

Effectiveness of Nigeria's Amnesty Programme in Peace Restoration in the Niger Delta

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Abstract: *The declaration of amnesty to the Niger Delta militants by the Federal Government was seen as a roadmap to restore peace in the region. Thus, this study was carried out to investigate the effectiveness of the amnesty programme in restoring and promoting sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study was conducted in four local government areas of Delta State. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Using a survey research design, 1407 questionnaires which served as the sample size of this study were distributed but 1370 were retrieved and used for data analysis. Also, 75 indepth interviews and four focus group discussions comprising 10 participants each were conducted for the study. The quantitative data were analysed using percentages and cross tabulations (SPSS software), while the qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The data analysed revealed that there is no connection between the amnesty programme and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta; the amnesty programme has not resolved the Niger Delta conflict; peace has not returned to the Niger Delta since amnesty and the programme has led to the uprising of new militants in the region. Based on these findings, we recommended that the amnesty programme should be all embracing and it should continue until sustainable peace is achieved in the region, the unemployed youths should be identified for engagement in skill acquisition and empowerment programme while those ex-militants that have been trained should be employed to dissuade them from falling back to militancy and the infrastructural and developmental deficiencies of the region should urgently be tackled by the Federal, State and Local Government in collaboration with the oil companies operating in the region.*

Key Word: *Amnesty, Effectiveness, Niger Delta, Peace Restoration, Nigeria*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region, located in the southern part of Nigeria, remained the treasure base of the Nigerian state in the past five decades. The area harbours over 95 percent of Nigeria's crude oil and gas resources, which accounts for 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings [1]. It is also Africa's largest wetland with extensive lowlands, swamps, estuaries, creeks and rivers. In spite of its resource endowment, the region has been plagued by development neglects, trickle natural resource benefits, marginality in political representation and the oil economy [2]. The oil and gas infrastructure has led to extensive environmental degradation, destruction of livelihood sources, socio-economic disruptions and extensive poverty. These conditions generated agitation and protests beginning from the 1970s [2, 3]. The Niger Delta people have been in the agitation for justice for over four decades for the abuse of human rights and environmental degradation in the region which gave rise to the emergence of organised pressure groups and militant activities in the region [1]. The Ogoni environmental protests internationalised the agitation and catalysed further protests which by the late 1990s, turned into a youth driven militant agitation for resource control and state reforms [2].

The agitation turned into an insurgency between 1998 and 2009, with thousands of youth militias engaging the oil companies and the Nigerian security agencies, accompanied by extensive devastation of oil infrastructure, abduction and kidnapping of oil companies' staff, disruption of oil and gas production and attacks on oil tankers on the maritime waters [2]. The level of violence almost tipped to a point of outright warfare, when by June 25th, 2009, the late President Umaru Yar'Adua publicly announced a 60 days amnesty offer to be effective from August 4th to October 4th 2009. This was to halt the hostilities in the Niger Delta region and to show commitment of government towards achieving peace and development in the region [1]. Thus, the Amnesty programme hinged on a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme was

adopted in 2009 as a strategy to end the insurgency and restore the oil and gas industry and production. In fact, the Amnesty Programme was set up to bring peace to the troubled Niger Delta region in order to facilitate oil production and eventual development of the region. The programme was designed to ensure peace and reconciliation so as to facilitate uninterrupted oil exploration thereby boosting revenue that would be deployed towards tackling a wide range of problems of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region [4]. The granting of amnesty to ex-militants initially reduced the spate of violence and invariably increased oil production in the region. It helped to cut attacks on pipelines and restored oil production from 700,000 barrels per day between 2007 and mid-2009 to between 2.4 million and 2.6 million in late 2009 [5].

However, the relative peace sustained at the onset of the amnesty programme has dwindled. Despite the reduced intensity of militancy, there is still a high level of insecurity, as demonstrated by kidnappings, bombings and tension within the region. There have been upsurge of various criminalities such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, oil theft, piracy, arms trafficking, illegal refining of crude oil, etc., in the region in the post amnesty era [3,5, 6,7,8]. Consequently, the initial hope that amnesty programme would bring about sustainable peace in the Niger Delta is now faltering away as the days go by and the much needed security and development continue to elude the region [9].

Also, five years after the programme was set up, the issues of youth unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, environmental degradation that led to militancy and insurgency in the region remained unresolved hence it is the goal of this research to interrogate the effectiveness of the Nigerian Amnesty Programme in promoting peace in the Niger Delta Region with the following specific questions: (1) To what extent has the amnesty programme engendered sustainable peace and development as promised? (2) Is the amnesty programme a panacea for the protracted conflict or a mere palliative measure? (3) How effective is the Amnesty Programme in curbing insurgency in the Niger Delta? (4) To what extent has peace been restored in the Niger Delta since the Amnesty Programme? (5) What are the challenges confronting peace building in the Niger Delta? (6) What measures can be adopted to achieve sustainable peace in the Niger Delta?

II. METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Study Setting

The study adopted mixed methods of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative techniques involved the use of structured questionnaires to understand the socio-demographic attributes of respondents on one hand and the relationship between amnesty and peace on the other hand. Qualitative methods used were in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) used to enhance, as well as clarify, the quantitative results generated in the survey [10]. The in-depth interviews involved interviewing key personnel of institutions and some social activists. The study took place in 4 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Delta State where militants activities were very high such as: Warri South, Warri South West, Bomadi and Burutu LGAs. The study took place from June 2015 to March, 2016.

2.2 Sampling and Recruitment

The study's sample size was 1407. The sample size was determined using Rule of the Thumb [11]. The rule of the thumb is a conventional or a commonly accepted amount. Rules of thumb are not arbitrarily but are based on past experiences with samples that have met the requirements of statistical method. The rule of the thumb adopted for this study states that for a large populations of over 150,000, the sample size of about 1500 can be very accurate. The unit of study is the housing unit (HU). An HU was canvassed through a ward demarcated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Nigeria electoral body. Most Local Government Areas have a minimum of 10 wards and a maximum of 17 wards. By creation, each ward has a population size of 10,000 people. For purposes of selection, each ward was broken into 10 blocks with each block containing at least 1,000 people. This design enabled the selection of housing units to be easy for field staff. This method of selection gave every block within the ward the chance of being selected. With the above design, 350, 322, 369 and 366 HUs was targeted in Warri South, Warri South West, Bomadi and Burutu LGAs respectively to make up a sample size of 1407. However, 37 of these questionnaires (9 in Warri South, 7 in Warri South West, 11 in Bomadi and 10 in Burutu) were invalid or were not retrieved. Hence, it was 1370 questionnaires that were used for data analysis. A systematic sampling selection was adopted to select the housing units where household interviews were conducted. The study began with contact setting and visits to relevant stakeholders and authorities to inform them of the purpose and permission to start the study – including community development committees, local government authorities, State Government and some federal agencies responsible for amnesty.

2.3 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In all, 75 in-depth interviews were held with different stakeholders on different issues relating to amnesty and peace. Regarding FGDs, four of them were held including one each in Warri, Ogbe-Ijoh, Bomadi and Burutu– the headquarters of the LGAs of Warri South, Warri South West, Bomadi and Burutu respectively. In all, 75 persons participated in the in-depth interview include 42 men and 33 women. A total of 40 participants took part in the FGDs include ten persons each in all the four (five males and five females). All participants were paid stipends for their transportation fare and refreshments given to them at the end of each session in line with the promise to motivate them to be part of the exercise. The interviews as well as the FGDs were conducted in English and the corrupted version - pidgin.

2.4 Study questions and guide for interviews and focus group discussions.

The study's questionnaires sort such socioeconomic/demographic information such as: sex, age, religion, marital status, highest level of education, occupation, monthly income level, level of activity in the Niger Delta struggle. Questions relating to the study were on: awareness and knowledge of amnesty, possibility of amnesty bringing about sustainable peace, possibility of amnesty ending the Niger Delta crisis, possibility of amnesty effectively ending insurgency in the Niger Delta and the possibility of amnesty producing the needed peace in the Niger Delta. Other questions were on the challenges confronting the implementation of amnesty as a peace building mechanism in Nigeria and the measures that could be adopted to achieve sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software IBM version 21 using percentages and cross tabulations. Analysis of qualitative data entailed the use of N6 software after transcription of data and coding and content analysed in term of the themes and objective that the study tried to achieve. In analyzing the transcripts from the focus group discussions, in-depth and key informant interviews, the thematic analysis technique was used to uncover themes and trends. Comments on each aspect of the objectives of the study were compared by place of interview. Excerpts of the transcripts were used to complement the quantitative results where possible. Such excerpts are the views expressed by the majority of the discussants. These were also supported with similar views from the FGDs and in-depth interviews.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Approval for this work was given by Centre for Population and Environmental Development Ethical Committee. Though the study was classified as a low risk one in term of the objects of investigation, At all levels, participants were briefed on the study objectives and their consent was received verbally before administering any of the research protocols. In addition, all the participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation in the study at any stage. The participants were also assured of their anonymity during and after the study (10).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Table 1 indicates, the household size of the respondents was more from families having 7 members and above (41.8%). This was followed by households with 5 to 6 members. This is not surprising since the practice of polygamy is a common phenomenon in the Niger Delta and the people here like many African countries see the production of children as way or insurance to guarantee their future. As at the time of the survey, 55.7% of the respondents were married while 32.2% were single. However, there were pockets of them who were either divorced, separated or were widowed. With respect to the sex of the respondents, 54.6% of them were male and 45.4% being female. There were more Protestants (38.3%), followed by 30.2% and 24.1% who were Pentecostal and Catholic members respectively with other respondents who were neither catholic, Protestants nor Pentecostal in term of their religion. More of the respondents were found in the age bracket of 31 to 40 years (33.8%), followed by the age brackets of 21 to 30 (27.7%), 41 to 50 (21.5%) and more than 50 (10.1%) years respectively. Regarding the occupation of the people studied, 30.7% of them were without any occupation since they were not employed as at the time of the survey; 25.6% of them were self employed, 22.6% were civil servants while 12.1% and 9.2% respectively were engaged in fishing and farming respectively. The studied population was mostly from Ijaw (40.4%), Urhobos (23.4%) and Itsekiri 20.4%. Others were from Isoko (8.9%) and other tribes which constituted 6.9%; with 68.4% of them born in their community. Educationally, majority of the respondents (43.3%) attended primary schools, followed by 34.6% of them who attended secondary schools. Most of them (35.7%) earned N10, 000 or less (\$50.2 or less), followed with 28.7%, 22.9% and 12.7% persons who earned N11, 000 – N30, 000 (\$55.2- \$150.7), N31, 000-50,000 (\$150.7 - \$420) and above N50, 000 (more than \$420) respectively. The respondents were mostly indigenous locals (60.5%) who were involved in the Niger Delta struggle and 20.6% militants.

Table 1: Demographic/Socioeconomic profile of respondents

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
House Hold Size		
1 Member	27	2.0
2 Members	38	2.8
3-4 Members	218	15.9
5-6 Members	514	37.5
7 Members and above	573	41.8
Marital Status		
Married	763	55.7
Single	441	32.2
Divorced	30	2.2
Separated	119	8.7
Widowed	17	1.2
Sex		
Male	748	54.6
Female	622	45.4
Religion		
Catholics	330	24.1
Protestants	525	38.3
Pentecostal	414	30.2
Others	101	7.4
Age (Years)		
Less than 20	95	6.9
21-30	379	27.7
31-40	463	33.8
41-50	295	21.5
More than 50	138	10.1
Occupation		
Farming	126	9.2
Fishing	166	12.1
Civil Service	307	22.4
Self employed	351	25.6
Not employed	420	30.7
Ethnicity		
Ijaw	553	40.4
Itsekiri	279	20.4
Urbobo	321	23.4
Isoko	122	8.9
Others	95	6.9
Place of Birth		
In Community	937	68.4
In LGA but not in community	169	12.3
In the State but not in LGA	212	15.5
In Nigeria but not in State	52	3.8
Highest Level of Education		
Non	156	11.4
Primary	593	43.3
Secondary	474	34.6
Tertiary	145	10.7
Monthly Income (N)		
Less than 10,000	489	35.7
11,000-30,0000	393	28.7
31,000 -50,000	314	22.9
More than 50,000	174	12.7
Level Involvement in Niger Delta Struggle		
Yes: A militant	282	20.6
Yes: As an indigene	829	60.5
No	259	18.9

3.1 Amnesty and sustainable peace

This study was concerned about the role and effectiveness of amnesty in bringing peace to the Niger Delta. The question that was answered here was whether amnesty can lead to sustainable peace. Table 2 indicated that there is no connection between the amnesty programme and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. In reaching this conclusion in the study, the likert scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed was used to answer to the statement that "Amnesty has led to sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta" by combining strongly agreed and agreed as agreed and combining disagreed and strongly disagreed as one. From the table, a preponderant of respondents (80.2%) believed that amnesty did not lead to sustainable peace in the studied area. However some level of variations were noticed among the four LGAs where the study was carried out. While the highest level of disagreement that amnesty has led to sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta was found in Warri South LGA with 92.4%, it was 79.9%, 78.1% and 70.3% in Burutu, Warri South and Bomadi respectively. The variation noticed between Warri South and the three other LGAs may not be unconnected with the fact that the other three LGAs of Burutu, Warri South West and Bomadi were locations that most of the beneficiaries of the amnesty came from and relatively slight peace was recorded in those areas compared to Warri South LGAs – hence the greater number of persons disagreed with the statement. Hence Aghedo (13) posited that it was only hope that amnesty would bring about sustainable peace at the beginning of the programme. In his words, those early expectations that amnesty will bring about sustainable peace faltered away as days of the programme counted and that peace has continued to be elusive in the region as some other excerpts from interviews and FGDs also supported as found below:

"Amnesty initially brought hope that our boys will rest their guns and there will be peaceful atmosphere for the oil companies to operate. The good side of this was that there will be peace in the community. However, events of recent times have made us to rethink our earlier position about amnesty bringing peace to the Niger Delta. Today, kidnapping and sea piracy has continued as before the programme started. After all the life styles of the ex-militants is not helping us. Some youth feel it is better to be criminal than to be law abiding since criminality is paying better dividends. From this perspective, amnesty has produced new set of war lords who were left over of the first phase and the benefits which amnesty programme can give and the peace of our communities has become elusive due to greater agitation for amnesty slots"

-----**a section of an interview in Warri South West LGA**

"Wish kind peace una dey talk about. This tin don cause more gbeghe for areaoo. My friends de go look for guns to buy make them fit be part of the amenesi because dem don see say if you make trouble govment go call you. Bekos of this, more gbeghe don fall for area no be small at alloooo"

(Which kind of peace are you talking about? Amnesty has caused real trouble in our area. My friends are looking for guns to buy so that they could be part of amnesty. They just realised that the more trouble you make, the more the chance of government calling you for dialogue. Because of amnesty, more trouble is coming to communities)

-----**FGD excerpt in Warri South**

In trying to establish the nexus between amnesty and peace in the Niger Delta, another question that was asked was whether amnesty has resolved the conflict in the region by asking respondents to agree or disagree with the statement that "amnesty has resolved the Niger Delta Conflict". This stemmed from the belief that cassation of the conflict in Niger Delta as brought about by amnesty might lead to peace. From Table 2, it was equally observed that 82.3% of the respondents in the studied area did not believe that amnesty has resolved the Niger Delta Conflict. From the individual LGAs that took part in this study, it was evident that Warri South recorded the highest disagreement that amnesty has resolved the Niger Delta conflict. The figure of Warri South was followed by Warri South West and Burutu that had 82.8% and 82.6% respectively. The smallest proportion of persons who disagreed that amnesty had resolved the Niger Delta conflict was witnessed in Bomadi LGA with 73.7%, thus agreeing with Ubhenin(6) and Okurebia and Daniel (7) that though amnesty brought relative peace to some parts of the Niger Delta, there have been upsurge of various criminalities such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, oil theft, piracy, arms trafficking, illegal refining of crude oil, etc., in the region even with amnesty an indication that amnesty has not been able to end the prevailing conflict in the region as some of the extracts below from interviews and FGDs equally revealed.

"How can we be talking of amnesty resolving the Niger Delta conflict? No! Amnesty was palliative. It was meant to bring some level of peace to be able to address issues raised in the region that in the first instance led to insurgency. What do we have today? The Federal Government took amnesty as an end itself instead of a means to an end. What am I saying by this? Amnesty was programmed to give the government some respites to be able to come into Niger Delta to address various problems that led to agitations from the people here. However, as soon as amnesty started, the government thought they could carry on as usual by the carrots they were giving to a few ex-militants. This in itself created another problem, some person felt alienated from the programme which produced another crisis coupled with the fact that the developmental

challenges were not addressed, hence the conflict in the region continued, hence one cannot say that amnesty has resolved the conflict in the region. It reinforced it period”

-----an extract of an interview in Burutu LGA

“Make I no lie at all. Trouble still full ground becos government neva fit come help usoo.”

(If we should say the truth, there are still a lot of issues since government had refused to address the development challenges of the region)

-----portion of FDGs in Bomadi

“Let us get something right here. How can amnesty resolve the conflicts while our people are still in poverty and starvation? Look at the degraded environment and unemployment of our children. Amnesty did not address any of those things and we are saying there will not be conflict because government decided to bribe some persons who called themselves militants? In fact, the genuine persons who suffered from the many years of neglects and exploitation of the Niger Delta did not get anything from amnesty. So, how can one say amnesty has resolved the conflict here? That did not happen. It was simply impossible. The problems are still here with us”

-----excerpt of an FGD in Warri

The outcome from the data regarding the relationship between amnesty programme and curbing of insurgence show that, though a good number of persons across the four studied LGAs believed that amnesty has curb insurgency in the Niger Delta to some extent, a higher proportion believed that was not the case. From Table 2, the reaction of participants to the statement that amnesty has helped in curbing insurgency in the Niger Delta indicated that, 57.4% believed in the contrary. In the four LGAs, as expected, the highest proportion of respondents (62.2%) in this category were from Warri South were the beneficiaries were less, compared to the other three LGAs. Bomadi, Warri South West and Burutu had 58.1%, 56.6% and 52.8% respectively of persons who do not believe that amnesty has helped curb insurgency in the Niger Delta having an average proportion of 57.4% for the studied area. However, one must not disregard the 42.6% who were of the opinion that amnesty has helped curb insurgency in the region. This result presented a kind of curious outcome since the expectation is that amnesty has actually helped to reduce the activities of militants. That persons still believed that amnesty did not curb insurgency as expected is in line with the position of Faleti (3) and Osah and Alao(8) that the peace expected from amnesty had dwindled and that insecurity is actually on the increase. Furthermore, the studied attempt to find out the reason for this mixed result to produce the reasons for the belief that amnesty had not curb insurgency, the excerpts from an interview captured the reasons why amnesty had not been able to curb insurgency as found below:

“Amnesty was a good programme with good intentions. Along the line, the government and the managers of the programme derailed into what was not expected especially in the manner the programme was implemented. It is one sided programme which a particular tribe has hijacked and the mode of operation is bad. Many things are wrong with amnesty project. For example, it was not holistically implemented. It concentrated on a tribe thereby producing agitations from other tribes who equally suffered the consequences of oil production. This agitation right from the beginning led to breeding of a new set of agitators thereby disrupting the peace that would have come with amnesty. Just like the exclusion of tribal groups, the amnesty was lopsided in the type of beneficiaries. Ex-militants were empowered to the detriment of law abiding graduates and other peaceful citizens. Some of them seeing the benefits that were going to the ex-militants started their own movements which altered the initial peace. The hijacking of amnesty project by politicians contributed in no same way to making amnesty a crisis producing project. There was struggle by the loyalists of the politicians to be part of the project –hence true militants were excluded. This scenario led to another agitation and contestation for supremacy; thereby making amnesty programme a crisis generating outfit”

-----Extract from an interview in Warri South West LGA

“Adooa. I dey happy to won say wetin I wan tak because of the question wen una ask us. The truth bita but e de open way for beta to come. This amenesi no stop the criminal wen de here. Na our children fight the fight, but today na anoda people dey enjoy the money. Some of the people no know wetin we de shofa for here our fis do die becos oil don kill them. This fight no go shtop at all until govamet meet the real people wen dem shuppose talk to”

(Greeting to you all. I am happy to say what I am going to say now. I like the question you just asked us. The truth is bitter; but it opens ways for better things to come. Amnesty cannot stop the criminality in the region. It

was our children who fought for the rights of the Niger Delta people. However, it is foreigners who are enjoying the benefits today. Some of them did not know what we suffered here. Fishes were killed by oil spillages. The fight by insurgents cannot stop until government meets the real and genuine stakeholders of the region).

-----Portion of FGD in Burutu

The understanding from the statement above and like Osah and Alao(8) have equally posited in their work is that, amnesty right from the onset led to uprising of new militants who were excluded from the initial programme. The desire to be part of the project especially with the benefits accruing to the ex-militant led to more persons seeking way to be part of the programme. This exclusion was both at the ethnic level and hijacking of the programme by politicians which gave rise to new insurgents who equally wanted the benefits of the project. Some persons, who could not be part of the first phase of the project, resorted to forming of new groups along ethnic lines; hence the curbing of insurgence by amnesty was limited. It was in this way that groups of persons felt amnesty had not curb insurgency. Also evident from the extracts above is the fact that amnesty was perceived as benefitting only criminal elements of the communities to the exclusion of law abiding persons – some who could no long stomach the neglect to their groups and decided to raise their voice and constituted the bulk of new agitation and disruption of the peace building process which was expected from amnesty. Equally noticeable from the excerpt above is that, some sections of the communities in the Niger Delta see the beneficiaries of amnesty as alien to the struggle who were only reaping in places they did not sow. Hence, one could deduced that, the programme of amnesty was not all encompassing enough since it was tribal, excluded other unemployed persons – both graduates from tertiary institutions and other peace loving persons. Amnesty also gave benefits to opportunists who know nothing about the Niger Delta struggle which had led to bitterness on the parts of genuine community militants who were excluded from the project and the breach of peace which brought about uprising of new insurgents.

The respondents were equally asked a direct question either to agree or disagree with the statement that peace has returned to the Niger Delta with the introduction of the Amnesty Programme. From Table 2, a preponderant of persons in the study area (71.4%) did not believe that peace has returned to the Niger Delta since amnesty, thus agreeing with previous questions which attempted to link amnesty and peace. Though variations were noticed among the four LGAs of Warri South, Warri South West, Bomadi and Burutu, it is curious that the greatest group who doubted that peace has returned to the Niger Delta since amnesty was found in Bomadi LGA; followed by Warri South, Warri South West, and Burutu LGAs with 73.4%, 69.7% and 66.8% respectively. Put in other words, a very high proportion of people (71.4%) in the studied area did not believe that amnesty has brought about sustainable peace. The reason for this position may not be unconnected with resurgent of criminality due to the way amnesty was implemented which excluded persons that were supposed to benefit from the programme (5, 6). The lack of transparency in amnesty implementation was such that the benefits got into the hands of persons who did not feel the impact of the environmental degradation which led to feeling of alienation. More importantly, amnesty was taken as an end itself instead of a means to an end. Hence, issues which brought about the agitation were not address as the FGDs excerpts below depict:

“How can peace return to Niger Delta because of amnesty when the programme was haphazardly implemented? It was a well thought out programme to create peace but it had been hijacked for other purposes. Politicians used the programme to settle their thugs thereby leaving out those the programme was meant for. The result of this is that amnesty did not bring the needed impacts and peace”

“Amnesi for give us peace before. You know wetin happen? Instead of govamet to giv us the thing to take do develomet, dem come take am do politik so tey na tif wen no sabi how we de sufa na dem de enjoy. Anoda tin wen happen bi say govamet no gree solve the problem wey make our people vex and na so our people provoke come de fight and the result be say we dey go back to where we start –more trouble”

(Amnesty actual brought about some peace. Do you know what happen in the programme? Instead of government to give us those things that will bring about development, politics came into the whole thing to the extent that it was thieves that know nothing about our suffering that were actually benefiting from amnesty. Another thing is government refused to deal with the problems that led to agitations by the people in the region. Hence, the people here have no choice than to fight back. The sum total is that, we are back to square one-where we started from- more agitations and fighting)

From some of the discussions in the excerpt above, it was reasoned that amnesty will bring about peace which will usher in the opportunities for government to tackle the challenges of development in the region, however, it was a lost hope when amnesty came since instead of using the period to pursue development in the region, the project was hijacked and politicised for the benefits of persons who did not take part in the Niger

Delta struggle. This led to feelings of exclusion and neglects and subsequent uprising of new agitations and disruption of the peace in the Niger Delta.

Table 2: Relationships between Amnesty and some peace related variables

LGA/Variables	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Amnesty has led to sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta										
Warri South	14	4.2	12	3.4	193	56.6	122	35.8	341	100
Warri South West	33	10.4	36	11.5	119	37.8	127	40.3	315	100
Bomadi	62	17.3	44	12.4	142	39.7	110	30.6	358	100
Burutu	21	6.0	50	14.1	99	27.7	186	52.2	356	100
Study Area	130	9.4	142	10.4	553	40.5	545	39.7	1370	100
Amnesty has resolved the Niger Delta Conflict										
Warri South	15	4.6	17	5.1	144	42.3	165	48.4	341	100
Warri South West	28	8.8	26	8.4	144	45.6	117	37.2	315	100
Bomadi	34	9.6	60	16.7	136	37.9	128	35.8	358	100
<i>kBurutu</i>	34	9.4	28	8.0	139	39.1	155	43.5	356	100
Study Area	111	8.1	131	9.6	563	41.1	410	41.2	1370	100
Amnesty has helped in curbing insurgency in the Niger Delta										
Warri South	63	18.6	65	19.2	111	32.4	102	29.8	341	100
Warri South West	81	25.7	56	17.7	85	26.9	93	29.7	315	100
Bomadi	71	19.8	79	22.1	113	31.7	95	26.4	358	100
Burutu	82	23.1	86	24.1	98	27.5	90	25.3	356	100
Study Area	297	21.8	286	20.8	407	29.6	380	27.8	1370	100
Peace has returned to the Niger Delta with the introduction of the Amnesty Programme										
Warri South	57	16.7	34	9.9	133	38.9	117	34.5	341	100
Warri South West	50	15.9	45	14.4	96	30.4	124	39.3	315	100
Bomadi	46	12.7	40	11.3	177	49.5	95	26.5	358	100
Burutu	46	13.0	72	20.2	94	26.4	144	40.4	356	100
Study Area	199	14.6	191	14.0	500	36.3	480	35.1	1370	100

3.2 Amnesty, Niger Delta development and peace building

Agitation in the Niger Delta was an offshoot of the neglect and refusal of the Nigeria Governments to tackle the environmental degradation challenges of the region (2). Hence for peace to return to the region, it was expected that during amnesty, the challenges of developments which in the first instance led to different agitations in the region would be dealt with by those concerned. On this light, the reasoning here is that there is a nexus between the development of the region and the return of peace. Thus, this study was interested in finding out if those challenges were tackled since it will confirm to a major extent the level of peace in the Niger Delta. From Table 3, various questions put to respondents to find out whether the issues which led to the agitation have been addressed; produced the following outcomes. From the table, though some slight variations were noticeable on all the issues of development raised, they all attested to the fact that the problem of development are very much in the increase instead of being addressed. In Table 3, well addressed and fairly addressed were combined as addressed in the likert scale while not addressed and not sure were equally joined as not addressed. For example, respondents' response to the following questions such as: How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Unemployment in the Niger Delta? How has the Amnesty addressed the Infrastructure and Social Services in the Niger Delta? How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the land degradation in the Niger Delta? How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Oil Spillage in the Niger Delta? How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Demand for Increase in derivation funds in the Niger Delta? How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Resource control in the Niger Delta? The response to all the questions above questions indicated that the problems of the Niger Delta have not been addressed since over 90% of the respondents revealed in their responses to each of the questions above that the issues which led to the Niger Delta crisis have not been addressed thus indicating that amnesty did not produced the needed peace. The finding from this study is in congruent with the earlier position of Faleti (3) and Oluwaniyi (5) that various criminalities such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, oil theft, piracy, arms trafficking, illegal refining of crude oil still occur across the region in spite of amnesty – thus revealing that amnesty did not lead to the needed peace because the initiators of amnesty instead of addressing issues that lead to agitations which later brought about amnesty, saw amnesty as an end which further infuriated the people of the region who continued to agitate

even though amnesty was in place, hence amnesty was intended to produce peace did not yield the expected result but more agitations since development did not come with amnesty. Put in other words, amnesty was merely palliative. This excerpt from an interview in Burutu also attests to the fact that the peace in the region is closely linked to development of the area and not amnesty bringing about the peace as found below:

“Ok! You really think that amnesty will bring peace here. Well, that was an initial thought. Look, we gave the government the benefit of doubts. At least, our people accepted amnesty as a means of addressing the plethora of challenges in the region. But you know today like I do that the period was never used for the intended purpose. Politicians picked it up and started using it as a political tool to settle their thugs. Hence the real beneficiaries and issues were left unattended to. It is therefore not surprising that agitations started as soon as amnesty started. Therefore, it will not be wrong to say that the project brought more confusion than the good it was designed to do. In terms of development, the region is still where it used to be. The result is the renewed agitations by the people here”

Table 3: Amnesty and Development of Niger Delta

LGA/Variables	Well address,		Fairly address,		Not Addressed		Not Sure		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Unemployment in the Niger Delta?										
Warri South	0	0.0	2	0.7	333	97.5	6	1.8	341	100
Warri South West	2	0.5	3	1.1	301	95.5	9	2.9	315	100
Bomadi	2	0.7	9	2.5	328	91.5	19	5.3	358	100
Burutu	3	0.9	25	7.1	320	89.8	8	2.2	356	100
Study Area	7	0.5	39	2.9	1282	93.6	42	3.0	1370	100
How has the Amnesty addressed the Infrastructure and Social Services in the Niger Delta ?										
Warri South	3	0.8	17	5.1	295	86.5	26	7.6	341	100
Warri South West	1	0.4	17	5.4	286	90.6	11	3.6	315	100
Bomadi	3	0.9	45	12.5	293	81.9	17	4.7	358	100
Burutu	2	0.6	32	9.1	283	79.4	39	10.9	356	100
Study Area	9	0.7	111	8.0	1157	84.6	93	6.7	1370	100
How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Land degradation in the Niger Delta?										
Warri South	1	0.2	10	3.2	322	94.4	8	2.2	341	100
Warri South West	0	0.0	15	4.7	295	93.6	5	1.7	315	100
Bomadi	0	0.0	2	0.6	351	98.1	5	1.3	358	100
Burutu	1	0.3	4	1.0	340	95.6	11	3.1	356	100
Study Area	2	0.1	31	2.4	1308	95.1	29	2.0	1370	100
How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Oil Spillage in the Niger Delta?										
Warri South	1	0.3	4	1.1	328	96.4	8	2.2	341	100
Warri South West	2	0.6	10	3.2	290	92.2	13	4.0	315	100
Bomadi	1	0.2	12	3.3	339	94.6	6	1.8	358	100
Burutu	1	0.3	2	0.5	351	98.6	2	0.6	356	100
Study Area	5	0.3	28	2.0	1308	95.5	29	2.2	1370	100
How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Demand for Increase in derivation funds in the Niger Delta?										
Warri South	0	0.0	0	0.0	339	99.5	2	0.5	341	100
Warri South West	1	0.1	0	0.0	310	98.7	4	1.2	315	100
Bomadi	0	0.0	1	0.3	355	99.2	2	0.5	358	100
Burutu	1	0.4	2	0.5	348	97.8	5	1.3	356	100
Study Area	2	0.1	3	0.2	1352	98.8	13	0.9	1370	100
How has the Amnesty Programme addressed the Resource control in the Niger Delta?										
Warri South	0	0.0	0	0.0	341	100	0	0.0	341	100
Warri South West	0	0.0	0	0.0	313	99.8	2	0.2	315	100
Bomadi	0	0.0	0	0.0	355	99.3	3	0.7	358	100
Burutu	0	0.0	0	0.0	351	98.7	5	1.3	356	100
Study Area	0	0.0	0	0.0	1360	99.5	10	0.5	1370	100

3.3 Challenges of peace building in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta and her people are today victims of various environmental problems. As the region bearing over 95% of Nigeria's oil wealth and accounted for over 90% of the country's foreign earning (1), the people in the region expected that, the volume of oil wealth should reflect on their standard of living. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case. In spite of its resource endowments, the region has been plagued by development neglects, trickle natural resource benefits, marginality in political representation in the oil economy [2]. The oil and gas infrastructure has led to extensive environmental degradation, destruction of livelihood sources, socio-economic disruptions and extensive poverty. These conditions generated agitation and protests beginning from the 1970s [2, 3]. The agitations later turned into an insurgency between 1998 and 2009, with thousands of youth militias engaging the oil companies and the Nigerian security agencies, accompanied by extensive devastation of oil infrastructure, abduction and kidnapping of oil companies' staff, disruption of oil and gas production and attacks on oil tankers on the maritime waters [2] until the late President Umaru Yar'Adua publicly announced a 60 days amnesty offer to be effective from August 4th to October 4th 2009 in June 25th 2009. Even after amnesty, the region had continued to suffer incessant disruption to the peace process (3). What then are the challenges of finding lasting peace in the area since amnesty?

Table 4 gave insights into the mindset of the people in the region as to what they perceived as the challenges to peace building. From the table, respondent were of the view that amnesty did not address Niger Delta development, did not lead to greater participation of Niger Deltans in oil business; did not represent the interest of the stakeholders of Niger Delta, that amnesty created new agitations in the region by those excluded; that amnesty is spoiling the minds of law abiding youth and that amnesty is criminal and is a reward to criminality. Other issues and challenges of peace buildings were that: amnesty has been hijacked by politicians to settle their political thugs; amnesty did not eliminate violence in the region; amnesty did not address the unemployment problem in the Niger Delta; amnesty did not address the infrastructures problem in the Niger Delta and that amnesty did not address land degradation problem in the Niger Delta. Furthermore, the people of the region believed that amnesty did not address the oil spillages problem in the Niger Delta; lack of commitment to the development challenges of the region by the government of Nigeria; amnesty did not address the demand for increase derivation in the Niger Delta and that amnesty did not address resource control agitation in the Niger Delta. Other areas of challenges include the fact that amnesty did not consider the victims of Niger Delta struggle; the attitude of oil companies in which does not promote peace; amnesty is promoting kidnapping and other vices and lack of articulated studies before the programme. In all the factors mentions as challenges to peace building above, over 90% of the participants in this research picked all the reasons listed above.

The participants also showed that the following issues as challenges using amnesty to build peace such as the fact that: amnesty did not consider women; the manner the programme was implemented; corruption by the managers of amnesty; amnesty middle men ("Generals") are a problem; amnesty is an elitist programme; the problem of trust between amnesty manager and ex-militant; failure to pay entitlement to militants; perception of amnesty as a failed project which is not creating the needed impact; unequal distribution of amnesty benefits, poor monitoring of programme, poor data base of beneficiaries; unstable policies and unstable political terrain of Nigeria and the type of projects being embarked upon by amnesty which are unsustainable projects and the perception of the entire programme as mainly benefitting Ijaw ethnic group.

The issues raised on amnesty are a testimony to what Ikelegbe (1) identified as the inherent weakness of the entire programme. It is evident that amnesty has "father" more crisis than the peace it was intended to generate hence; amnesty did not produce peace as expected. It only created a temporal setting for government to do what was needed in the area. However, government took amnesty as an end and coupled with the hijacking of the programme and the manner it was implemented, it led to other issues and challenges which were hitherto not available as at the time the programme started. Generally, the challenge of peace building in the region were hinged on the fact government refused to address the developmental challenges of the region during amnesty on one hand and the administration of the programme itself produced new sets of hiccups which led to other issues and more troubles for the area. Hence, it will be imperative to look at some of the challenges identified and government being committed to development to addressing initial developmental problems of Niger Delta. The extract from one of the FGDs in Warri put this very straight:

"Government did not solve the problems that led to the agitations and their own programme which was meant to address the problem created additional challenges which were not there before amnesty took off. This is like Fela music which says "double wahala for dead body". There was a problem and a solution was thought out. However the solution became more of a problem than the challenge it was meant to address"

The point being made here is that while the people of the region did not see amnesty as bad, the mode of implementation and manner of governance has generated new challenges which were not there. The statement below from a portion of an FGD in Warri captured this more explicitly as presented here:

“One big issue or additional challenge is the heightened tribal distrust among ethnic groups since amnesty. Though we have always had one misunderstanding or the others, amnesty had pushed the boundary to an unexpected level. For example, the struggle between Tompolo and Ayiri is actually a contestation between Ijaw and Isekiri. Ayiri felt Tompolo an Ijaw man like President Goodluck Jonathan is getting all the attention for Ijaw to the detriment of Isekiri who were excluded. What of Kelvin uprising in Kokori in Urhobo land? For the same reason, Kelvin felt Urhobo were equally excluded from the benefits of amnesty and decided to raise his own people. Before amnesty, we were all united in the neglect of our area by successive government and we were speaking with one voice. Today, we see ourselves as different people all because of the divisions that stemmed from amnesty”

Table 4: Ranking of Challenge amnesty and peace building in the Niger Delta (N=1370)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Amnesty did not address Niger Delta development	1365	99.6
Amnesty did not lead to greater participation of Niger Deltans in oil business	1363	99.5
Amnesty did not represent the interest of the stakeholders of Niger Delta	1354	98.9
Amnesty created new agitations in the region by those excluded	1353	98.8
Amnesty is spoiling the minds of law abiding youth	1345	98.2
Amnesty is a reward to criminality	1343	98.1
Amnesty has been hijacked by politicians to settle their political thugs	1333	97.3
Amnesty did not eliminate violence in the region	1330	97.1
Amnesty did not address the unemployment problem in the Niger Delta	1317	96.2
Amnesty did not address the infrastructures problem in the Niger Delta	1300	94.9
Amnesty did not address land degradation problem in the Niger Delta	1300	94.9
Amnesty did not address the oil spillages problem in the Niger Delta	1299	94.8
The government of Nigeria is not committed to addressing Niger Delta issue	1284	93.7
Amnesty did not address the demand for increase derivation in the Niger Delta	1281	93.5
Amnesty did not address resource control agitation in the Niger Delta	1277	93.2
Amnesty did not consider the victims of Niger Delta struggle	1274	93.0
Attitude of oil companies in does promote peace	1269	92.6
Amnesty is promoting kidnapping and other vices	1262	92.1
Amnesty was not well articulated and back by studies results	1238	90.4
Amnesty did not consider women	1200	87.6
Implementation of amnesty is fraudulent	1200	87.6
The managers of amnesty are corrupt and lack transparency	1184	86.4
Amnesty is being use to enrich some people with achieving her objectives	1181	86.2
Amnesty middle men (“Generals”) are a problem	1177	85.9
Amnesty is a elitist programme	1114	81.3
There is a problem of trust between Amnesty manager and ex-militant	1111	81.1
Some ex-militants are not receiving their entitlements and are angry	1097	80.1
Amnesty is not creating the needed impact	1097	80.1
The benefits or amnesty are unequally distributed	1097	80.1
The government of Nigeria is not committed to amnesty	1018	74.3
Amnesty programme is not well monitored and evaluated	1017	74.2
Selfishness of the managers of Amnesty programme	1010	73.7
Poor data base of beneficiaries	1001	73.1
Unstable policies and unstable political terrain of Nigeria	967	70.6
Embarking on unsustainable projects by managers of Amnesty	929	67.8
Amnesty is an Ijaw programme that did not consider other ethnic group	762	55.6

* Respondents could pick more than one challenge of sustainable peace building in Niger Delta

3.4 Achieving sustainable peace in the Niger Delta

Scholars believed from their various studies that the relative peace from the onset of amnesty programme has waned considerably as a high level of insecurity demonstrated by kidnappings, bombings and tension within the region has returned [3,5, 6 ,7,8]. However, the people believed that all hopes are not lost since there is still a lot to be done to return sustainable peace to Niger Delta. In the course of the study, respondents were asked to identify measures which they believed are priorities that when they are adopted will guarantee sustainable peace in the area. The respondents were given the leverage to select more than one measure that can bring about sustainable peace in the region. From the analyses done in Table 5, over 90% of the participants in descending order in the study believed that: Federal government should be commitment to the development of

the Niger Delta and practice of true federalism; that the amnesty programme design to bring peace to the Niger Delta should be more inclusiveness and benefits extended to all youth in the Niger Delta. In this way, the feeling of exclusivity by most of the youth in the region will be avoided. Other measures the participants supported were that more opportunities be given to Niger Deltans to participate in the oil industry which is dominated by foreigners as this section of an interview in Warri South West LGA indicates:

“Peace will be a difficult thing to get in this region as long as we the indigenous people here are treated as foreigners. Take for example, a great deal of the oil wells of Nigeria in the Niger Delta are owned by northerners while we suffer and daily being exposed to consequences of their wealth without allowing our people to participate in the oil business. This is really an irony. They get the benefits from oil wells while we are daily being killed by the mess from their wealth. As long as this trend continued, then expect continued agitations and unrest in the region. Well the only way out of this is to give us more access to participate and own the business in our land”

From the view expressed in the excerpt above, for peace to reign in the Niger Delta, the indigenes of the area must be given the opportunity to actively participate in the oil business, at least to have the satisfaction of ownership of the oil which they believed had been hijacked by foreigners. Apart from the above, the region expected that they should control the resources, enjoy greater employment engagement and massive infrastructural development. Additionally, the participants were of the view that adequate compensation should be given to those who suffered in the Niger Delta struggle. Also, it was expected that measures should be put in place to bring about poverty reduction and economic development especially for women. The study also indicated that compensation be given to communities that were destroyed; rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration of victims of struggle; reconstruction of community destroyed during the struggle; human capital development/training of youth/Skill acquisition; dialogue with real stakeholders and industrialisation of Niger Delta. Furthermore, the people in the study equally opined that oil companies should operate with international standards; there should be improved environmental laws and enforcement against oil companies and more transparency in the management of amnesty. A dimension to all the above measure was the call that a meeting of stakeholders be called to articulate the issues in a more professional way to have a holistic view of what the government should do to bring perpetual peace to the Niger Delta as this excerpt from interview in Warri showed:

“There are many things government can do to bring peace to the Niger Delta. There have been reports and meetings on what to do to address the issues of the region in the past. What we need to do today is to come together to look at the documents see what the desire of the people are. The government will have a working document from such exercise”

A critical examination of the measures presented to bring about sustainable peace in the Niger Delta revealed that they touched on earlier demand by people in the Niger Delta - thus indicates that, for a meaningful and sustainable peace in the region, the root cause of the agitations before amnesty must be addressed and tackled otherwise peace will continue to elude the area. This was in line with a key informant interview extract from Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State:

“The Amnesty Programme has not addressed the causes of militancy and restiveness in the Niger Delta. How can amnesty address the issue of environmental degradation? Even if you settle the boys that picked up arms, what about the affected environment? The solution to Niger Delta crisis is that the Federal Government should address the main issue of unemployment, resource control, environmental pollution and infrastructural development in the region”

Table 5 Ranking of the measures to achieve sustainable peace in Niger Delta (N=1370)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Federal government commitment to the development of the Niger Delta	1308	95.5
Practice of true federalism	1300	94.9
Inclusiveness/programmes that benefits all youth and Niger Delta	1263	92.2
Participation in the oil industry	1262	92.1
Resource control	1237	90.3
Job creation and employment	1234	90.1
Infrastructural development	1234	90.1
Adequate compensation to those who suffered in the struggle	1230	89.8
poverty reduction	1226	89.5
Economic development of women	1222	89.2
Compensation to communities that were destroy	1222	89.2
Rehabilitation, Resettlement and rein-integration of victims of struggle	1221	89.1
Reconstruction of community destroy	1212	88.5
Human Capital Development/training of youth/Skill acquisition	1210	88.3
Improved welfare of the people	1203	87.8
Dialogue with real stakeholders	1201	87.7
Industrialisation	1197	87.4
Oil companies should operate with international standards	1106	80.7
Improved environmental laws and enforcement against oil companies	1101	80.4
Social welfare for the children and Elderly	1002	73.2
Transparency Leadership in Amnesty programme management	985	71.9

* Respondents could pick more than one measure for sustainable peace

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The amnesty programme was designed to bring peace in the Niger Delta which was to enable the government to tackle a wide range of problems of underdevelopment in the region. However, five years later, the issues that led to militancy in the region remained unresolved. To ensure sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- The infrastructural and developmental deficiencies of the region should urgently be tackled by the Federal, State and Local Government in collaboration with the oil companies operating in the region.
- Unemployed youths should be identified for engagement in skill acquisition and empowerment programme while those ex-militants that have been trained should be engaged/employed to dissuade them from falling back to militancy.
- Indigenes of Niger Delta should be involved in control and management of the upstream and downstream operations of the oil industry.
- All the communities that were destroyed by the activities of militancy should be rebuilt by the government.
- The amnesty programme should be all embracing and it should continue until sustainable peace is achieved in the region.
- The problems of air and water pollution as well as land degradation in the region should urgently be resolved.

V. CONCLUSION

The goal of this research was to interrogate the effectiveness of the Nigerian Amnesty Programme in promoting peace in the Niger Delta Region and to answer the questions: (1) To what extent has the amnesty programme engendered sustainable peace and development as promised? (2) Is the amnesty programme a panacea for the protracted conflict or a mere palliative measure? (3) How effective is the Amnesty Programme in curbing insurgency in the Niger Delta? (4) To what extent has peace been restored in the Niger Delta since the Amnesty Programme? (5) What are the challenges confronting peace building in the Niger Delta? (6) What measures can be adopted to achieve sustainable peace in the Niger Delta? From the study and analyses of the data, it is clear that amnesty: did not lead to sustainable peace and is not a panacea to conflict but actually a palliative measure. Though relative peace came with amnesty, the programme generated additional crisis that was hitherto new to the region and it is clear that amnesty did not yield the needed peace due to host of challenges such as lack of development of the region and not addressing the reasons which led to agitation and the crisis in the region. The government of Nigeria took amnesty as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. This generated tension since the reasons which led to agitation were left unattended to, hence more

agitations. The study believed that addressing the root causes of Niger Delta agitation will yield the needed peace by gathering the stakeholders together for a talk on the way forward. Amnesty was a good project which the government did not take advantage of to address development instead; it created new challenges of exclusion and failed expectations for the indigenes of the region

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