants in the area by utilising the peace building theory. This is particularly significant because the formal education, skill development, and vocational training offered to the involved ex-militants are predicated on the idea that these resources will help the former combatants veer away from militancy and towards becoming contributing members of their communities and the nation at large.

Lederach's notion of peace-building is relevant to this work because the amnesty programme was established to proffer solution to the challenges of human development in the region and guarantee sustainable development. This is significant because it is anticipated that combatants who take part in skill development, formal education, and vocational training will renounce militancy and as citizens improve both their local communities and Nigeria at large.

The Vocational Training Scheme under the Amnesty Programme and the Acquisition of Skills by Former Militants

Ajibola (2015) investigated the ways in which peace and development were facilitated by the Niger Delta's post-conflict amnesty initiative. He found that education and skill development are the only ways that the peoples of the Niger Delta area may truly and fully become empowered. Consequently, the amnesty initiative uses educational and vocational training as a means of rehabilitation and socialisation. Most of the young people will be able to support themselves and their families after graduation as a result of their education and skill development, since they will be able to find gainful employment. Giving Niger Delta youngsters access to education and career opportunities will help keep them occupied and out of the hands of influential outside parties who typically exploit them to further their own political and personal agendas. The disarmament, demobilisation, and rehabilitation (DDR) process depends critically on using both education and the acquisition of vocational skills as tools for youth rehabilitation and reintegration. In Ajibola study, however, a large number of respondents (55.3%) chose education over skills acquisition (31.9%), presumably because graduates of ex-militant programmes have a nearly 70% chance of landing well-paying jobs; fewer people (12.8%) chose both

In a study on the amnesty initiative, Humphrey-Abazie (2014: 4) contended that the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta (OSAPND), headed at the time by Hon. Kingsley Kuku, was directly responsible for coordinating the reintegration phase. To supervise the reintegration phase, a group including government officials, prominent figures, and consultants with differing backgrounds in development and security projects was formed. The President's Special Advisor on the Niger Delta (SAPND) served as the chairman of the Amnesty Committee. Humphrey-Abazie (2014: 14) explains that the committee created a working plan and categorised the project as an intervention project, meaning that changes to its component pieces are evaluated and amended on a regular basis as part of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). The committee serves as a venue for the DDR project's consensus-building.

State governments had to establish community demobilisation and reintegration committees and youth development centres in order to guarantee that the plan is well-received by the general public. These committees were intended to support the reconstruction of communities destroyed by military invasion, as well as improve reintegration and capacity-building. In addition, state governments were required to provide social amenities on the locations of former terrorist camps, such as

schools and health facilities (NDTC, 2008, p.67). A budget of N52 billion (US\$145 million) was announced in July 2009 for the amnesty deal; the money was intended to account for the training and rehabilitation of 20,192 registered militants. For the recipients, the reintegration process also includes formal education programmes and training in vocational skills.

The training programme for vocational skills encompasses a broad spectrum of abilities that have the ability to enable former fighters upon their reintegration into society. These include automotive technology, welding, boat construction, agricultural operations maritime operations, heavy duty operation, oil and gas technical operations, carpentry and furniture making, mechanical and electrical engineering, among other relevant talents. Through the reintegration process, former combatants who wish to continue their education have the chance to attend both domestic and international universities and earn a top-notch education up to the university levels, postgraduate studies inclusive.

The Amnesty Capital Grants and the Former Militants' Creation of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

In the post-conflict region of the Niger Delta, empowering former fighters will foster peace and development, according to the majority of respondents to a survey done by Ajibola (2015). This is because statistics from the amnesty period in the region shows that the intervention has decreased violence and militancy in the area. Ex-militants have been the main beneficiaries, focusing their energies in different directions. The empowerment programme has produced positive involvement. More importantly, though, given the region's numerous challenges, over half of the respondents (53%) concur that empowerment alone will not promote peace and development in the Niger Delta's post-conflict aftermath.

There have been certain omitted components of the evolution of the region that are critical to the problem at hand. The amnesty scheme has been beset by allegations of corruption, and it is said to be selective in that it gives preference to former militants over other young people in the area. Moreover, no effort has been made to address environmental issues like gas flaring or to improve the lives of those who live in the Niger Delta. Nonetheless, the research Odubo and Tobor (2016) shows that rather than engaging in radical activities, the majority of participants successfully applied the skills, knowledge, and training they acquired in the amnesty training camps to better their lives by finding work, launching their own companies, taking part in civic and community activities, and becoming contributing members of their communities.

According to Odubo and Tobor (2016), some of the graduates have taken advantage of other chances, such as contract awards and campaigning for political office, despite not having a profitable employment. These research by Odubo and Tobor (2016) focused on the problem of retraining former fighters and helping them start their own enterprises. They did not, however, explain how they raised money for these companies or how the people who were employed managed to get jobs. Was it due to their own initiative and hard work, or did the government provide them with jobs and grants?

According to Pepple (2012) assessment of the militants' reintegration into society following the aforementioned action by the amnesty office, in their attempt to reintegrate them into society, no fewer than 300 ex-militants from the Niger Delta area received the resources and training required to launch small and medium-sized enterprises in 2017. The Presidential Amnesty Office for former militants in the region sponsored empowerment activities for the delegates, including sales of electronics, building materials, fisheries and super markets. It was suggested that the ex-combatants should acquire the skill of reinvested earnings into their own businesses. The empowerment initiative, he said, was made to help the trained delegates and give them the resources they required to start the next generation of businesses.

Nevertheless, despite the government's best attempts to rehabilitate and reintegrate former combatants, a number of them were penalised in their training countries while others were returned home for misdemeanours. For example, at the National Vocational Training Institute in Ghana, officials in Ghana detained 27 out of 212 former militants due to their disruptive attitude. The 27 trainees who were apprehended sought food-for-money because they did not like the type of food that was being supplied, but the hotel management refused their request. A dispute broke out, leading to violence and hotel employees being heckled. They were returned to Nigeria after being freed by the authorities (Oluwaniyi, 2011).

Again, in August, 2011, eight former militants sponsored to the underwater welding and boat building vocational programme in Sri Lanka on July 22, 2011, were sent home after being dismissed from the training facility for a variety of offences, including fighting and deliberate destruction of training materials. According to Oluwaniyi (2011), these are just a handful of the repatriation activities carried out by the foreign government. Ikelegbe & Onokerhoraye (2016) state that ex-militants have struggled to be fully and productively assimilated into society after finishing

their post-rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Not much has been accomplished and not many job possibilities have been created despite minimal efforts.

Only 113 former militants had benefited from the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in terms of employment as of early 2014. However, Odubo and Tobor (2016) asserted that only roughly 300 people obtained support for specialised businesses including welding, fish farming, and retail establishments under the 2014 (PAP) pilot project for post-training engagement and start-up firm packs and money. As a result, the majority of former fighters are still unemployed and idle, depending only on their monthly government stipend and support from friends and family (Ikenga, 2023)

Moreover, the plan has been extremely expensive, partly because of a complicated payment structure for ex-combatants and a thorough reintegration plan that encompasses training, education, and skill development both inside and outside of Nigeria. By February 2014, more than \$1.65 billion had been invested in the programme. More than 35% of the estimated \$.57 billion in 2013—which was intended to be used for the reintegration of former fighters—went towards providing stipends and allowances for 30,000 of them (Ikelegbe & Onokerhoraye, 2016).

Recurring Challenges of the Amnesty Deal

A major policy objective of the amnesty programme was to dismantle the hierarchical nature of command that did make group affiliation and commitment enduring. It is important that this should be targetted if the seamless reintegration of former militants into the society will be achieved. Sadly, for a long time, at least till 2021, the reinforcement of hierarchical structure and command was allowed to fester as the government through payment of salary do not only keep this structure in place but also inadvertently continue to build on the command system of the militant groups. Ex-militants were expected to collect their salary from their ex-commandants which helped to maintain the superior-subordinate relationship that had been effective in militant group formation. Though this method was challenged by ex-militants in 2015 who cited issues of corruption and favouritism by the government especially in areas of pipeline security contract, the salary system undergoes little or no change. According to Golden-Timsar (2018),

This is problematic on several levels. First, paying ex-commanders directly maintains fighting organizations and power structures. The continued amnesty payments reinforce patronage networks. They also create vehicles for political

power and political violence for the 2019 presidential election... {also} the stipends have morphed into a cash-for-peace system that is not sustainable turning violence into a commodity. The payment structure for ex-militants did not in itself encourage innovations, creativity and the desire to look for jobs. What they were receiving were significantly higher than what professionals like teachers were receiving at the time and higher than the minimal wage of most states' government. This of course hampered government reintegration plan. Failure sometimes to pay the money when due often cause friction between the government and ex-combatants, the excuse needed by these ex-militants to go back to old ways. In 2016, there were emergence of new groups like red scorpions, Niger Delta Avengers, Adaka Boro Avengers, Niger Delta revolutionary Crusaders, Asawana Deadly Force of Niger Delta and others who rose up attacking pipelines in the Forcados area. These groups are still very much active and many have indeed branch into kidnapping making the Niger Delta an unsafe place. Indeed, the cash down salary structure significantly helped to strengthen militant structures and ex-combatants effectively tapped from it when they felt their interest were not pursued. Presently, there are increase in illegal oil bunkering and oil theft and illegal refineries are established in the creeks which make it difficult for government to address the menace.

It is clear that the Amnesty programme did not address the poverty in the region which many believed is cause by the pollution of the ecosystem by the activities of Oil Multinationals in the region. it therefore seems safe to say that the primary goal of the amnesty programme was to ensure the continued exploitation of oil in the region as oil continued to be the engine house of the country's economy. The amnesty programme was more like a divide and rule policy: appease the fighters with monetary incentive to allow the free exploration of oil. Lands, waterways and even the bad air were totally ignored and there was no effort to address this as a 2023 Bayelsa State report indicate.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The amnesty programme was no doubt a good idea. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's amnesty programme, implemented by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration in 2009, was a good move because it helped to keep the Niger Delta peaceful Initial report indicate that Nigeria oil economy improved following the surrender of militants in the region to the federal government. However, this superstructural solution in addressing Nigeria economic woes was not carried beyond the mere gratification of few individuals especially when compared to the vast majority of the people that have suffered for years and in neglect due to the presence of oil companies in their communities. The environment rarely featured

in the amnesty plan and this was a missed opportunity by the government. One of the reasons given by Nigerian military commanders in their inability to fish out illegal bunkers is the support given to them by the people. The Niger Delta inhabitants have come to believe that the government do not have their interest at heart and therefore gives support to those stealing the government oil.

The amnesty programme is not a failure. It helped to achieve some goals and even though some militant groups still exist or have regrouped in the region, the fact remains that compared to times before the amnesty, one can begin to appreciate the relative peace the region has enjoyed in recent times. The demobilization of former combatants was a laudable success, and this helped to slow the pace of militancy in the region. It is however germane that the government must live up to its social contract of the amnesty deal and must also include the remediation of the environment into his programme. The goal of reintegration, which entails teaching former combatants' certain skills and providing them with resources and equipment to launch small and medium-sized enterprises must be pursued. This goal must also be extended to all members of communities devastated by oil production. Of course, to help the programme reach its predetermined aims and objectives, a lot still needs to be done. The first step is to start with the environment as it is the cause of discontent in the region.

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