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**NIGER DELTA CRISIS IN NIGERIA: THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION THROUGH AMNESTY PROGRAMME**

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**Abstract**

*Niger Delta region of Nigeria is an area where crude oil which is the mainstay of Nigeria economy is being produced. In the process of producing crude, their environment has been violated, and the region has faced and is still facing neglect. Development is at low ebb in the region culminating in the frustrated locals resorting to militancy and engaging in armed struggle including vandalisation of oil pipelines, kidnapping of oil workers and expatriates, etc. As a way of restoring peace to the area, the federal government of Nigeria introduced an amnesty programme that was meant to reintegrate the disarmed restive youths into the society and clean up the environment in an attempt to bring forth sustainable development of the neglected area. To achieve sustainable development, there must be economic development, social development and environmental protection and stability. This is achievable only through integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental and social concerns. Amnesty programme falls under social and economic concerns. This paper is of the view that sustainable development of the Niger Delta of Nigeria requires sustainability of Amnesty programme as part of fulfillment of the social and economic concerns without losing sight of environmental concern.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Amnesty, Reintegration, Niger Delta.

**Introduction**

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been termed the treasure base of the nation. It is described as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy (Mbaeke-Ekanem, 2000). In recent times, the Niger Delta has attracted global attention than ever before. Many reasons account for this development: Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa, and the second largest Delta in the world, covering an area of over 70,000 square kilometers, with a population of 15 million, and more than 40 ethnic groups (Mbaeke-Ekanem, 2000).



Niger Delta region gives Nigeria over 35 billion barrels of proven oil reserves besides an even larger deposits of gas (Courson, 2009; Enyila and Ukpo, 2006). Nigeria obtains over 80% of its revenue from oil rents and its economy is driven by exploration and export of crude oil gotten from the Niger Delta region. Irrespective of its oil wealth, the region represents an example of extreme poverty as the vast oil revenue has barely touched off pervasive local poverty (UNDP, 2006). There is no relationship between development in all its ramifications in the Niger Delta region and the wealth generated in the region rather as Joseph (2003, p.22) puts it “the most visible presence of both the Nigerian state and its collaborating multinational corporations is not to be found in development and empowerment programmes”.

Relatedly according to Agu and Ugwu (2011, p.221) “the major problems of the region are traceable to economic deprivation, ceaseless deteriorating ecological and aquatic lives and environmental degradation arising from oil exploration and production activities that impact negatively on the lives of the people of the region”. The authors contend that the inhabitants of the Niger Delta being farmers and fishermen depend on their farmlands and fishing creeks and water ways for their living. However, the environment of the Niger-Delta has not adequately provided for the people, in terms of creation of alternative means of livelihood (Agu&Ugwu, 2011).

Based on these environmental degradation and economic deprivation, Ikejiani-Clark (2009) suggests that the Deltans especially the youths are restive. They are restive because they are unemployed, hungry and under developed. They are equally angry because the vast sums of money realized from the sale of petroleum products derived from the Niger Delta are distributed and used to develop other places. The communities in the oil producing areas of the Niger-Delta struggle for imagined benefits, which they hope to, derive from oil companies operating in their territory. The results of these ill-feelings are fighting within the communities and destruction of oil pipelines (Ikejiani-Clark, 2009).

The environment of the Niger-Delta areas is flared with gases, resulting in the pollution of such areas. According to World Bank report captured in The Guardian (1991), the Nigerian oil fields contribute more to global warming than the rest of the world put together. The report makes the Niger Delta the most polluted area in the world and this has triggered anarchy and chaos in so many parts of the Niger-Delta.



In the cause of the agitation for a cleaner environment, development and resource control of the area, many militant groups were formed. According to Agu&Ugwu (2011) from mid 1980s, the minorities had formed or revived various social groups to resist environmental degradation and mode of oil exploration. The groups including Ijaw National Congress (INC), Movement for the Payment of Reparation to Ogbia (MORETO) and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP) among others. From the year 2000 and beyond, more violent groups were formed. They include Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), etc.

The agitation groups resorted in the 80's to petition-writing, legal actions, community mobilization, etc as means of agitation. The more violent groups of the year 2000's resorted to hostage taking, kidnapping, armed uprising, pipeline damage and vandalism as means of agitation (Okecha, 2003). In the cause of these violent agitations, exploration of oil was hampered and economic activities were heavily affected. This harmed the economy of the country to a great extent since the mainstay of the economy is oil.

The government of Nigeria, being conscious of the economic advantage in the Niger-Delta, being conscious of the need for the reign of peace to harness this advantage and being conscious of the ominous consequences which crisis in the Niger-Delta could bring to the national economy, has made several efforts to check and stem, if not fully put an end to the crisis emanating from the Niger Delta (Agu&Ugwu, 2011). Some of these steps taken by the government according to the authors include the establishment of the OMPADEC, the NDDC, Niger-Delta ministry and the present day Amnesty Programme.

The Amnesty offers was announced by president Yar' Adua in June 2009. It was established as a direct panacea to the realization of peace in the Niger Delta region which is hoped will bring sustainable development. The programme is a deal between the Federal Government and the militants. The latter were obliged to turn in their weapons of destruction and renounce their membership of militant/terrorist groups. The former were to issue presidential pardon, education and training both home and abroad and an enhanced rehabilitation programme that is hoped in the long run will usher in sustainable development.



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### **Concept of Development**

Development in the views of Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) is a complex and multidimensional concept. It has many facets, social, political, economic and cultural. They defined development as “the improvement of the economy, often regarded by many as national economic management of a desirable increase in the gross national output and the equitable distribution of the output among the entire populace” (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011, p. 387). Olaleye (2004) maintains that it is the attainment of relative stability in general price levels, high productivity and full employment as well as the maintenance of a healthy balance of payments situation.

Development in the view of Gboyega (2003) implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, but everybody in the society. The author opined also that it demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks also to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Development involves both socio-economic and political issues (Gboyega, 2003).

At the thrust of development is standard of living of the people. Development implies to cause to grow or expand, to realize what was potential to change or progress. Development therefore is a change, improvement or progress in the living condition of people, an improvement in the political, economic, social and cultural institution as well as an advancement in the living standards of the people (Nnamani, 2009).

Development has been seen by Oguonu (2012) as a process whereby government of a country ensures that standard of living of the people and their economic status are improved through various means including the extension of credit facilities to encourage the establishment of small and medium enterprises. In that line, Arvind and Everett in Nnamani (2009) stated that development is a widely participatory process of directed social change in society intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. Development they continued may also mean improvement in the social status of the people; it is absolutely a participatory process leading to growth and social change. The end-product of development is a developed man or woman and their material conditions. Development was given a tripod dimension as an improvement of the economic and social conditions of the people; a continued growth in applied sciences and productive technologies emanating from advancement of



societies and their organization efforts, and a transition of some of the earth's population from a less human to a more human phase (Biron et al, 1997).

Development was also conceptualized by Onah (2010, p.9) in terms of “the structure and growth of the national economy and degrees of development (or underdevelopment). They were often measured in terms of national income. In that line, the two most common indicators of development were per capital income (national income divided by the size of the population) and the average annual rate of growth in national income”.

Emphasis has however shifted from measuring development in terms of national incomes and growth (national economy) to the general well-being of man. Onah (2010) gave the reason as because a country might experience growth in its national economy without an attendant change in the well being of its people. There is a great leap in economic growth in China for example over some years now but that has not changed the massive poverty affecting a great majority of their people.

Consequently, Onah (2010) explained that the new concepts of development are thus characterized by relatively less concern with the quantity of production or output, material needs or monetary environment. This is reflected in dissatisfaction with the use of indicators such as per capital income or the rate of growth of national income as targets or measures of development and a corresponding search for alternative or additional indicators, such as life expectancy, standards of health or literacy, access to various social or public services, freedom of speech, the degree of popular participation in government or decision-making or environmental conservation.

Development is also conceptualized as to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. It is also about freeing people from obstacles that affect their ability to develop their own lives and communities (UNDP, 2008). Development therefore is empowerment. It is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their problems (UNDP, 2005). There cannot be meaningful development anywhere without peace, law and order (Agu et al, 2011).

Quoting Todaro, Nnamani (2009) asserted that development will be said to have been attained in the final analysis if the core values of development are met. Core values imply elevation or upliftment of the whole society and social system to a good life. Three basic core values are fundamental for the understanding of the meaning of development and represent the major



requirements that guarantee “good life” in the society. These values include: life sustenance which simply refers to the psychological need of man without which life will be impossible. They include need for food, shelter, clothing, protection and health. Life would be threatening, uncomfortable and difficult if these needs are not met by at least majority of the population. Secondly is self esteem which is used to explain non-relative need of honour, respect or recognition of individuals. What counts here is the extent to which one is dignified, respected and made to have sense of worth. It connotes a level of development which varies from society to society and from one culture to the other. And finally freedom, which is fundamental for development. Apart from freedom connected to political or ideological sense, freedom ensures emancipation of people from ignorance, misery, dogmatic beliefs and social servitudes. Freedom is important in the range of choice of men, and the minimization of external constraints in the pursuit of some social goal which we call development (Todaro in Nnamani, 2009).

### **Sustainable Development**

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2009) conceives sustainable development as development that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The UNDP identified three elements which should work together to ensure sustainable development. These include economic development, social development and environmental protection. These three elements in the view of Ayeni (2010) must be conceptualized together, planned together and implemented together to achieve sustainable development.

Collaborating, Anazodo et al (2014) contend that sustainable development can only make sense to people when they are involved in the process of decision making through a bottom-top approach. Ake (2001) submits that popular participation is crucial to sustainable development and is seen as the active involvement of all categories of civil servants in the process of setting goals and making decisions about involvement in the process not just the acceptability of end results which satisfies the need to participate. Ake (2001) concludes that for sustainable development to be achieved there is need for human capacity building.

Emas (2015) maintains that sustainable development aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment. Quoting UNDP, Emas (2015) contends that it provides a framework for the integration of environment policies



and development strategies. The interdependence between environmental stability and the economy is the foundation of sustainable development (Poster & Van der Linde, 1995). Sustainable development the authors opine look to tackle the sources of environmental degradation, not just the symptoms, while still providing opportunities and creating incentives for economic advancement (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995).

Sustainable development ensures according to Emas (2015) healthy environment such as clean air and water. This is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental and social concerns throughout the decision making process. In the application of sustainable development theory, one issue comes to mind substitutability of capital (Stoddart, 2011). The author explains that there are several types of capital: social, natural, and man-made. The idea of weak sustainable development explains that only the aggregate level of capital matters: man-made, or manufactured, capital is an adequate alternative to natural capital. Strong sustainability idea on the other hand, recognizes the unique features of natural resources that cannot be replaced by manufactured capital (Stoddart, 2011).

Contained within the definition of sustainable development is intergenerational equity. Dernbach (1998) Stoddart (2011) agree that intergenerational equity recognizes the long-term scale of sustainability in order to address the needs of future generations.

The key principle of sustainable development is the integration of environmental, social and economic concerns into decision making by the authorities (Stoddart, 2011). In that light, sustainable development requires the integration of economic, environmental and social objective across sectors, territories and generations. Therefore, “sustainable development requires the elimination of fragmentation, that is, environmental, social and economic concerns must be integrated throughout decision making process in order to move towards development that is truly sustainable” (Emas, 2015, p. 3).

### **Amnesty**

Amnesty is a pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons usually for political offence, the act of a sovereign power officially forgiving certain classes of persons who are subject to trial but have not yet being convicted (Blacks Law Dictionary). West’s Encyclopedia of American Law (2008) contends that it is the action of a government by which all persons or certain groups of persons who have committed a criminal offence usually of a political nature that threatens



the sovereignty of the government are granted immunity from prosecution. Examples of such offences are treason and sedition.

Azinge (2013) explains that amnesty allows the government of a nation or state to “forget” criminal acts, usually before prosecution has occurred. Amnesty has traditionally been used as a political tool of compromise and reunion following a war. An act of amnesty is generally granted to a group of people who have committed crimes against the state, such as treason, rebellion, or desertion from the military (West’s Encyclopedia of American Law, 2008).

The history of amnesty dates back to 403 B.C according to Greek and Roman law (Azinge, 2013). One of the documented ones was the long-term civil war in Athens which was ended after a group dedicated to reuniting the city took over the government and arranged a general political amnesty. The amnesty which was effected by loyalty oaths taken by all Athenians, and only later made to law, the amnesty proclaimed the acts of both warring factions officially forgotten (Blacks Law Dictionary).

Amnesty is also conceptualized as the act of oblivion which is specially to heal the wounds resulting from the civil war between democrats and oligarchs (Teitel, 2000). Amnesty prevents the prosecution of those considered enemies of the state, where their offences will be remembered no more (Colaico, 2001).

Joinet, (1985) posits that the effects of amnesty are as follows:

- Immediate release of all political prisoners
- Right of political exiles to return
- Relinquishment of civil and political rights
- Reinstatement in their jobs of persons dismissed for political reasons.
- Right of victims of inhuman treatment or their families to compensation.

Joinet (1985) again narrates the reasons for amnesty as:

- The authorities sometimes see in amnesty laws a means of dealing with the overcrowding of prisons, a situation which may prejudice the human rights of prisoners.
- In some cases, the purpose could be strictly humanitarian.

For instance in Zaire, the Act of 17 November 1981 covers disabled persons. In Syria, Act No. 26 of 12 March 1978 covers incurable or chronically ill prisoners. In the Eastern European countries,





each humanitarian measure appears to be traditional, particularly in respect of children, women, the aged and the sick, etc.

- Amnesty can also be granted for political reasons during transitions of government. During the transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy, authoritarian regimes usually grant themselves amnesty in order to avoid prosecution during the approaching democratic dispensation.
- Amnesty can also serve to neutralize opposition groups. The purpose of amnesty is to seek social tranquility less by consensus than by a reduction of tensions, and thus of the opposition's scope for action by forcing it to adopt a passive role. The aim is normalization rather than reconciliation through both persuasion and dissuasion.

### **State of Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

After years of neglects, late President Yar' Adua eventually came up with a step of redressing the social problems amidst the Deltans. He introduced a five years amnesty program starting from year 2009 through 2014 with the aim of alleviating poverty, stopping deprivation and also to control crime as well as re-integrate and rehabilitate militants within the environment (Jegede&Olu-Olu, 2015). The Federal government on September 8, 2008 inaugurated 'The Technical Committee on Niger Delta region' (Interagency Coordination report, 2009). The government "accepted and adopted the amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants as recommended by the Technical Committee as a way of arresting the security challenges in the region. The amnesty programme recommended by the committee entails 'Disarmament', 'Demobilization' and 'Reintegration' into the Nigerian Society (DRR)".

Starting with 'Disarmament', Interagency Coordination report (2009) states that it is the process through which arms, ammunitions and all war equipments used by the militant groups are intercepted and collected as a means of disarming the militants of those dangerous weapons of destruction. A time frame of 60 days in that year of commencement was given by the federal government and at the end of the period, 2760 guns of different models, 287,445 rounds of ammunition, 18 gun boats, 763 explosives and 1090 dynamites was surrendered.

The second arm is 'Demobilization'. This was explained by The Interagency Coordination report (2009) as involving registration and gathering of necessary information from those who have voluntarily surrendered their arms and other war equipments. It prepares them for reintegration into



the society. Their data are collected and used to determine the line of training they were to undergo based on each person's background and competencies.

The last phase is 'Reintegration'. The ex-militants and beneficiaries are reintegrated into the social and economic hub of the society. They were trained in schools and skill acquisition centres both at home and abroad. They were trained as mentioned by Akinwale (2010) in sectors as Oil/Gas, Maritime Services, Fabrication and Welding Technology, Exploration and Production and Processing Engineering. These rehabilitation and reintegration are still ongoing.

### **Challenges of the Amnesty Programme**

The amnesty programme has run for so many years and has recorded many successes and landmarks. It is however laced with some challenges which are affecting the ex-militants that were the primary reason for the amnesty programme. The report by a panel set up in January 2010 to review the rehabilitation phase of the programme as narrated by Obi & Rustad (2011) revealed some challenges. Firstly, they noted that eighty percent of the budget mapped out for the programme had gone on settlement of consultants and contractors bills with only twenty percent going to rehabilitation of the ex-militants that it was meant for. Secondly, is the over bloating of the numbers of ex-militants registering for the programme; the continued alienation of some militants; some of the skill acquisition centres at home are falling short of the acceptable global standards and operating with inadequate facilities (Obi & Rustad, 2011).

Collaborating, Nwajiaku-Dahou (2010) in *Invention journals* (2017, p.53) noted that "allowances unpaid or not paid regularly, huge disparities between payments made to foot soldiers and former militant commanders, limited access to rehabilitation, training and allowances for those who surrendered weapons after the deadline, inappropriate training provision, limited employment prospects, the absence of a broader political settlement involving the broader Niger Delta population that has borne the costs of conflict, and the politically motivated staffing of bodies responsible for implementing and coordinating the amnesty programme, are among the flaws of the Amnesty".

Some other challenges were identified. Obi & Rustad (2011) found out that the consultations and negotiations were not done with the ex-militants directly but at a very high level. Quoting them, they wrote "rather than engage in open negotiations or a formal peace agreement with the militants, the consultations were at the highest levels of federal government, involving NigerDelta elites/elders and top government officials of Niger Delta origin negotiating with the militant commanders". The



negotiation approach lacked grassroots participation. It gave room for a feeling of alienation and cheating by the grassroots people who felt that their so called leaders are only interested in their pockets and what they could gather for themselves (Obi & Rustad, 2011). This has led to a renewed orgy of violence. Olubayo & Olubisi (2012) in that perspective agreed that the spate of bombings and killings across the region shows that all is not well with the amnesty programme.

Elaborating on this challenge, Ofelie (2010) reminisced that a militant group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta 'MEND' set off two car bombs on 15 March, 2010 in Warri the Delta State capital, where a post amnesty dialogue was being held with the death of one person recorded and several others injured. Vanguard newspaper (2010, Oct.2) reported that the celebration of 50 years of Nigeria's independence was marred with car bombings in the nation's capital Abuja with twelve deaths reported. This is a direct consequence of dissatisfaction by ex-militants over the mode of implementing amnesty programme.

Militants also bombed a trunk pipeline at Brass in Bayelsa state to the extent that ENI- the oil major that owns the pipeline-lost around 4,000 barrels of oil per day (Mamah & Amaize, 2012). The Nation newspaper (2012, Jan. 30) also reported that the home of erstwhile Niger Delta Minister in Burutu local government area of Delta State was bombed on 28 January, 2012 as a mark of dissatisfaction of the ex-militants. Also, Daily independent newspaper (2013, April 7) reported the killing of twelve policemen by some ex-militants on April 6, 2013 in Southern Ijaw local government over the displeasure of the amnesty programme.

Amnesty programme is a policy designed to bring peace and security to the Niger Delta. The assessment of the policy has been rated well in spite of the challenges most of which have been highlighted in this research. However, some scholars and militants as Jegede & Olu-Olu (2015) found out are of the opinion that, to an extent, the amnesty program has reduced the insurgency in the Niger-Delta, but notwithstanding it has introduced a form of alienation in the process. To some the policy has not bridged the initial gaps and reasons for agitation but rather an opportunity for the Niger-Delta elites and militant leaders to enrich themselves more (Jegede & Olu-Olu, 2015).

#### **Amnesty Programme and Sustainable Development**

Apologists of development represented by Todaro, Rodney, Seers, etc believe that development comprises political, social, cultural and economic developments and it involves increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material



well being (Nwafor& Joy, 2017). In Nigeria, researchers and professionals are in agreement that socio-economic management and development should be seen in the improvement of the quality and standard of living of the citizens (Ajakaiye&Ayodele, 2000;Yuguda, 2000; Abamba, 2005; Tomori, 2008). In that regard, development can only be sustained in the atmosphere of peace.

In a bid to maintain peace in the Niger Delta and sustain development, amnesty programme was started by the federal government of Nigeria. The people of the region were also deeply involved in their attempt to create peace and bring about sustainable development. Ibaba in Nwafor& Joy (2017) discovers that the drive for sustainable development through participatory involvement by the Niger Delta people in their oil resources which is one of the cardinal points of amnesty policy can be found in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990); the Kaima Declaration (1998); the Resolution of the first Urhobo Economic Summit (1998); the Bill of Right of the Oron people (1999); the Aklaka Declaration (1999)and the Warri Accord (1999). These declarations are driven by the need to put a stop to dehumanizing social, economic, political, environmental and infrastructural decay, marginalization and inhuman treatment meted to the people of the region by the country and the operating oil companies (Ibaba in Nwafor& Joy, 2017). The availability of these factors and implementing amnesty to the letter will bring peace and sustainable development.

However, Empirical research by some researchers have shown that poor implementation of the amnesty programme is a hindrance to sustainable peace and development. Eboh in Nwafor& Joy (2017) opines that the yardstick for measuring the sustainability of peace and development is the ability to rise up to the potentials of upcoming generation to live up to its needs. The author emphasizes that to attain sustainable development and peace especially through amnesty programme depends on its ability to provide social progress, social justice, human welfare, environmental health and national development. But from available evidence, the objectives of amnestyprogramme have been derailed by infighting, internal squabbles, unhealthy rivalry among operational action agencies within the Presidency, such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

These inadequacies inherent in the policy of amnesty threaten the ability of the programme to bring about sustainable development in the Niger Delta region. It is observed by Nwafor&Joy (2017) that there are reported physical fights among the rehabilitating militants in their various domestic and foreign skill acquisition and educational centres. This stems from their displeasure



with institutionalized corruption and power projection of these presidential agencies involved with the programme. These corrupt practices and other vices by agencies of the state weakens amnesty programme and threatens sustainable development of the region.

### **Future Prospects of Amnesty Programme in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

Amnesty programme of the federal government of Nigeria came about as a resolve to checkmate willful destruction of lives and vandalism of properties, increasing crime of Kidnapping and killing of both expatriate and local oil workers, constant attacks and vandalism of oil facilities, which has rendered revenue loss to the government (Akpan, 2011; Omar, 2008).

Nwafor & Joy (2017) submit that Amnesty programme is meant to build peace and human capital development for the ex-militants. However, to ensure its sustainability government must put in place further measures. Nwafor and Joy (2017) contemplate that Nigerian government was myopic to draw the Amnesty programme in a manner that accommodates ex-militants from the Delta acquiring skills on other natural resources and human development apart from crude oil and natural gas to skills in fish rearing, plantain, banana, rice, cassava, palm oil cultivations, timber production, cashew and groundnut productions, etc which are all in abundance in Niger Delta.

Furthermore, Nwafor and Joy (2017) propose that local government administrations, non – governmental agencies and private sectors should be incorporated into the programme to train them on agriculture and entrepreneurship. On the social front, women and children of Niger Delta were not fashioned into the Amnesty programme. The future of the programme also lies in incorporating them into it. On that perspective Nwafor and Joy (2017) again propose that the programme must give physiological succor to women and children who were displaced by the fighting between the Nigerian armed forces and the militant groups. Igwe (2011) opines as regards future prospects of the programme that Amnesty programme must cover issues of short and long term employment and the ability of the state to make available start-up capital for the ex-militants.

In the views of Oluwaniyi (2011) major critical issues such as the roots of alienation, marginalization, exploitation, corruption, unemployment, poverty, youth and women's issues must be sorted out by the government to ensure sustainable peace and development. He maintains that "if these issues are not promptly tackled, the post-primary period will become another vicious cycle, aimed at benefiting the political elite without any modicum of development for those that actually need it in the oil-rich region" (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p.52).



Amnesty programme has made a lot of positive impact both on the ex-militants of the Niger Delta and on the Nigerian state. On the side of the ex-militants of the Delta, they were ‘reintegrated into various communities through vocational skills training, formal education or entrepreneurship skills acquisition either in Nigeria or abroad, depending on ex-militants interests’ (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 51). On the side of the Nigerian state, “the spate of violence including kidnappings and killings – have been reduced, while the production of oil has increased from 700,000 barrels to 2.4 million barrels per day” (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 51). However, the selected incidences of low – level kidnappings, killings and protests from disgruntled ex-militants who were not included in the process continue to undermine the success of the process (Oluwaniyi, 2011). As a solution, the tenets of the report of the Technical Committee that recommended Amnesty programme to the federal government should be adhered to. They recommended a bottom-up approach to the programme where consultation should be held by the government with the ex-militants directly (Oluwaniyi, 2011). Future prospects of this programme largely depend on these noted approaches.

### **Conclusion**

The upsurge of militant agitation in the Niger Delta before the amnesty programme was attributed to the grim reality of the inability of the crude oil produced in the region to translate into regional prosperity, due to the unacceptable and faulty resources distribution mechanism in the country. The development deficit, environmental degradation suffered by the people, neglect of oil bearing communities by the multinational oil companies, were all factors that contributed to the restlessness of the youths and the subsequent militancy that erupted.

The presidential amnesty programme which was initiated by the federal government in 2009 was a welcome development to curb violence in the region that has harmed the economy of the nation. The region has felt the effect of the programme in the massive training of surrendered militants in various skills and educational trainings that has helped to dunc the tension. However, more groups in women, children and non – militants need to be incorporated into the programme and trainings given to them.

The result will be increase in the living standard of the people. It is expected that the government in the spirit and letter of amnesty will clean up the degraded environment of the Niger Delta. All these will ensure sustainable development of the region.



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