

An Assessment Of The Amnesty Programme Implementation In The Niger Delta Of Nigeria (2009-2011)

Chukwuka E. Ugwu

&

A. N. Oben.

Abstract

One of the most current and topical issues within the context of peace and conflict resolution in Nigeria, borders on the lingering militancy and the subsequent President Yar'Adua's (2008) amnesty programme in Niger Delta. The objective of this paper is to unravel the puzzles behind the fact that, in spite of the on-going amnesty implementation, the region is still entangled by militancy insurrection. The paper adopted the methodology of secondary sources of data, hypothesizing in the process that there are constraining factors inhibiting the effectiveness of the amnesty programme. The findings of the study established that, the amnesty programme is regrettably too petite on the imperative developmental requirements, for redressing the demands of the region.

Keywords: Assessment, Amnesty Programme, Niger Delta, Implementation, Nigeria

Introduction

The Delta of the Niger River in Nigeria is a densely populated region, sometimes called the Oil Rivers, because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The area was the British Oil River Protectorate

from 1885 until 1893 when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate (Utelu, 2009).

The Niger Delta, as now defined officially by the Nigerian Government, extends over 70,000km and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. Historically and cartographically, according to Utelu (2009), it consists of the present day Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states. In the year 2000 however, Obasanjo's regime expanded its definition to include Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo States. Some 31 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups, speaking some 250 dialects, live in the Niger Delta (Fubara, 2002). The amnesty policy of the Nigerian federal government in the Niger Delta region which constitutes an aspect of this study covers some states in the region as Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and River States.

Today, oil and gas production remains central to the effective functioning of the Nigerian state. Paradoxically, the oil-producing states within the federated Nigeria, according to Nwaodike and Ebiefa (2010), have benefited the least from this oil wealth and by extension negatively affected the inhabitants of the region. According to the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP, 2008) Niger Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor and economic conflict. It is against this background that various leaders of the region have been calling for a redress of this socio-economic situation of the region in various fora. These include Ogoni Bill of Right (1990), the Kaiama Declaration (1998), among others.

As a consequence of the above stated poor socio-economic conditions of the people of Niger Delta over their impoverished existence, Gowon (2008) concedes that there are justifiable feelings by the communities in the area that much is taken out from them without a corresponding return of benefits to the area. In a detailed affirmation of the imperatives of a development-oriented approach to the increasing poverty in the Niger Delta, Gowon (2008:1) did state that:

Niger Delta is overdue for development. The plans earlier put in place during my administration, which could have addressed the problems, were not only implemented but totally abandoned by successive federal administration to the detriment of the region and the nation. This is unlike what transpires in the Middle East countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE (Dubai) etc where the desert is turned into a green vegetation and a massive physical and infrastructural development.

In spite of this clarion call by Gowon (2008) and a whole lot of other similar “save our soul” (SOS) calls to the federal government of Nigeria for urgent development of this area, not much was done by the federal government. These observed inadequacies on the part of the federal government, towards the development of the Niger Delta communities, gave rise to community agitations mainly championed by the youths

However, all these agitations according to Nwaodike and Ebienfa (2010) hardly resulted to any positive response on the part of the central government. Instead the agitation was met with state violence that has resulted in the militant approach by the youths in the region. Since 2006, these little known militant groups have emerged in Nigeria’s oil

Niger Delta, making life difficult for the Nigerian government and the oil companies in the region. Their activities include errant violent movement, sea piracy and bunkering of oil installations, agitation for resources control, hostage taking of foreign and local oil workers, communal clashes, among others. The implications of these militant activities, among others, are social instability, tension in the region and loss of oil and gas resources by the federal government of Nigeria and the oil and gas companies.

In an effort to bring peace and free flow of oil in the region, the federal government under the presidency of late Yar'Adua in 2008 initiated an amnesty programme for all militants in the region. The programme required militants to surrender their arms and in turn are pardoned for their activities. However, in spite of the implementation of this amnesty programme since 2008 in the region, recent reports Segun (2011:1) and Omon (2011:1) demonstrate that militancy and the attendant consequences are still experienced in the region.

It is in the light of the above antecedents that the basic objective of the study is to investigate why, in spite of the over three years of the implementation of the Amnesty Programme, the militancy and violence in the region is yet to abate. To engage in this effectively, we situate the Amnesty implementation programme in the Niger Delta, its features and dynamics as a phenomenon that affects the entire Nigeria as a social system, orchestrating national development problems and consequences there from.

To focus on our study properly, the following objectives constitute the paper's analytical benchmark:

- ✓To ascertain the historical circumstances that warranted the federal government amnesty programme in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.
- ✓To assess the actual implementation of the Amnesty programme and the attendant matters arising from the implementation thereto; and
- ✓To ascertain measures to be adopted in order to achieve the noble objectives of the amnesty programme and eradicate violent and militant activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

To accomplish the above objectives, this study adopted the social research typology of the documentary methods of data collection. This refers to already existing documented materials on the topic of study in the form of books, journals, newspapers and the internet sources etc. With these sources of data collection, qualitative and empirical analysis of the social, economic and political issues within the purview of the Amnesty programme is embarked on. These analyses will be conducted within the data analytical framework of detailed description and generalizations.

Prelude to the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta

The historical trajectory that acted as a precursor to the crisis and the attendant amnesty programme in the Niger Delta has its roots in what has been termed, Ibeanu (2008) the antimonies of affluence and affliction. In his seminal synthesis of this claim of afflictions in the preponderance of affluence, Ibeanu (2008) did propound three essential theses of exploitation, insecurity and underdevelopment, under which the people of Niger Delta are subjected to.

Since the 1950's when oil was first found according to Eye (2007) the oil producing regions of the Nigeria's Niger Delta have

earned the country and major oil companies like Shell, Elf, Chevron, Agip, Exxon Mobil, hundreds of billions of dollars. But defying the laws of gravity, these billions have not trickled down to the poor peasants of the Delta region, nor for that matter, the working masses of Nigeria. In this regard, Ibeanu (2008:15) has posited that, the Nigerian Niger Delta:

Has become emblematic of all that is wrong with Nigeria and yet remains indicative, of the hopes of a better Nigeria. What is happening in the Niger Delta is a clear lesson of the dialectical relation between affluence and affliction and how social forces try to reconcile the two.

For Ibeanu (2008) and Onuoha (2008) the endowment of natural resource can be a blessing or curse, depending on how it is used. Some nations, according to Onuoha (2008), have seen revenues from oil squandered through corruption or used to fund conflict, while the petrobourgeoisie, on the other hand, smile home with fat money bag. In the Niger Delta scenario, particularly, Ibeanu (2008) has acknowledged that the endowment of natural resource of the Niger Delta is more of a curse to the citizens of the area than a blessing. In this view, Ibeanu (2008:18) pointedly states that:

One of the most glaring contradictions in the Niger Delta is the glaring differences between the petrobourgeoisie and the petrolatariat. Indeed, a lasting paradox of the petro-state in Nigeria is the level of poverty in the Niger Delta, which is the source of the country's oil wealth. Without doubt, Niger Delta's poverty is in part the consequence of oil production, especially its environmental consequences, which have destroyed livelihoods by destroying farmland and fishing waters. The numerous negative environmental impacts of crude oil mining and refining are well known. Pollution arising

from oil spillage destroys marine life and crops, makes water unsuitable for fishing and renders many hectares of farmland unusable. Brine from oil fields contaminates water formations and streams, making them unfit as sources of drinking water. At the same time, flaring gas in the vicinity of human dwellings and high pressure oil pipelines that form a mesh across farmlands are conducive to acid rains, deforestation and destruction of wildlife. In addition, dumping of toxic, non-biodegradable by-products of oil refining is dangerous to both flora and fauna, including man.

As stated above, the cataclysmic consequences of oil and gas exploration in the Niger Delta has damaged the environment and caused untold hardship to the people of the region. In contrast to the above present poor ecological scenario of the Niger Delta, Nnamani, et. al (2011) indicated that the ecological areas of the region before the advent of commercial oil and gas production were exactly the opposite. In this regard, their comment (Nnamani, et. al 2011:163) is very apposite as follows:

The region was essentially a pristine environment which supported substantial subsistence resources for the most sedimentary populations. These include among other things, medicinal herbs and barks, fish and shrimp, crabs and clams, wood for energy and shelter as well as a stable soil for farming and habitat for exotic wild life.

There was the Delta elephant, the white crested monkey, the river hippopotamus, as well as a colourful array of exotic birds, crocodiles, turtles and alligators. This area, according to Abosedo (2010), as cited by Nnamani and Ayogu (2011:163)

was blessed with a long coastline, extensive brackish, mangrove swamps supporting a wide range of fish specifics, such as Tilapia, “Threadfins, moon fish, Bony tongue fish, Tiger fish, catfish, see catfish, snappers, crayfish, see turtle, lobsters, sardine, West African croakers, mullets, mackerels, Razor fish, Electric fish, and many others.

Nevertheless, the recent despoliation of the Niger Delta environment orchestrated social tensions by the citizens of the area that have burgeoned into the latest militant phenomena in the region. As Onuoha (2008) rightly noted, the history of protests and conflicts of acrimony by the Niger Delta people against forced union and exploitation, dates back to 1957, when testimonies were made in respect thereof before the Willink commission of inquiry into minority fear. Subsequently, several protests and clamours for justice have been registered to no avail.

In the manner of operationalizing the maxims of **if peaceful change becomes impossible, then violent change becomes inevitable** the people of Niger Delta responded to the negative responses of the Nigerian state and the operating oil and gas companies with militancy. Ebiefa and Nwaodike (2010) noted that, it is the paradox of suffering in the midst of plenty that inspired to Niger Deltans to make demands on the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies to improve their living conditions. But instead of redress, the people were visited with state violence, repression and brutalization.

Major Isaac Adaka Boro was one of the pioneers of minority rights activism in the region. In a treatise on the person of Isaac Boro, BBC World Service (1995) described him as an undergraduate student of

Chemistry and student union President at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who left school to lead an armed protest against the exploitation of oil and gas resource in the Niger Delta area. He was the leader of Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), an armed militia with members consisting mainly of his fellow Ijaw ethnic group. Boro Adaka Jasper with his 40 member armed group blew up oil pipe lines, attacked police stations and decalred the independence of Niger Delta Republic on February 23 1966. This “treasonable” act was suppressed by the federal government of Nigeria, sanctioning Boro and his men to death sentence. The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and nine other Ogoni men in 1995 as a result of the founding of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990 and the invasion and occupation of Niger Delta communities such as Uwuechem, Ogoni, Opia, Tombia, Kaiama, Soku, Odi, Agee, Ezetu, Gbanramatu, Oporoza, Peremabiri, etc by the Nigerian military captures the reality (Ebienfa and Nwaodike 2010).

Ebienfa and Nwaodike (2010) emphasizes that the refusal of the Nigerian state to respond positively to the pens and placards of such personalities as Harold Dappa-Piriye’s and Ken Saro-Wiwa, further increased the environment of anger and desperation. The struggle was thus militarized in response to the violent posture of the insensitive Nigerian state that led to the emergence of armed groups.

From the dialectics of violent oil agitation (militancy) in the Niger Delta, two major arguments appear discernable. The first argument is that, militancy is as a result of the Nigerian governments’ application of force in quelling non-violent agitation/protests for development and resource control (Nwabueze, 1999, Azaiki, 2009; Ebienfa and Nwaodike,

2009). The second argument asserts that, militancy in the term of hostage taking, kidnapping, pipeline vandalization, hijacking, etc is as a result of frustration due to lack of education, poverty, unemployment and idleness of youths in the region. It therefore, counts, that militant are not fighting for the socio-economic and political emancipation of the region, but simply to enrich themselves (Ibeanu, 2000).

The truth, as stated by Nwaodike and Ebienfa (2010), remains that; there is no homogeneity in terms of militant characters, ambitions and activities. This is because; their creation process, ushered in three different categories of militants in the Niger Delta. These include:

- ❖ Resource agitator's militant category (General Tompolo, Alex Preye, Asari Dokubo, Henry Okah, etc).
- ❖ Cult groups militant category (Ateke Tom, Soboma George, etc) ; and
- ❖ The political thug's militant category (General Africa, Commander Joshua, etc).

In general, some of the major militant groups that are involved in the Niger Delta agitation include, among others: Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Federated Niger Delta Communities and the outlaws operating under MEND in Rivers State, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (MDPVF), Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV) and People's Liberation Force (PLF) etc. For the purpose of this study however, our discourse is on the "Resource Agitators Militant Category" devoid of the criminal and political thug's militant groups

Theoretical Discourse

The analytical construct adopted for this paper is structural functionalism. Structural functionalist theoretical underpinning is an attempt to explain the organization of any society in the process of the maintenance of order and stability or what is called societal equilibrium. In the theory's exegesis of the attainment of the social equilibrium, which is found in the social system, structural functionalism indicates that certain phenomena are functionally imperative. These necessary intervening variables are the social structures, processes and the mechanisms that are to be in place for the structures to attend to their functions.

In this respect, function is defined as a "diagnosed consequence which a social phenomenon has for a wider system, of which, it is a part" (Mitchell, 1979). Ruth (2008:6), in stressing on the relevance of this functional imperative asserts that:

The central concern of structural functionalism was the continuation of the Durkheimian task of explaining the apparent stability and internal cohesion of societies, which is necessary to ensure its continued existence over time. Societies are seen as coherent, abounded and fundamentally relational constructs which function like organisms, with their various parts (social institutions) working together to maintain and reproduce them...working in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion towards the maintenance of overall social equilibrium.

The theory is characterized by many proponents among which are Auguste Comte, Talcott Parsons (1951) Merton (1967) Durkheim (1915) and Radeiff-Brown (1952) among others. Among these theorists

of structural functionalism however, there are slight nuances in their peculiar postulations of the theory. In spite of these nuances, the following are the major tenets of the theory:

- Every society is characterized by relational differentiations which increases the complexity of its social organizations.
- As society grows, there exists the adaptive upgrading of social institutions which become increasingly specialized in the growth process.
- As the growth of society expands, groups that were previously excluded in the social dynamics as a result of factors as class, race, politics, economy etc gains increasingly included and become accepted by the entire society.
- With increase in societal growth, there is the development of new ideas, philosophy, values etc that creates room for increased tolerance and legitimization of greater range of activities in society.
- Societies are imbued with conflicts but not great enough to dramatically disrupt the societal evolutionary change. All the societal conflicts or external threats are orchestrating factors towards needed adjustment to a new equilibrium.
- All structures of the society are operationally interdependent with a change in one affecting others, and that;
- All these societal structures are highly functional in nature eg interest articulation and aggregation, rule making, application and adjudication etc all combined in the regulative, extractive and the distributive functions within the environment.

In applying the structural functionalist theory to our study---An Assessment of the Amnesty Programme Implementation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria (2009-2011)---the theory assisted this discourse, to identify the roles played by the adopted structures created by the federal government of Nigeria in the implementation of Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. Additionally it assists in the examination of the dynamics of using the amnesty programme of the federal government in resolving the theory issues of marginalizing the citizens of Niger Delta in the developmental equation of Nigeria. In this sense, the region is now included instead of excluded from the development agenda of the federal government. Moreso, the theory when applied to the study enabled the study to carefully analyze, assess and establish the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of the Amnesty Programme and the resultant constraints thereto. It is based on the utilization of this theoretical framework that the study engaged in detailed generalization and recommendation of the study.

An Overview of the Amnesty Policy in the Niger Delta

The amnesty policy of the late President Yar'Adua of Nigeria originated from the earlier policy of his regime called the Seven-Point-Agenda of January 11, 2007, in which he stressed on the need for security in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta region (Adeyemo et al 2011). On Yar'Adua's emphasis on this imperative for security in the Niger Delta, Ugwu (2009:2011) has reported that:

A major plank of the Seven-Point Agenda in this area is the priority that will be given to the security in the Niger Delta, which will emphasize, not so much of the military initiatives, but peaceful dialogue between the Niger Delta citizens and the federal government.

On the basis of the above promise by the late President Yar'Adua, the federal government of Nigeria in September 5, 2008, set up a 45 member Niger Delta Technical Committee, with a mandate Oben (2011:53) to:

Review and distil all previous reports on the Niger Delta and come up with appropriate recommendations on the way forward for the region... the recommendations of the committee will form the basis of planned discussions between the federal government and Niger Delta leaders towards a holistic development of the oil rich region.

The above stated Niger Delta Technical Committee headed by a chairman-Mr. Ledum Mitee- President of MOSOP also involved representatives of the states that comprised the geographical region of Niger Delta, including Abia and Ondo States and Niger Delta representatives in Diaspora, especially these residing in United Kingdom and the United States. In order for the committee to arrive at comprehensively acceptable recommendations, invitation for memoranda to the committee were called and received from various Niger Delta stake holders and interest groups. About a total of four hundred (400) memoranda were received from the following:

- ✓ The nine states of the region;
- ✓ The various Niger Delta communities;
- ✓ Some civil society organizations and the private sector; and
- ✓ A submission by the joint revolutionary council of all Niger Delta militant groups etc.

After careful distilling of the various submissions by the various groups, the Niger Delta Technical Committee came up with, some many recommendations which were forwarded to the federal government. Some of the recommendations were divided into categories called technical report (TOR) 1 to 3 and others. Prominent among the non TOR recommendations is the novel approach called (Oben 2011) **Compact with stakeholders in the Niger Delta**. Reporting further on this compact with stakeholders in the Niger Delta approach, Oben (2011:66) has maintained that this approach was:

Designed to build broad-based implementation and commitment solution to the Niger Delta crisis. This Compact is targeted at quick impact and gains that are achievable within the residue of the first term of the present government. The absence of trust and the need to see marked improvement in the quantity and quality of implementation make the **Compact with stakeholders in the Niger Delta** an innovation, which will be used to accurately measure political will on all sides in the Niger Delta equation and potentially to redefine the relationships between stakeholders towards the Region's future.

Apart from the compact approach recommendations of the committee, some general recommendations for solving the Niger Delta crisis were also put forward. These according to Oben (2011:67) are as indicated below:

- ❖ Increased revenue allocation of 25% in the interim but with a graduation towards 50%, leveraging extra funds from other sources;

- ❖ Establishment of a Disarmament, Decommission and Reintegration (DDR) Commission which will explore negotiated approaches to address the challenge of arms and militancy;
- ❖ Open trial and unconditional bail for Henry Okah;
- ❖ Negotiate amnesty for all Niger Delta militants;
- ❖ End to gas flaring by December 2008;
- ❖ Achievement of 5,000MW of power for the Region by 2010;
- ❖ Completion of the dualisation of the East-West road including spurs to each of the coastal states; and
- ❖ Ensure significant improvement in education, health and youth employment in the Region.

Within the ambit of TOR 3 of the recommendation, three areas of federal government intervention, in the development of the region were emphasized. These areas are on:

- ❖ Good governance and rule of law in the region
- ❖ Appropriate and timely regional development; and
- ❖ Good regional human development

The details of these three areas of intervention required for the federal government include among others:

- Reduction in the incidence and impact of corruption in the region;
- Establishment of credible institutions in the region;
- Adjustments and legal amendments to correct existing socio-economic imbalance in the region;
- Improved transportation, power, education, health, water, resources, management of land and environmental sustainability in the region; and

- Improved youth, women empowerment and overall reduction in regional unemployment etc.

The federal government of Nigeria, after reviewing the recommendations of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, accepted in theory the recommendations of the committee, among which is the negotiation of amnesty for all Niger Delta militants.

Other recommendations also accepted to be implemented soonest are the timely regional development and its good regional human development correlate. In reporting on the federal government of Nigeria's proclamation on the accepted amnesty policy, Amnesty International (2009) had quoted President Yar'Adua of Nigeria as proclaiming on June 25, 2009 that the federal government had granted amnesty to the Niger Delta militants. In a detailed report of the proclamation, Amnesty International (2009:1) did aver that Yar'Adua stated as follows:

Whereas certain elements of the Niger Delta populace have resorted to unlawful means of agitation for the development of the region, including militancy, thereby threatening peace, security, order and good governance and jeopardizing the economy of the nation.....

Now therefore, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, after due consultation with the Council of States and in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by the provisions of section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, make the following proclamation:

1. I hereby grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta
2. The pardon shall take effect upon the surrender and handing over of all equipment, weapons, arms and

ammunition and execution of the renunciation of militancy forms specified in the schedule hitherto, by the affected persons at the nearest collection centre established for the purpose in each of the Niger Delta states;

3. The unconditional pardon granted pursuant to this proclamation shall extend to all persons presently being prosecuted for offences associated with militant activities; and
4. This proclamation shall cease to have effect from Sunday, 4th October 2009.

Apart from the granting of amnesty to the Niger Delta militants as part and parcel of accepting the recommendations of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, the President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua however added a caveat. This caveat was that the federal government of Nigeria would only implement those recommendations it found acceptable and politically convenient to his regime (Adeyemo et al 2011).

Whither Amnesty Programme Implementation In The Niger Delta

As earlier stated in this study, the amnesty programme of the Yar'Adua, regime that emerged in 2008, is just one of the series of federal government policies since independence that is geared towards solving the Niger Delta crisis. The first policy after independence was the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) of 1960 to the one shortly before the amnesty, known as the Ministry of the Niger Delta in 2008. Despite all these policies leading to committees being set up, a plethora of analysts, Ikelegbe (2005) and (2006) Ojakorotu et al (2006) Watts (2007) and Adeyemo et al (2011) have made scathing remarks about the efficacy of the implementation of these programmes. As particularly stated by Adeyemo, et. al. (2011:13):

Much as the Nigerian state have set up committee to find lasting solutions to the minority problems, especially in the Niger Delta, very little positive results have been achieved...it is on record that the report of all committees set up between 2002 and 2007 are still been kept by the government. The state often appears disoriented in how to approach the Niger Delta crisis.

In the case of the Yar'Adua's 2008 amnesty implementation in Nigeria, it has been opined (Adejumobi 2009) that it defies all known international patterns. In adumbrating on the international pattern of amnesty, Adejumi (2009) has opined that:

Political amnesty is usually a product of two contexts. The first is a negotiated settlement in which two warring parties have arrived at a dead-end in their conflict, and decided to settle their differences politically. The second context is one of a victor's amnesty in which a party overwhelms the other, claim victory and decides to be magnanimous in victory by offering amnesty to some or all of the combatants on the defeated side.

From the above depiction of the conventional pattern of amnesty programme, it is of note that, the Musa Yar'Adua's 2008 amnesty to the Niger Delta militants fails short of expectation. This inadequacy in the 2008 Niger Delta amnesty did attract the criticism of the programme by Adeyemo, et. al. (2011) when they argued that the 2008 Niger Delta amnesty is:

Neither a negotiated settlement in the Niger Delta, nor a victor's benevolence of any kind. There is no peace truce and the federal government has not won the military battle in the creeks, in spite of its heavy artillery and weaponry. Why then offer an amnesty in a vacuum?

In spite of the vacuumed nature of the 2008 Niger Delta amnesty, there are some social analysts, Lysias (2011), Oji, et. al. (2009) and International Crisis Group (2009) that have contended that the programme and its implementation have had some strings of successes. The success rate of the implementation is showcased by a myriad of militant groups that have renounced their militancy as at 3rd October 2009, as shown below:

Table 1: Synopsis of Key Militants that Accepted the Amnesty in 2009.

S/N	NAMES	DATE OF ACCEPTANCE	ESTIMATED ARMS AND AMMUNITIONS SURRENDERED
1	Solomon Ndigbara alias Osama bin Laden	26 June 2009	Gave up 11 arms and 1,000 ammunitions
2	Henry Okah	13 July 2009	Though the supposed leader of MEND, Okah did not surrender any arm because he had been arrested in Angola and extradited to Nigeria since February 2008; where he was detained and was facing closed trial on 62 count charges.
3	Victor Ben Ebikabowei alias General Boyloaf and 31 other militants; including African Owei, Joshua Macaiver and Ezizi Ogunboss	7 August 2009	Surrendered an assortment of arms totalling 520, ammunitions valued at 95,970 rounds and 16 gunboats.
4	Soboma George of Outlaws cult group.	13 August 2009	Surrendered 36 assorted weapons
5	Kile Silkey Torughedi (Young Shall Grow).	5 September 2009	Gave up an assortment of arms totalling 100 weapons, ammunitions worth 100,00 rounds and 3 gunboats
6	Ateke Tom of NDV	3 October 2009	Exact number is unknown but it included: anti-aircraft launchers, GPMG, Ak-47 rifles, Mark 4 rifles, pistols and loads of ammunition.
7	Manfimisebi Othello and the Gwama Boys of Ilaje	3 October 2009	Surrendered different weapons, such as: sub-machine guns, AK-47 rifles, hundreds of live ammunition and arrows

8	Biibo Ajube, second in command to Tompolo	3 October 2009	Surrendered several AK-47 rifles, heaps of ammunitions, hand grenades, rocket launchers and explosives.
9	Fara Dagogo of NDSF	3 October 2009	Exact number is unknown but is also included: anti-aircraft launchers GPMG, AK47 rifles, Mark 4 rifles, pistons and loads of ammunition.
10	Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo or GOC), a key militant of MEND	3 October 2009	Surrendered over 117 assorted weapons, 20 bullet proof jackets, numerous boxes of ammunitions, 26 camouflage uniforms, loads of dynamites, tear gases cans, on 4 th October 2009; the last day of the amnesty.

Source: Lysias (2011:60)

The above table demonstrates that a preponderant number of militant groups did accept the amnesty programme through their disarmament, decommission and reintegration. From the above table, some major militants as Tompolo, Ateke Tom and Soboma George etc all have complied with the spirit of amnesty.

Notwithstanding this phenomenon of militancy renunciation, by some elements of the Niger militants, the questions one should ask are: Is the amnesty policy the only recommendation of the Niger Delta Technical Committee on the issue of the region? What has happened to the resolution of other critical aspects of the recommendation that will affect the wider members of the Niger Delta communities? Why is it that, in spite of the implementation of the amnesty programme for over three years now, there are still incidences of violent militancy activities in the region? Whither amnesty programme in the Niger Delta of Nigeria?

Paradoxically stated, it should be attested to, that the answer to the above questions usher in a prognosis of the 2008 amnesty

programme and its expected contribution, in resolving the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria. In line with (Adeyemo, et. al. 2011), these answers will be tackled as matters arising from the amnesty programme implementation of the Yar'Adua administration.

Key Issues Arising From the 2008 Amnesty Implementation in the Niger Delta

One of the key matters arising from the amnesty policy is that it is over-emphasized to the point of gross neglect of other essential elements of the Niger Delta Technical Committee recommendations. A “militant-centred” approach to the Niger Delta imbroglio demonstrates a limited solution to a region that suffers from the tragedy of (Sachs, 2005) the poverty trap, in which poor health in combination with poor education and poor social infrastructures reinforce one another.

Ipsa facto, there is no gainsaying the fact therefore that the Niger Delta crisis requires more serious, fundamental approach on issues like:

- ✓ Environmental pollution and despoliation
- ✓ Legislations against disempowerment and subjugations; and
- ✓ The issues of political marginalization and exclusion, etc.

Another issue arising from the implementation of the amnesty is the total sum of money and other promises granted the militants in comparism with the gains from militancy activities. According to reports (Akinwale, 2010:12) each repentant militant now receives N50,000.00 monthly stipend and N1,500.00(\$9.93) daily feeding allowance as well as vocational training in on-going rehabilitation programme. For a militant and members of his group, this promised amount constitutes

only a minuscule of such sums as \$100 million paid as ransom for kidnapping one or few foreign oil workers (Africa Report 2007). Such sums of money are also a far cry from the amount of \$109 billion (N283 billion) and \$3 billion (N430 billion) Nigeria lost to illegal oil bunkering in 2006, and the first seven months of 2008 respectively (Lysias, 2011). The message here is that militancy and the gains from it are too tempting to be entirely stopped by such amnesty programme. These gains from militancy activities are the **raison d'être** why militancy has continued unabated in the region even till 2011. Instances of the latest militancy activities are the John Togo militant group that abandoned the amnesty package mid-stream, vandalizing oil pipes and kidnapping oil and gas workers in the region (Segun, 2011).

The third matter arising from the amnesty proclamation and its implementation is that it has not addressed the issue of resource control for the region, which is one of the key demands of the militants. The present allocation formula of 13% derivation (federal allocation) fund to the region is not acceptable to the militants (Dokubo-Asari, 2011). In warning the federal government on the consequences of not addressing this issue, Dokubo-Asari (2011:1) states that:

We are on sabbatical. We may be forced back into the trenches and armed struggle would be the last resort. We are only giving Goodluck (Jonathan) a chance to make a difference, to bring about change within one year.

From the views of Dokubo-Asari as quoted above, it is imperative to aver that, the federal government's inability to address the issues of resource control constitute attenuating influence on the successful implementation of the amnesty programme in Nigeria.

Another major matter arising from the amnesty implementation in the Niger Delta is the militants' lack of trust in the federal government's sincerity in paying their fifty thousand naira (50,000) monthly stipend and the inability of the federal government to include all the names of all repentant militants in the list of those slated for training, payment of allowances and subsequent employment. For instance, as of December 8, 2011, Kazeem (2011:57) had reported that scores of trained militants from Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa and Delta States marched along East-West Road in Urue Effong/Oruko Local Government of Akwa-Ibom with placards, warning of the consequences of non payment of their outstanding nine months allowances. In reporting about this, a militant leader named Kazeem (2011:57) avers as follows:

If government cannot pay us after training us, we will go back to creeks and continue from where we stopped. Enough is enough. Since the government can cheat us and treat us like that, we in turn will pay back.

The implication of all these is that, within the trajectory of the present federal government's amnesty programme implementation, it would be difficult to assert that it is a welcome catalyst to the development of the region, nor a sure-banker to checkmating the Niger Delta militancy insurgency. This assertion becomes more obvious when it is observed that there is lack of transparency and sincerity in implementing the amnesty programme, three years after the inauguration.

Recommendations for Effective Amnesty Implementation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are considered adequate for more effective amnesty implementation in the Niger Delta:

- (1) There is need to reduce the level of unemployment, under-employment and economic powerlessness of the citizens of the region. The federal and state governments should address this by the provision of opportunities for employment, training for skills acquisitions and overall socio-economic empowerment. This, implemented, will engage the masses of violent youths and frustrated citizens of the region, who might be tempted to go back to militancy.
- (2) The federal government should ensure massive investment in critical social infrastructures in the region. The emphasis should be on water services, transportation services, educational services, health services, energy supply services, etc. With these provisions, the development indicators of the region will definitely increase to ameliorate the present underdevelopment in the region.
- (3) The check on corruption and its impact in the region is necessary for good governance. This should be implemented through the intense use of anti-corruption institutions like EFCC and ICPC etc. This will checkmate these governance excesses as showcased in the former Governor DSP Alamieyeseigha's incidence of 2005.
- (4) There is the relevance of resocialization and reconscientization of the political leaders of the region towards people-oriented

development programmes. This can be done through conferences and development-oriented retreats for these leaders.

- (5) The multinational organizations engaged in oil and gas explorations in the region should be influenced by the federal government of Nigeria to adhere to right environmental practices devoid of environmental degradation and destruction of the ecology of the region. This should be done through sanctions on poor environmental practices as is obtainable in developed countries of the world. Additionally, these companies should imbibe greater social responsibility practices that will develop the Niger Delta region in comparison with other areas of the world, where oil and gas resources are found.

Conclusion

This discourse has demonstrated that the amnesty programme of the Yar'Adua administration has achieved a modicum of success in the area of militancy renunciation and surrender of arms and ammunitions. Nonetheless, it is also demonstrated in this study that the conflict and militant activities in the Niger Delta since 2008 to 2011 are observed to have only minimally reduced. This is not the objectives of the amnesty programme. These recent incidences of violent militancy activities in the region, irrespective of the on-going amnesty implementation, indicate that the agitations of the people of the region, over perceived injustices in the context of the Nigerian state are still unabated. The implications of these continuing agitations after years of amnesty implementation are pointers to the fact that, there is need for a paradigm shift in the search

for a solution to the Niger Delta socio-economic and political cataclysm. The present approach of implementing what the federal government calls “politically convenient” programmes at the expense of the recommendations of Niger Delta Technical Committee of 2008 is merely scratching the surface of the problem, thereby exposing the region to more violent upheavals. The adoption of this study’s suggested panacea may be a way out of this regional crisis that has lingered since Nigeria’s independence in 1960.

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