

MILITANCY AND THE CHALLENGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA

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Abstract

Militancy in the Niger Delta is a threat not only to economic development, but also to the environment and social peace. There is no doubt that the Federal government Amnesty Programme has reduced the incidence of militancy in the region and its associated threats to national security and development. However, the lingering challenge of environmental sustainability and social peace cum the gradual resurgence of militancy in recent times is a clear indication that the Amnesty Programme has not addressed the crux of the problem. This paper examines how militancy contributes to the crisis of environmental sustainability and social peace and vice versa. Using qualitative methodology and political economy approach the paper shows the primacy of environment in the Niger Delta conflict and how its abuse by the oil companies and sabotaging activities of the militants, all contribute to the persistent lack of social peace and economic development in the region.

Key words: Militancy, oil, environmental sustainability, social peace, Niger Delta, Amnesty Programme

Introduction

Different policies and strategies have been suggested and adopted by the Nigerian government as the antidote to the militancy in the Niger Delta. These include: deployment of the military/coercion to suppress the agitation; creation of special intervention programmes such as development commissions for the oil producing areas; introduction of Amnesty Programme, and so on (Oтите and Umukoro, 2010). Of all these policies and strategies, Amnesty Programme seems to be the one that has had the most profound effects. It not only reduced militancy in the region, but also helped to achieve relative peace. These in turn have resulted in improved national security through the reduction in incidences of kidnapping and open-confrontation of the military by militants. The economy also received a boost as the region's atmosphere became conducive atmosphere for oil exploration and exploitation which in turn increased Nigeria's oil production capacity (Kuku, 2011).

However, the resurgence, in recent times, of cases of kidnapping of oil workers, vandalisation of oil and gas pipelines, killing of security agents guarding oil installations and other acts of militancy in the region have shown that the Niger Delta debacle is far from over, and that perhaps, the Amnesty programme is not an enduring solution to the

militancy in the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2014). This raises a fundamental question: why is the Amnesty Programme which worked very effectively at the initial stage of its introduction now failing? This question leads to another one which is even more fundamental, and that is: Did the Amnesty Programme address the root cause of the Niger Delta crisis? Of course, the core factors that are responsible for the agitation by the militants in the region are underdevelopment caused by corrupt leadership, and environmental degradation which results from oil spillage and gas flaring arising from the activities of the oil companies operating in the region. Ironically, some of the strategies (such as the sabotage of oil facilities like the pipelines, flow station, oil well, etc) adopted by the militants also lead to oil spillage that damage and degrade the environment. Hence, the environment is at the receiving end of both the abuses by the oil companies and the violent agitation by the militants. Therefore, tackling underdevelopment and environmental crisis are crucial to finding a lasting solution to the crises of development and militancy in the region.

This paper examines the effects of oil production activities and militancy on the quest for environmental sustainability and social peace in the Niger Delta in particular, and Nigeria at large. It has seven parts. Parts one, two and three are the introduction, theoretical construct and methodology, respectively. While part four explores the origin of militancy, part five highlights its impact on the environment. Part six looks at the various policies and strategies (including the Amnesty programme) adopted by different administrations and why they cannot guarantee sustainable environment and social peace. Part seven presents the recommendations and conclusion.

Theoretical Construct

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is political economy. The political economy approach places emphasis on material condition as a pre-requisite for understanding any given society, including its successes and failures. Economic resources and how they are harnessed, distributed and re-distributed are at the root of all societal crises around the world. In fact, the very survival of man is dependent on economic factors. Thus, Ake (1981) rightly argued that although it is “a biblical truth that man does not live by bread alone, it is a more fundamental truth that man cannot live without bread”. By this is meant that man must produce in order to live. But man cannot produce without making use of the factors of production one of which is the environment (land). Hence, any threat to the environment is a threat to man’s means of existence and as such, it is more often than not resisted by all means, including the use of violence.

Based on this fact, the paper argues that material factor (the environment) is the major cause of the Niger Delta crisis. The crisis is all about the struggle for survival. The environmental degradation in the Niger Delta threatens the people’s means of survival such as farming and fishing, thus, they resort to militancy not only as a way of stopping the rape and destruction of that essential means of survival, but also as a way of seeking redress for the damage already done to it.

Methodology

The data used for this paper came from secondary sources and these include: books, journals, newspapers, magazines, monographs, conference papers and internet materials. The data extracted from these sources were analysed qualitatively using content analysis.

The Origins of Militancy in the Niger Delta

With over 34 billion barrels of crude oil, the Nigeria's Niger Delta has one of the biggest reserves of crude oil on earth (Robinson 2006). This rich oil resource feature makes the region strategically important to both the Nigerian economy and international energy security. However, the Niger Delta is also a region of paradox. It is so rich in oil resources yet ravaged by environmental and human poverty (Inokoba and Imbua, 2010) partly because of corruption and many years of marginalization that have characterized the exploitation of such resources. Thus, the Niger-Delta people, particularly those in the creeks (riverine), have continued to wallow in miserable poverty in spite of over four decades of oil production in the region and the accruing hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue. The prevalence of high level political corruption (Ewharieme and Cocodia, 2011) and poor leadership has led to the ceaseless embezzlement of statutory allocations from the Federation Account including the 13 percent derivation oil revenue meant for the region's development. Some of the leaders of the Niger Delta particularly the state governors (past and present) are very corrupt. It is on record that Nigeria has earned over US\$400 billion from the export of crude oil since 1970s and significant fraction of this amount have been allocated to the states in the Niger Delta, but only to be siphoned by their governors (Kew and Phillips, 2013). It is no wonder therefore that the names of some of the state governors in the region have become a recurring decimal in the corruption case files of the anti-graft agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over the years.

There is dearth of basic amenities such as pipe-borne water, electricity, well-equipped schools and functional hospitals, in the Niger Delta (Kaur, 2013; Afinotan and Ojakorotu, 2009) and this is largely a consequence of pervasive corruption in the region. Majority of the Niger Delta youth are unemployed and the unemployment rate in the region is still rising. The living condition is so poor that it is only comparable to what could be found in a poor refugee camp (Arong and Egberere, 2013 quoting Ejibunu 2007; Oronto et al 2003; Ibaba 2005; Mukagbo 2004). Generally, the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region has produced abject poverty which in turn compelled the people to resort to violence both as a way of bringing the attention of the government to their plight and as a means of survival.

The bad condition in the Niger Delta region is further worsened by the negative impact of oil exploration and production activities. Gas flaring and oil spillage are some of the fallouts from oil production which have continued to damage the eco-system of the Niger Delta region. The air, land and water pollutions that come from oil spillage and gas flaring have made the water, air and land of the Niger Delta unsafe and thus, threatened the traditional means of livelihood of the people which are fishing and farming. All these anomalies combined with the lack of basic amenities and rising unemployment made the youth to rise and demand for compensation and the tackling of these anomalies from their perceived exploiters – Federal Government and Multinational Oil Companies. First, the agitation was through peaceful protest, but it later degenerated to violence when the Federal government failed to listen to the people's grievances but rather tried to suppress the protests with coercion using the armed forces (Joint Task Force - JTF). This changed

the character and modus operandi of the agitation as the youth in the region armed themselves and began to sabotage oil facilities. They later started killing agents of the Nigerian state (such as the members of the JTF) and kidnapping oil workers, especially foreign expatriates, and demanding for ransom. This marked the origins of militancy in the Niger Delta. The unleashing of violence on the oil-producing communities by the Nigerian state; the looting of oil revenue by government officials at all levels of government; and the monumental abject poverty in the Niger Delta in the midst of huge wealth from oil and gas all combined and triggered and nurtured militancy (Inokoba and Imbua, 2010).

As the years went by, the militant agitation became criminalized as the tempo of violence increased and the scope of the calibre of people involved militancy also expanded. As ransom from kidnapping of oil workers became the quickest means of making millions of naira (or even dollars in some cases), various persons such as politicians, traditional rulers and businessmen became involved in militancy, thus, militancy became a business. This set of people saw militancy as a business and invested billions of naira in importing sophisticated weapons and arming the militants. Within a short time, various militant groups and camps emerged in the region (see Figure 1). Attention gradually shifted away from forcing the oil companies and the federal government to address the lack of development, and environmental degradation that caused the agitation in the first place to profit maximization through criminal activities such as kidnapping, hostage taking, hijacking of ships, illegal oil bunkering, piracy, armed robbery, and so on (Oтите, 2009). The targets became not only foreign oil companies and workers but also Nigerians who reside or transact business in the Niger Delta. The attempt by the Federal government to use military might to contain the Niger Delta militancy failed as militant acts such as kidnapping oil workers, disruption of production and vandalization of oil and gas pipelines peaked in 2008. The various acts of sabotage by the militants crippled Nigeria's crude oil production which declined drastically to about 800,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first quarter of 2009 from 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2004. Having seen that military force was not working, and being faced with the urgency to mitigate the threats that militancy posed to the national economy which is dependent on crude oil, the federal government reversed its policy of coercion to amnesty in the last quarter of 2009 (Etekpe, 2012).

Figure 1
Militant Camps in Niger Delta as at 30 June, 2009

S/N	Name of camp	Location	Status of Camp	Leader(s)
1	Olugbobiri	Southern Ijaw (SILGA, Bayelsa State)	Major	Joshua Mckiver
2	Korokorosei	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Major	Africa Owei
3	Okiighbene/Ebrighbene (Ikebiri I and II)	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Major	Gidson Kala (Prince Igodo)
4	Robert Creek	Nembe, Bayelsa State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and Henry Okah
5	Cowthorne Channel	Nembe, Bayelsa State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and Henry Okah

6	Camp 5	Warri South, Delta State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and Henry Okah
7	Okerenkoko	Warri, Delta State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and Henry Okah
8	Opuraza	Warra, Delta State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and Henry Okah
9	Azuzuama	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Major	Jackson
10	Gbekenegbene	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	Not Available
11	Ezetu	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	Victor Ben Ebikabowei (Boyloaf)
12	Agge	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	Victor Ben Ebikabowei (Boyloaf)
13	Kurutiye, Forupa	Okubie SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	Not Available
14	Ken Camp Odi,	Bayelsa State	Minor	Ken
15	Egbema Camp	Warri, Delta State	Minor	Kem Agbakara
16	Ubefan	Warri, Delta State	Minor	John Togo
17	Berger Camp	Warri, Delta State	Minor	Inilo Sinite
18	Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDFVF)	Akuku-Tori, Rivers State	Major	Alhaji Asari Dokubo
19	Niger Delta Volunteer Movement (NDVM)	Okirika, Rivers State	Major	Tom Ateke
20	Borokiri (Icelanders/Outlaw cult)	Borokiri, Port Harcourt, Rivers State	Minor	Soboma George
21	Yeghe	Bori, Ogoni, Rivers State	Minor	Solomon Ndigbara (Osama Bin Laden)

Source: Etekpe (2009) cited in Etekpe 2012

Oil, Militancy and the Impact on the Environment

Oil extraction has impacted negatively not only on the socio-economic well-being of the Niger Delta oil producing communities, but also on their physical environment. Apart from the problem of oil spillage, there is also gas flaring. All these challenges are associated with oil exploration and production in the region. While these challenges are unavoidable in some instances, they are sometimes the consequences of the negligence and deliberate actions by the oil company in their quest to maximize profit by compromising the vital processes such as environmental impact assessment and adequate safety measures in order to cut cost. Although most of the environmental degradation in the Niger delta is as a result of non-compliance with internationally recognized environmental standards by the oil companies, the situation is being worsened by the failure of the Nigerian government to compel the oil companies to comply with rules of exploration and production, and sanction oil companies that contravened the rules. The environmental degradation caused by oil production has affected land, water bodies and air in the region (See Figure 2 below). This threatens the subsistent and peasant economy and bio-diversity on which the livelihood and survival of the oil producing communities depend. The people could no longer fish nor farm because their lands, waters and atmosphere have been polluted and damaged by oil spillage and gas flaring. The implication is the persistent underdevelopment of oil producing communities (Owabukeruye, 2000). This partly explains why the Niger Delta crisis seems intractable

because you cannot destroy the people’s means of livelihood without providing an alternative means of sustenance and yet expect socio-economic peace. The livelihood of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta is largely dependent on the environment. But the irony is that the strategy of sabotaging oil pipelines for instance, which the Niger Delta militants adopted in protesting environmental degradation by the oil companies have further led to environmental damage. Some of the acts of sabotage by the militants such as vandalising oil pipelines also cause oil spillage which equally impacts negatively on the environment. Moreover, some of these environmentally unfriendly activities from oil production have negative global implications. Gas flaring for instance contributes to climate change such as global warming. Nigeria is one of the highest emitters of greenhouse gases in Africa and among the highest CO2 emitters in the world (GGFR, 2002; Iyayi, 2004; Ellen and Barry, 2005).

Figure 2

Environmental Impacts Associated with Upstream and Downstream Petroleum Operations

S/N	Activities	Potential Associated Risks	Environmental, Health and Safety Issues
1	Exploration operations •Geological survey •Aerial survey • Seismic survey •Gravimetric & magnetic survey •Exploratory drilling •Appraisal	Noise pollution Habitat destruction and acoustic emission Drilling discharges e.g. drilling fluids (water based and oil based muds) and drill Cuttings Atmospheric emission Accidental spills/ blowout Solid waste disposal	Ecosystem destruction and interference with land use to access onshore sites and marines resource areas; environmental pollution (air, soil and controlled water) and safety problems associated with the use of explosives; land pollution which affects plants and pose human health risks; groundwater contamination and adverse effects on ecological biodiversity.
2	Development and production •Development drilling •Processing: separation & treatment • Initial storage	Discharges of effluents (solids, liquids & gases) Operation discharges Atmospheric emission Accidental oil spills Deck drainage Sanitary waste disposal Noise pollution Transportation problems Socio-economic/ cultural issues	Ecosystem destruction and interference; contamination of soils and sediments with petroleum-derived wastes; atmospheric emissions from fuel combustion and gas flaring/venting; environmental pollution (air, soil and sediments, controlled waters) and groundwater contamination; ecological problems in the host communities, adverse human health risks; safety related risks and interference with socio-cultural systems
3	Decommissioning and		

	rehabilitation • Well plugging •Removal of installations and equipment •Site restoration	Physical closure/removal Petroleum-contaminated waste disposal Leave in situ (partial or total) Dumping at sea	Environmental pollution and human safety; pollution related to onshore and offshore operations; hazard to other human activities such as fishing and navigation; marine pollution, fishing and navigation hazards
4	Refining of petroleum products	Atmospheric emissions and air pollution Discharges of petroleum-derived wastes	Atmospheric emissions and air pollution; oil spillages; water effluents and production discharges
5	Transportation and distribution • Pipelines •Barges, ships, tankers and FPSOs •Road tankers and trucks	Emissions and accidental discharges Discharges from transporting vessels e.g. ballast, bilge and cleaning waters	Air emissions (hydrocarbons from loading racks and oil spills); accidental discharges and operational failures; disposal of sanitary wastes; contamination of soils and sediments
6	Marketing operations •Product importation •Storage	a. Operational discharges b. Wastes disposal	Spillage; contamination of soils and sediments; emission of organic contaminants and environmental pollution.

Source: Ite, Ibok, Ite and Petters (2013)

Part of the Niger Delta struggle is the agitation for environmental justice and this has resulted in several attempts (such as the famous Kaiama Declaration on 11 December, 1998) and formation of various organizations in the region with the aim of stopping, and seeking redress for the rape of the environment. Examples of such organizations include; the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) formed in August, 1990; the Ijaw Youth Council formed in December 11, 1998; Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN), Community Rights Initiative (CORI), Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDWJ), Chicco Movement, Ijaw National Congress and Egbema National Congress. These groups have continued to among other things campaign against the Multinational Oil Companies (MNCs) for the environmental damage caused by oil production activities and the glaring negligence by the MNCs and government to tackle these challenges (Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012).

The appalling rape of the environment in the Niger Delta by oil companies was vividly captured by Saro-Wiwa. Using Ogoniland as a case study, he said: ‘I looked at Ogoni and found that the entire place was now a wasteland; and that we are victims of an ecological war, an ecological war that is very serious and unconventional. It is unconventional because no bones are broken, no one is maimed. People are not alarmed because they can’t see what is happening. But human beings are at risk, plants and animals are at risk. The air and water are poisoned. Finally, the land itself dies. Oil has brought nothing but disaster to our people.’ (Saro-Wiwa, 1998) Many years after Saro-Wiwa’s observation and his subsequent killing by Abacha-led military junta, the United Nations Environmental Programme’s (UNEP) Report on Ogoniland re-affirmed the observation of Saro-Wiwa and indicted multinational oil companies, particularly Shell Petroleum and

Development Company (SPDC), as the major culprits. In its environmental assessment of Ogoniland in which over 4000 samples of soil, drinking water, groundwater, surface water, rainwater, sediments from the creeks, fish and vegetation were collected and analysed, UNEP found that notwithstanding the damage arising from the vandalization of oil pipelines by the militants, there is enough evidence which shows that SPDC had compromised international best industrial practices, including environmental impact assessment and safety standards all of which have contributed to oil spillage which caused monumental degradation of Ogoniland such that the water and air contains high concentration of benzene (a known carcinogen) 10 per cent higher than the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended level. The report recommended the need for urgent clean-up of Ogoniland by SPDC, which it estimated would cost about a billion dollars (UNEP, 2011).

The Quest for Environmental Sustainability and Social Peace: From State Coercion to Amnesty

The quest for environmental sustainability and social peace as a solution to the Niger Delta crisis has elicited different policies and strategies from different administrations. While some deployed the state's coercive power to suppress the crisis, others adopted palliative and development-oriented measures. The strategy and policy action each regime adopted depended on its orientation and conviction. Generally, some of the past regimes, especially those with military background, used more military force whereas others, particularly civilian administrations, combined both military force and development policies. In other words, both carrot and stick approach have been deployed at different times by various regimes to deal with the Niger Delta crisis. For example, the carrot approach include: the creation of states like Akwa Ibom, Delta and Bayelsa in 1987, 1991 and 1996, respectively (Omotola, 2007); the periodic review of revenue allocation formula and the increase of derivation from 1.5% to 3% in 1992 and 13% in 1999 (Osaghae, 2008); the establishment of special intervention development agencies such as Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta; and the installation of Goodluck Jonathan from one of the Niger Delta ethnic minorities (Ijaw) as president following the death of President Umar Yar'dua on the 5th of May, 2010, and his subsequent election in 2011 (Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012). While some of these policies and concessions are commendable, they could not yield the expected positive result because of corruption and mismanagement that characterized their application and implementation.

On the other hand, the Nigerian state has also responded to the Niger Delta crisis by deploying the repressive apparatus of the State. include the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders in 1995 by the Military government of late Gen. Sani Abacha, the military operation against the inhabitants of Odi in February, 2000 (Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012), the Umuechem massacre of 1990 (Suberu, 1996), the Odioma killings in 2005, the Gbaramatu the massacre of 2009 (Aghalino, 2009), and other acts of violence unleashed on several communities in the Niger Delta. In most of these military actions, the affected communities not only had their properties destroyed but the inhabitants were also maimed, raped, displaced, and some killed (Oshionebo, 2009;

Ekine, 2008). Obviously, the use of state force could not suppress or contain the militancy in the region. Rather it increased it as many people in the affected communities took up arms in self-protection and several new militant groups emerged. Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) became very popular as it among the youths during the military campaign. These youths saw it as the guardian of the Niger Delta people; a voice against the military invasion of the region and the repression being unleashed on the people by the Joint Task Force of the Nigerian state. The counter-violence by the Niger Delta militants which manifested in the form of increased kidnapping, hostage taking, bunkering and oil theft, pipeline vandalization, bombings, oil-facility sabotage, and destruction of lives and property crippled the Nigerian economy as oil production fell to all-time records low.

Faced with this apparent failure of violent approach, the Nigerian state initiated the Amnesty Programme with the aim of bringing peace to the Niger Delta, and by implication mitigating the threats posed by militancy to the national economy. Hence, President Yar' Adua's administration granted amnesty to the militants on June 25, 2009 and gave them 60 days, with effect from August 6, within which they were expected to surrender their arms and renounce militancy. Amnesty, described by Otite and Umukoro (2010) as a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) was one of the recommendations of the 2008 Mittee Committee Report. The Amnesty Programme required the militants to surrender their weapons to the government and to receive presidential pardon, education, training and rehabilitation which would re-integrate them back to the society in return.

The road to the Amnesty Programme was tortuous as events leading up to its acceptance and early implementation showed. Initially, the militants were reluctant to accept the offer because they thought it was a ploy by the federal government to arrest them. But before the timeframe given by the federal government for the militants to surrender their weapons expired, it was observed that some of the militants accepted the Amnesty Offer while few others did not. Thus, the early days of post-Amnesty programme was characterized by some acts of militancy and sabotage by the militants who did not accept the Presidential Amnesty. For instance on 15 March, 2010 in Delta State, MEND set off two car bombs at the venue where a post amnesty dialogue was taking place. One person was killed and several others injured in the incident. Similarly, on 1st October, 2010 a car bomb went off at Eagle's Square in Abuja where Nigeria 50th Anniversary Celebration was taking place. The event was not only disrupted, but 12 people died as a result. MEND claimed responsibility for the bombing and this later led to the arrest and trial of MEND leader, Henry Okah at his base in Johannesburg, South Africa, as well as his brother, Charles Okah and three others for terrorism on the suspicion of being the masterminds of the attack (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010 cited in Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012).

But after over a half decade of the Amnesty Programme, it appears to be the magic wand owing to the success it has recorded in check-mating the Niger Delta conflict. It has not only restored relative peace in the region, but improved national security which in turn, has created a relatively conducive atmosphere that allows oil exploration and production. The Amnesty Programme has proved to be "the most pragmatic strategies and procedures

for conflict resolution, peace-building and sustainable development in the region” (Etekpe, 2012, p.94). In this regard, Okoli (2013) averred that:

The proclamation of state Amnesty on the Niger Delta militant in 2009 marked a water-shed in the search for a lasting resolution of the Niger Delta crisis. The Amnesty Programme was a well thought out policy designed to bring about cessation of active hostility in the Niger Delta region as well as disarming and reintegration of the militants into the society (p.43).

The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) which was aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the ex-militants in the Niger Delta region has achieved its immediate goals of cessation of hostilities, restoration of oil and gas production and increasing of oil revenues (Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2014). Peace in the Niger Delta is a pre-requisite for economic development of the region and Nigeria as a whole. As expected, since the proclamation of amnesty for the militants, peace and safety have returned to the once volatile region. Economic benefits had also accrued as oil production which was less than one million barrels per day in pre-Amnesty period rose to between 2.4 and 2.6 million barrels per day in the post-Amnesty period (Kuku, 2011). However, the recent resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta is an indication that the peace achieved by the Amnesty Programme was only relative and temporary (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3
Piracy, Oil Theft and Kidnapping of Sailors 2011-2014: The New Face of Militancy

S/N	Date	Incidence	Vessel/Outcome	Militant Affiliation/Place
1	September 14, 2011	Kidnapping of 14 Filipinos and 9 Spanish sailors	AT Mathios. Release of 23 sailors on 26 th September, 2011	Allegedly mend
2	October 13, 2011	Kidnapping of 20 Russian Sailors	Mt cape Burd. Sailors released	Allegedly mend
3	October 19, 2011	2011. Hijack of Exxon Mobile oil Tanker	Ahstwiwert Tide. Large amount of oil stolen. Captain released	Allegedly mend. Near Opobo
4	November 1, 2011	Kidnapping of 2 British Sailors	Chevron oil Vessel Sailors released in December 2011	Allegedly mend
5	February, 29, 2012	Kidnapping of 3 Dutch sailors		Allegedly mend Gunmen/Off the Rivers State Coast
6	August 4, 2012.	Kidnapping of 3 sailors. Gun battle with Nigerian Navy	Oil carrier 35 miles off Nigerian coast	Allegedly mend
7	September 5, 2012	Hijack of oil tanker, 14 miles off Nigerian coast	Abu Dhabi Star	Allegedly mend
8	October 15, 2012	Kidnapping of 7 sailors aboard	Bourbon liberty 249 Allegedly released on	

		bourbon liberty 249	payment of ransom on November	
9	December 13, 2013	Attack of oil carrier pm Salem	PM Salem. One person killed and another injured	
10	December 17, 2012	Kidnapping of 5 Indian sailors aboard SP Brussels	SP Brussels. Ship looted and set ablaze S sailors released on ransom in January, 2013	
11	December 23, 2012	Kidnapping of 3 Italian sailors Aboard Asso Ventino	Asso Ventino. Sailor on ransom payment in January 2013. s released	
12	on ransom payment in January 2013	Hijack of Filipino operated vessel	Kidnapping of one sailor and killing of another	
13	February 7, 2013	Kidnapping of 2 Russian and 1 Romania sailors aboard British cargo ship	Looting and damage of ship. Sailors released on March 13, 2013	
14	February 17, 2013	Kidnapping of 6 Russian sailors aboard armada Tuah 101	Sailors released on payment of ransom	
15	February 10, 2013	Attack on oil carrier armada Turgas and oil carrier Walves 7		Allegedly mend
16	February 22, 2013	Kidnapping of 2 Pakistan sailors aboard oil carrier	1 released	
17	March 7, 2013	Kidnapping of 3 Malaysian sailors aboard armada Tuah 22	Released following a raid on mend camp	
18	March 8, 2013	Hijack of oil Carrier	Looting, theft of oil	
19	April 22, 2013	Kidnapping of 4 sailors	Released upon JFT attacks on camp on may	Allegedly mend
20	April 28, 2013	Kidnapping of 9 oil workers from a Shell operated oil installation		Allegedly mend
21	April 29, 2013	Kidnapping of 5 sailors aboard cargo ship off the coast of brass	Released after payment of ransom on may 14, 2013	
22	Released after payment of ransom on may 14, 2013	kidnapping of 12 Pakistan and 5 Nigerian sailors aboard Mt matrix oil Tanker	Crew released after payment of ransom	
23	June 13, 2013	Hijack of French oil tanker off the coast of Togo	One sailor seized but released on JTF seizure of camps	
24	June 19, 2013	kidnapping of 2 Indian and 2 polish sailors aboard oil vessel mdpl		Pirates allegedly affiliated to mend

		continental		
25	July 26, 2013	Hijack of Murkish oil carrier Mt cotton off the coast of Garbon	Crew held hostage. Large amounts of oil stolen	Pirates
26	August 15, 2013	Hijack of oil vessel Mt Notre	Crew held hostage until Nigerian Navy interception of ship	

Source: Ikelegbe cited in Ikelegbe and Umukoro, (2014)

Such resurgence shows some of the shortcomings of the Amnesty Programme and other steps taken so far towards addressing the Niger Delta conflict. One of such deficiencies is that the Amnesty Programme and its predecessors placed much emphasis on achieving immediate peace with little or no concrete effort to build and consolidate that peace whenever it is achieved. Peace building/consolidation is as important if not more important than peace restoration. It entails “all actions undertaken in a conflict continuum to consolidate peace and prevent recurrence of armed confrontations (Annan cited in Ikelegbe and Umuokoro, 2014). Peace building creates an environment that prevents the emergence of and receding to violent conflict. It also involves addressing the root cause of the conflict. This leads us to another shortcoming in the Amnesty Programme which is exclusion. The Presidential Amnesty Programme is rather exclusive than inclusive in the sense that it targets only militants without consideration for the victims of oil production and sabotaging acts of the militants – the environment and creek dwellers whose means of survival have been threatened by environmental degradation arising from oil spillage and gas flaring. Also, mothers and children who lost loved ones and, or have been displaced by the conflict were not included in the amnesty package (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010 cited in Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012). The implication of this exclusion is the emergence of what Ikelegbe and Umuokoro (2014) described as “negative peace”. According to them:

The problem in the Niger Delta region is that negative peace, the temporary cessation of violence and insecurity is being taken as permanent peace and security. Positive peace that is connected to conflict transformation, the restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of conflict is not being cultivated (P.73).

They further warned that “as long as there is no transformation of the conditions that generated the deep grievances and anger that triggered armed resistance and violence, positive peace would continue to evade the region” (Ikelegbe and Umuokoro, 2014, p.73). There is no doubt that disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian society can make an important contribution to conflict resolution (Zeeuw, 2001) as we have seen in the post-Amnesty period. But these alone cannot guarantee an enduring social peace as the recent resurgence of militancy has shown. Although the term “peace” is relative and the conditions for peace differ from one society to another, it is a process involving activities that increase development and reduce conflict. It entails justice and development (Ibeanu, 2005). Peace is a general expression of human desires, of that which is good and would bring happiness and as such, should be ultimately pursued (Galtung, 1967). Despite its relative nature, social peace is concerned with collective interests. Justice and equity, reduced social tensions and increased development are some of the attributes that guarantee the permanence of social peace (Kaynak, 2014, p.367). Post conflict peace building exercise should involve broad based

reconstruction of damaged rural infrastructures and restoration of livelihoods sources rather than narrow ends that would benefit the elite and ex-combatant leaders (Addison 2001). Zeroing this down to the Niger Delta crisis, justice and equity as well as broad based reconstruction should include not just state pardon, retraining and re-integration of the ex-militants, but also a holistic clean-up of the already damaged environment as well as the reclamation of their means of livelihood.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has been able to apprise militancy in the Niger Delta vis-à-vis the challenge of environmental sustainability and social peace. It argued that the recent resurgence of militancy in spite of the Amnesty Programme, and the seeming intractable nature of the Niger Delta crisis is a consequence of the persistence of underdevelopment, and colossal environmental degradation which continues to threaten the means of survival of the Niger Delta people.

In conclusion, the paper recommends that the actualization of a lasting social peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta is contingent on the following: First is that all the three tiers of government – federal, state and local governments should embark on a massive development of the Niger Delta region through provision of social infrastructure such as electricity, good roads, well-equipped hospitals, functional schools, and skill acquisition centres to empower the unemployed youth with skills. The Niger Delta deserves to have the best social amenities after-all it is the golden goose that lays the golden egg (crude oil) which sustains the Nigerian economy. Moreover, when such amenities are provided, they will act as catalyst for industrialization and employment generation because the presence of such amenities can attract industries and the resultant job opportunities to the region. To achieve this will require that corruption in the region particularly among the state governors, local government chairmen and traditional rulers is fought to a standstill.

Secondly, the oil companies in partnership with the federal government should embark on a holistic clean up of the polluted environment in the Niger Delta. Oil companies should also put in place an efficient quick-response-mechanism to clean up oil spillage without delay whenever and wherever it occurs. This would entail deploying cutting-age technologies to monitor, dictate and fix leakages in oil wells, pipelines and other platforms. The federal government should be seen to be proactive in enacting and enforcing the relevant laws in this regard and that should include sanctioning of the erring oil companies.

Thirdly, the oil companies should eschew compromising international standards when it comes to environmental impact assessment and safety as they affect oil production. They should also stop the ongoing rape of the environment in the Niger Delta by mitigating oil spillage and gas flaring.

The fourth recommendation is that the Niger Delta militants should stop vandalizing oil and gas pipelines because such act also leads to oil spillage which contributes to environmental degradation.

Finally, there is a need to incorporate environmental clean-up into the Amnesty Programme as well as into future plans for peace and development for the Niger Delta.

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