

Niger Delta: A Critical Appraisal of the Amnesty Programme and Social Political Development in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Environmental pollution by way of oil spillage and gas flaring are the lots and bane of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, where the country's oil exploration activities are carried out by the oil multinational companies (MNCs). The crisis of the people as well as several non-governmental organizations for attention to the area were not only spurned, but were at intervals rebuffed with crackdown and repression from successive administrations in the country, with the strong connivance of the oil MNCs. The situation reached a crescendo, when the people of this region took to self – help by bombing, kidnapping and abducting the expatriates and other categories of personnel of the oil MNCs in exchange for monetary ransom. The government not able to bear the embarrassment and the drop of oil production daily, coupled with the substantial loss of revenue devised the amnesty programme in 2009 are a solution to the quagmire.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

With the commencement of oil exploration in commercial quantities in Oloibiri in the Niger Delta in 1956 came great excitement and tall hopes for rapid development and accelerated civilization. But little was known of the pains associated with the exploration of oil such as Spillage, deforestation, noise pollution, sundry and other ecological effects. These adverse effects have been more of the lots of the people of the Niger Delta area since then until a time when it dawned on them that the government was not willing to yield to their demands for adequate attention to their polluted and depreciating environment. The persistent neglect was to result in unrest by the people, which eventually almost got out of hand. Long years of neglect and conflict have promoted, especially among the youths a feeling of a bleak future and thus see conflict as a stratagem to escape deprivation (Niger Delta Human Rights Reports, 2006). This resulted in the government cracking down with the strong support, active influence and connivance of the oil multinational companies (MNCs), which reached a crescendo with extra judicial hanging of the Prize nominee Ken Saro – Wiwa and eight other kinsmen in November 1995, by the infamous government of the maximum ruler- Late General Sani Abacha. (Oshionebo, 2009) the resultant effect was the outbreak of armed conflicts in the area, abduction and kidnapping of oil workers, especially the expatriates.

Exploration and extraction of natural resources have been known to always affect and after the geographical environment of the areas where they are carried on. The environmental impact of oil exploration in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has contributed in no-small measures to the destruction of the fragile ecosystem, thus making the region “One of the world's most severely petroleum impacted ecosystems and one of the 5 most petroleum-polluted environment in the World (Niger Delta Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project, 2006). To neglect utterly environmental and human rights issues of the people in exploration of resources is known to bring issues about crises and catastrophes as witnessed in the Niger Delta.

Nigeria presents a perfect example of a curse that natural resources can bring (Mahler, 2010. Collier and Hoeffler, 2001). Although, oil exploitation in commercial quantity began in 1959, two years after it was discovered in Oloibiri (now Bayelsa state) with increase in revenue generation to the federal, state and local governments, the poverty level in Nigeria however countries to increase. Almost 90 percent of the local inhabitants of the Niger Delta fall below the poverty line of \$1 dollar per day as they depended on the aquatic resources for their livelihoods (Watts, 2008). A situation typified as a “resource curse” the devils excreta. Hence, rather than the oil bringing blessings and fortunes for Nigerians, its proceeds have resulted in impoverishing the masses and creating violent conflicts in the Niger Delta region. However, several development initiatives have been taken by the Nigerian government to enhance socio-economic and social political development of the region, such as the establishment of development boards, provision of basic infrastructural facilities among others. While some of these initiatives are laudable and need to be strengthened (Ukiwo, 2010) they have however failed to achieve enduring peace in the region because they failed to address the root causes of the Niger Delta conflicts. The search for a permanent and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region led to the proclamation of an amnesty to the Niger Delta militants in June 2009 by President Umaru Yar'Adua, in exchange for disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration with the belief that this is going to bring peace to the region.

Keywords: Amnesty, Militancy, Rehabilitation, Conflict and Development.

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME AND SOCIAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

As earlier stated the major source of data for this research effort is secondary source and this include relevant information gotten from books, journals, magazines and newspapers dealing on the issue of amnesty and social, political development in Nigeria. The researcher also got vital information from his interview with some ex-militants and opinion leaders in the Niger-Delta region that are analysed alongside other data.

Specially, an overview of the Niger-Delta conflict which necessitated amnesty shall be looked into, Amnesty initiatives in the Niger-Delta region, prospects and challenges of Amnesty and reflections in Nigerians social political development with highlight on peace and security, poverty, corruption, elections and power sharing. The above issues shall be analysed below.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NIGER-DELTA CONFLICT

The struggles over oil, particularly the quest to correct the perceived injustice embedded in the separation of those that profit from the oil production and commoditization (MNCs and the Nigerian ruling elites), from the others (dispossessed local inhabitants) whose land and waters the oil is extracted, has led to the violent agitation in the Niger-Delta region (Obi, 2010) the publicity and tempo of the agitation for environmental justice increased in the region with the formation of the movement for the survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP) in August 1990; the November, 1995 hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni compatriots; the punitive expedition against the inhabitants of Odi in February, 2002; the formation of the famous Kaima Declaration in 11 December, 1998. Other groups that were formed during these periods include the movement for the survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN), Community rights initiative (CORI) Niger-Delta women for justice (NDINJ), Chiiccoco movement, Ijaw national congress and Egbema National congress. These groups have continued to criticize the government and the oil MNCs for the environmental damage caused due to the oil exploration activities by the MNCs. This situation in the Niger-Delta is well captured by Ken Saro-Wiwa in his presentation on why he championed Ogoni cause, in this way "I looked at Ogoni (Niger Delta) and found that the entire place was now a waste land and that we are the victims of ecological war that is very serious and unconventional. It is unconventional because no bones are broken, no one is maimed. People are not alarmed because they can't see what is happening. But human beings are at risk, plants and animals are at risk. The air and water are poisoned. Finally, the land itself dies. Oil has brought nothing but disaster to oil people" (Niger Delta) (Saro-Wiwa 1998) what can be inferred from this is that the failure of the Nigerian government to address the development needs of the region and to address the environmental damage caused by the oil exploration activities of the MNCs created a feeling of injustice in the Niger Delta people and led to the conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. It then became clear that the struggle is for an end to injustice, discrimination, exclusion, oppression, domination and exploitation, systematic destruction of the ecosystem, corporate and environmental bad governance, a call for equitable federation of Nigeria's economic policy.

It is sad to note that since around 2005, the pattern of unarmed peaceful protests and demonstrations used by these groups against the unwholesome activities of the MNCs operating in the Niger Delta region has been shifted to a violent one by the armed groups like the movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Egbesu boys, Niger Delta people volunteer force (NDPVF). And others to the extent that the whole region had become highly militarized. The rise of groups like MEND is said to be traceable to the lack of space for peaceful opposition movements and the failure of the government and the MNCs in ensuring that the Niger Delta people enjoy the benefits of oil production (Bassey, 2008).

The response of the government to the claims of the oil producing areas has been classified by Suberu (Suberu, 1996) into three forms: redistributive, reorganizational and regulatory state responses.

According to Suberu, "redistributive policies are state decisions that consciously dispense valued resources to one group at the expense of other claimants to state resources. Reorganizational policies refers to state efforts to restrictive or reconfigure political or administrative institutions and relationships, in order to accommodate groups demands or strengthen the efficiency of centralized state power. Regulatory policies entail the mandatory imposition of sanctions or restrictions on individuals or groups that are perceived to pose a threat to state cohesion and order. These included the creation of separate federal states in the Niger Delta viz Akwa-Ibom, Delta and Bayelsa states in 1987, 1991 and 1996 respectively (reorganizational policies) Omotola, 2007) the increase in the percentage of revenue allocation based on deviation from 1.5% to 3% in 1992 and 13% in 1999 (Osaghae, 2008) The installation of his Excellency Dr Good luck Jonathan, the former governor of Bayelsa state, an Ijaw man, as Vice-president in Nigeria in 2007 under the people's Democratic Party (PDP) (now president of the federal Republic of Nigeria in May 2010 following the death of president Umaru Yar'Adua on the 5th of May, 2010) and his subsequent election in May 2011 for another four years term and the establishment of development agencies as NDDDB, OMPADEC, NDDC etc. (redistributive policies). The repressive response of the state include the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders in 1995 by the

military government of Late Gen. Sani Abacha, the Umuechem Massacre of 1990 (African concord, 1990, Seberu, 1996) the Ogoni genocide (The News May, 1993) the Odi Massacre of (Aghalino, 2009) among several communities in the Niger Delta. The protesters in these communities not only have their properties destroyed but were also killed, maimed, raped, displaced or forced into exile (Oshionebo, 2009, Ekine 2008). The local inhabitants see these as a form of repression to keep them minorities from voicing even the most moderate claims.

These responses from the government and the oil MNCs elicited violence from the Niger Delta people in the form of kidnapping, hostage taking, bunkering and oil theft, pipeline vandalization, bombings, oil facilities Sabotage, destruction of properties and even killings of people in pursuance of the struggle.

AMNESTY INITIATIVE IN THE NIGER DELTA

Following his inauguration in May, 2007 President Umaru Yar'Adua promised to address the Niger Delta conflicts and also recognized the it in his seven point agenda. In fulfilment of his promise, the late president Yar'Adua in line with the suggestion of the Niger Delta elders (Obi and Rustad, 2011) inaugurated the technical committee on the Niger Delta. This 45 members committee was inaugurated on 8th September, 2008 to collate and review all past reports in Niger Delta, appraise their recommendations and make other proposals that will help the federal government to achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta Region. The committee under the chairmanship of Ledum Mitee, MOSOP president had submitted its report (Report of the technical committee on Niger Delta, 2008) to the federal government since 1st December 2008 (Mitee, 2009). The committee's recommendations include appointing a mediator to facilitate discussions between government and militants, granting of amnesty to some militant leaders, launching a disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation campaign and increase in the percentage of oil revenue to 25 percent from 13 percent, establishing regulations that compel oil companies to have insurance bonds making the reinforcement of critical environmental laws a nations priority; exposing fraudulent environmental clean-ups of oil spills and prosecuting operators, ending gas flaring by 31st December 2008 as previously ordered by the federal government (Report of the technical committee on the Niger Delta, 2008).

In line with the determination of the government to address the Niger Delta problem, the government partly yielded to the support of the technical committee by setting up a presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of militants in the Niger Delta on the 5th of May, 2009 to implement the recommendation concerning the granting of amnesty to Niger Delta Militants. In its recommendations, this panel set out the terms, procedures and processes of the grant of an amnesty to the Niger Delta militants. Accepting the recommendations, President Yar'Adua pursuant to section 175 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria granted "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 (Vanguard, 2009). Under section 175, the President may after consultation with the council of state (a) grant any person concerned with or convicted of any offence created by an act of the national assembly a pardon, either frees or subject to lawful conditions; (b) grant to any person a respite, either for an indefinite or for a specific person of the execution of any punishment imposed on that for such an offence, (c) substitute a less severe form of punishment for any punishment imposed on that person for such an offence, (d) remit the whole, or any part of any punishment imposed on that person for such an offence, or of any penalty or forfeiture otherwise due to the state on account of such an offence.

The amnesty which was unveiled on 15th June, 2009 was scheduled to run between 6th August to 4th October, 2009 that is, a 600 day period; and was 'predicated on the willingness and readiness of the militants to give up all illegal arms in their possession, completely renounce militancy in all its ramifications. Unconditionally, and depose to an undertaking to this effect. (Federal Government of Nigeria, Niger Delta Amnesty Programme). During the declaration, the President acknowledge the fact that Challenges in the Niger Delta arose as a result of the inadequacies of the previous attempts at meeting the yearning of the people of the region, which thus led to the restiveness witnessed in the Niger Delta. The high incidence of violence in the Delta led to Amnesty initiatives. As a matter of fact, in the first nine months of the year 2008, about 1,000 people lost their lives, 300 were taken hostage and the government lost \$23.7 billion to attacks, oil bunkering and sabotage. (Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, 2008). Apart from the inability of Nigerian government to meet up with its OPEC quota and other negative economic effects, the oil MNCs on their part reportedly lost billions of dollars to the conflicts. For instance between 2003 and 2007, shell petroleum Development Company (SPDC) estimated that it lost US\$10.6 billion, with a total loss of not less than US\$21.5 billion by the oil MNCs as a whole since 2003 (Nwozor, 2010).

It can be seen that a major drive for the use of amnesty in the management of oil – related conflicts in Nigeria is the belief that it is only through peace that sustainable development can be guaranteed in the Niger Delta.

NIGER DELTA MILITANTS: FREEDOM FIGHTERS OR CRIMINALS?

Several analysts and scholars have used different names, such as rebels, insurgents, terrorist, revolutionaries, criminals, cults and gangs, freedom fighters, to describe those behind the Niger Delta crisis. Edwin Clark, an Ijaw leader, prefers to refer to them as “Freedom Fighters” (Fatiyi & Olorok, 2010), as they are seen as a new generation of ethnic men engaged in a struggle for freedom and justice, not for themselves, but for their people’ (Osaghae, 2011). This is with a view to distinguishing genuine militants believed to be fighting the just cause of the Niger Delta from “criminal elements” motivated by greed (Ukiwo, 2011) and pecuniary gain and masquerading as militants. According to Osaghae et al.(2001).

In the Niger Delta, the term militants refers to gunmen who make political demands, including the release of imprisoned leaders, Cash reparations for communities, change of electoral candidates and a greater share of oil revenues among other issues. These political demands distinguish them, albeit tenuously from criminals who simply kidnap people for money. Militants are also distinct from disaffected communities, whose people may perform kidnappings or attacks in the hopes of getting a clinic, school or cash, but have no overall political aims (Osaghae et al, 20011).

Two broad segments of youth militia are discernible, viz; the genuine militias and the criminalized militias, with the latter comprising small cults and gangs. As noted by Ako (Ako, 2011; Ikelegbe, 2011), though motivation for recourse to violence determines the classification of a group as militants or cults, it is not easy to distinguish between the two as they often interact in somewhat symbiotic relationships.

Furthermore, while cults and gangs are primarily motivated by the financial benefits they derive from their activities such as illegal oil bunkering, political thuggery, drug peddling, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, piracy, e.t.c. militants also engage in these activities; although with underlying identified causes’ (Ako, 2011). The broad nature of the alliance of insurgent militias and the porous boundaries between them and other groups give room for infiltration by the various criminal elements who now use the name of militants to perpetrate various acts most of which smear the image of the struggle. (Ikelegbe, 2011).

THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME AND DDR

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) is one of the most important ways of resolving conflicts and managing post – conflicts situation in the world to ensure peace. This has been variously used by the United Nations and other similar bodies as an instrument for achieving sustainable peace (Ibaba, 2011). This was adopted by the Nigerian government in its amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. There are three phases to the amnesty programme, viz, the disarmament and demobilisation of militants, the rehabilitation and integration of ex-militants and the final stage is the post-Amnesty package of huge infrastructural development. The disarmed militants were Six Niger Delta States, with a promise of a payment of N65,000 (Approximately 407USD) monthly, the payment of rent and offering of Vocational training (Oluwaniyi, 2011). During the first phase which has already been implemented Several militants turned in several arms and ammunitions (Kuku, 2011). Indeed, it was recorded that about 26,358 ex-militants accepted the Amnesty offer (first phase – 20,192 militants representing those that accepted the offer on or before 4th October 2009, while the second phase of the Amnesty Programme that occurred in November 2010 comprises of 6,616 militants representing those that accepted the offer post 4 October 2009). This appeared to have reduced the incidence of conflict and the accumulation and influx of arms by militants in the region. Some rehabilitation centers were provided for the second stage which was tailored to meet training needs of the ex-militants. The trainings were to be done in batches as the Centers could only accommodate few numbers of registered ex-militants. It is expected that each batch would spend four weeks in the rehabilitation programme which involves re-orientation, counselling and moral/Spiritual regeneration of the ex-militants (Akinwale, 2010). A survey of the career aspiration of the ex-militants reveals a great preference for about Ten (10) sectors ranging from Oil/Gas, maritime services, Fabrication and welding Technology, Exploration and Production and Processing Engineering which duration of training programme is projected to last between 3–18 months (Akinwale, 2010). Those desires of going back to school for further education are also given the opportunity under this programme.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

Reports from the government indicate that following the relative peace ushered in by the Cease–fire as a result of the amnesty declaration, the country’s oil output had risen to 2.3 million barrels a day from 800,000 barrel per day (in the 2006–2008 period) as a result of the improvement in security in the oil region (Igwe, 2010). An increment of 1.5 million barrels per day indicates 120.45 million dollars of revenue to national coffers every day (Igwe, 2010). Some companies also took the opportunity to repair some of their damaged oil facilities.

Without doubt, the Amnesty programme is expected to improve the human capital development of the country which is presently low. Nigeria’s Human Development Index (HDI) Value (Comprising Home basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living) for 2011 stands at 0.459, positioning the country at 156 out of 187 countries and territories (UNDO, 2011). If

well implemented, the Amnesty programme in Nigeria could serve to negate the 'resource curse' theory that resource-rich economies such as Nigerian, Congo, Angola, etc. are more prone to mismanagement, underdevelopment and violence. Examples of UK and Norway, both major oil exporting countries, reveals that resource curse is avoidable with functioning institution and good governance in place.

Notwithstanding the achievement of the programme, reports from the panel set up in January 2010 to review the rehabilitation aspect of the DDR revealed some inadequacies thus leading to calls by elders in the Niger Delta region for the dissolution of the Presidential Amnesty Committee. Some of these include the fact that about 80 percent of the budget had gone on payments of consultants and contractors, with 20 percent committed on rehabilitation of the ex-militants; the over bloating of the numbers of registered ex-militants; the continued detention of several militants; some of the training centers falling short of acceptable standards and Operating with inadequate facilities (Obi & Rustad, 2011). Community on the flaws of the Amnesty programme, Nwajiaku – Dahou (2010) stated that; allowance unpaid or not paid regularly, huge disparities between payments made to foot soldiers and former militants commanders, limited access to rehabilitation training and allowances for those who surrendered weapons after the deadline, inappropriate training provision, limited employment prospects, the absence of a broader political settlement involving the broader Niger Delta population that has born the costs of conflict, and the politically motivated staffing of bodies responsible for implementing and coordinating the amnesty programme, are among the numerous flaws of the amnesty' (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010).

The Federal Government on 2 December 2009 scrapped the Presidential Committee on Disarmament and Amnesty for Militants in the Niger Delta, and in its place are five new committee put in place to handle the Post-Amnesty Programmes and fast track development challenges in the region. (Adebayo, 2009). These were the Presidential Monitoring Committee on Amnesty; the infrastructural Committee; the Disarmament and Reintegration Committee; the oil and Gas Assets Protection Committee; and the Environmental Remediation Committee.

One of the major challenges of the amnesty package is in the area of poor implementation. The amnesty programme was not implemented as recommended in the report of the Niger Delta Technical Committee. Rather than engage in Open negotiations or a formal agreement with the militants, the consultations were at the highest levels of Federal government, involving Niger Delta elites/elders and top government officials of Niger Delta origin negotiating with the militants Commanders (Obi & Rustad, 2011). This top down non-inclusive approach, through the militants commanders who are only interested in what comes into their pockets, or for their own personal aggrandizement is a serious challenge to the Amnesty programme as the militants on ground felt cheated and sidelined by the government. It shows that Nigerian government has not really learnt any lesson from the previous failed development programme such as the Niger Delta development Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC), which failed to deliver on the basis of top-down approach. For sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta to be achieved, there is need for the adoption of bottom-up approach through the inclusion of elements of democracy, accountability, equity and active public participation of all stake holders including the grassroots people (Ako, 2011), militants, youth organizations, women groups and civil society. Furthermore, the total number of ammunitions/weapons handed in by the militants totalling 1,798 rifles, 1981 guns of various types, 70 RPGs, 159 Pistols, one spear and six cannons (Agbo, 2011) are certainly low when compared with 26,358 militants that registered for the amnesty programme. The region is still ridden with arms and this is evident in the various attacks that have been carried out even after the disarmament exercise. The disarmament programme needs to be firmed up because as long as many arms are still at large, the region remains very unsafe and at risk of relapsing into violence (Joseph, 2010). The recent spate of bombings across the region shows that all is not well with the Amnesty programme. For instance, MEND set off two car bombs on 15 March, 2010 in Warri, the Delta State Capital, where a post amnesty dialogue was being held and this left one person dead and several others injured (Ofete, 2010) Also important is the October 1, 2010 Car bombing that killed about 12 people and disrupted the Nigeria 50th anniversary celebrations. This led to the trail and conviction of the leader of MEND; Henry Okah in South Africa. His brother Chares Okah also suffered the same fate alongside three others before the Abuja Federal high Court on suspicion of involvement (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010) Also on 4th February, 2012, the militant group also bombed a trunk pipeline at Brass in Bayelsa state belonging to Italy's EniSPA, ENS from which it lost 'around 4,000 barrels per day of 'equity production' from the incident (Mamah & Ameize, 2012). The group further claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Ogbogbabere country home of the Minister for Niger Delta, Elder Godsdoy Orubebe in Burutu local govt area of Delta State on 28 January 2012. (Mamah & Amaize 2012)

Importantly, "the Amnesty is exclusive, it targets only militants without consideration for the Victims of militancy and hostage taking in the region (Akinwale, 2010) Mothers and Children who had lost fathers and sons and homes and have been displaced by the conflict were not included in the amnesty package. (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010) presumably as a result of their lack of means of violence. To exclusion of grassroots on the

sustainability of the current peace in the region (Obi & Rustad, 2011) Ibaba (2011) posted the question thus: Does the surrender of arms and renunciation of violence by militants bring the frustration of the entire population to an end? Are the militants the only deprived in Niger Delta? Is the amnesty programme and the attention given to the ex-militants not reinforcing the frustration of those who did not take up arms against the Nigerian state? My answer to the first two is No, but the answer to the third question is in the affirmative. This brings us to the point that violence could rear up or recur in the region if the frustration which support insurgency are not resolved. Resolving these frustrations is therefore a requirement for peace – building in the region”. (Ibaba, 2011).

The empowerment policy of the government through the training programme and job opportunities must not be limited to the militant. It must be extended to all the local inhabitants in the region, otherwise, it could send a wrong signal to others who have been excluded from the exercise that crime pays and may serve as a driving force for others to want to take arms for recognition. The amnesty package should not be implemented as a standalone act, but must be carried out within a comprehensive peace process, as recommended by the technical committee (International Crime group 2009). Thus, government must not only publish the white paper on the recommendation of the Niger Delta Technical committee, but also embark on a holistic rather than the current fractured approach to the implementation of the report. This report is believed “Offers an opportunity to reduce the violent conflict significantly and begin long term regional development in the oil – rich region and could help to ‘save the region from further violence and organised criminality. (International Crisis Group, 2009). Addressing the militants alone while neglecting the deplorable situation, the underdevelopment and poverty, governmental and corporate misgovernance, all of which led to the militancy and later criminality in the region will no doubt spell doom for the amnesty programme. this is because the number of militants presently being reintegrated under the programme constitute only a small percentage of the Niger Delta population, which under the 2006 population figure is 31,224,577 million people (Nigerian News Census, 2006) Efforts must be taken to remove the Niger Delta people from what Sacs (2005 refers to as poverty trap – a situation in which degraded environment, poor health, poor education, poor infrastructure and poor standard of living reinforce one another (Ogege, 2011).

In addition, it was revealed that some of the rehabilitation centers and demobilizing campus are lacking in even the basic facilities for proper impartation of knowledge and skills. Shortages of bed spaces beds and other basic facilities in some of the centres made only few militants to be accommodated (Ikelegbe 2010). Also in compliance with the UN code of DDR, it is expected that in the implementation of the DDR programmes, the ex-militants must be taken away from their natural habitats for transformation and reintegration purposes.

REFLECTION ON NIGERIA’S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

PEACE AND SECURITY: Nigeria’s founding fathers also dreamt of a country where peace and justice reign and where no man will be oppressed and where our banner will not be stained (by the blood of fellow Nigerians) However, sustainable peace and security, social political development have eluded Nigeria for a significant part of the past 52 years. Although the Nigeria civil war ended on a “No Victor, No Vanquished” refrain, and reconciliation was achieved within a short period of time, Nigeria has witnessed several episodes of conflicts in several parts of the country since then, especially since the 1980s. These include ethnic, religious, land, rights and resource – based conflicts.

Although Nigeria is still recovering from the Niger Delta Insurgency, (resource control, underdevelopment, youth unemployment) have not been adequately addressed. Meanwhile the Boko Haram insurgency in the north has created a high sense of insecurity throughout the country. The huge expenditure on security has not translated into peace and security.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-examine the approach to peace and security in the country as this may promote social political development.

POVERTY: The founding fathers also dreamt of a land of plenty. This dream was not far-fetched because of the discovery of the “Black Gold” in independence (in 1956 (However, oil did not generate much wealth for Nigeria until after the 1967 because oil prices were low and Nigeria’s production was also relatively low. Following the quadrupling of oil prices in the early 1970’s. Nigeria became almost awash with petrol dollars. Unfortunately, successive governments have failed to use the country’s oil wealth resulted in the classic Dutch disease and immiserizing growth in Nigeria.

Thus, inspite of the vast oil wealth (and other natural resources) of the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in General, poverty remained a nagging problem since independence and this has adversely affected the growth of Nigeria’s social political development.

CORRUPTION: Corruption is defined here as “The abuse of public position for private, group or individual to whom one owes allegiance and it occurs when a public official accepts, solicits or extorts payments or when private agents offer a payment to circumvent the law for competitive or personal advantage.

Nigeria cannot afford to continue on the path of unbridled corruption because corruption erodes the capacity of governments at all levels to provide public services at the quality and quantity needed to improve the living standard of the people. Corruption has made public office the fast track to wealth in Nigeria and has intensified the struggle for elected offices, making elections a do-or-die affair. Infact, corruption may ultimately truncate the growth of Nigeria socially and politically, therefore, the Federal government must wage a renewed war on corruption at all levels of governance (Federal, state and local).

ELECTIONS: Over the past 52 years, elections in Nigeria have been very problematic. Most elections have been anything but free and fair. They have been characterized by massive rigging and fraud which have resulted in protests, conflicts and long-term court litigations.

The foundation of democracy is free and fair elections, therefore we cannot continue to have or tolerate elections. The Nigerians Governors forum held its election on the 24th of May, 2013 An election comprising of only 36 persons as voters could not be conducted hitch free as the forum currently has two chairmen who are claiming to have won the election. The social political development of any country is hinged on the perceived sincerity of the custodian of the people who holds the legal sovereignty. To this end, free and credible elections will promote social political development in the country.

POWER SHARING & RESOURCE CONTROL: Power sharing at the Federal level among the major ethnic groups and regions of the country has been a thorny issue since independence. The social – political development of Nigeria can be said to be a pendulum that swings to the region that holds power. The marginalization of the minority groups is the bane for the persistent call for power and resource control which if strictly adhered to could bring about social political development.

CONCLUSION

Beyond amnesty, the underlying social political economic and environmental problems triggered by militancy in the Niger Delta needs to be addressed, as without this, it is doubtful if Amnesty alone could bring durable peace to the volatile region. The introduction of Amnesty must be backed up by socio-economic and socio-political development in the entire region. Amnesty alone will only bring a temporary peace to the region sooner or later, new and more dangerous groups may emerge in the region if nothing is done to adequately address the root causes of the Niger Delta crisis that birthed the Amnesty programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Amnesty Programmes skill acquisition packages promises a better future for both the local populations and the companies if well managed. Upon the completion of their training in oil related skills, the companies should ensure that they are recruited and engaged in the industry through the reservation of some employment quota for the local inhabitants, thus making the local people identify with the companies of operating in the region.

Government must also ensure the inclusion of other militant groups that now desire to join in the Amnesty programme. Recently, there have been agitations from some of the militants, mostly youth in the region, who failed to avail themselves of the window of opportunity opened to them to accept the Amnesty offers. The first phase and second phase for lack of trust and sincerity in the government over the programme.

Also the success of the Amnesty package depends on the collaboration of the state governments, local governments, the oil malls, Nigeria Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the ministry of Niger Delta affairs and other intervention agencies. Each of these levels of government, corporations and agencies must strive to contribute their own quota to the success of the programme, practically in the area of training and skill acquisition, creation of economy is hostile and the people are not getting much expected democracy dividends, this would provide fertile ground for germination and exacerbation of conflicts. Democracy means nothing if people do not have access to nourishing Food, good health care, good education, access to resources for a good life, and social political development.

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