



## Amnesty Programme and the Sustainable Peace and Development of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, where oil multinational corporations (MNCs) conduct the nation's oil exploration activities, is plagued by environmental degradation from gas flaring and oil spills. With the strong cooperation of the oil multinational corporations, the country's successive administrations not only ignored the people and other non-governmental groups' pleas for attention to the region, but also occasionally responded with crackdowns and repression. The crisis escalated when the locals in this area resorted to self-defense by bombing, kidnapping, and capturing foreign workers and other employees of the oil multinational corporations in return for cash ransom. The government created the amnesty program in 2009 as a way out of the quagmire because it could no longer stand the humiliation, the decline in daily oil output, and the significant financial loss. This study examines the impact of the amnesty program on long term peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta. Using a qualitative data analysis approach and a historical research methodology, the study is grounded in conflict transformation theory which argues among other things, that all social groups should have equal access to the Amnesty program in order to establish a system of peace, regardless of their ethnic background or affiliation. To satisfy the Niger Deltas' demands for unfettered rights, all tiers of government— local, state, and federal—must carry out their obligations to the people. The federal government and its National Security Agencies (NSAs) should take adequate action to combat insecurity and the spread of weapons across the country.*

**Keywords:** Amnesty, Niger Delta, Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, Development.

### Introduction

The concept of amnesty is not new. The word "amnesty" is a Greek word that comes from "amnestia," which is defined as an act of grace in which the state's supreme authority restores those who may have committed any offense against it to the status of innocent persons (Novus homo). It goes beyond a pardon in that it erases all legal reminders of the offenses. It is also the government's act of power to pardon people, particularly for political offenses, and to absolve them of the

guilt or punishment associated with those offenses (Ikelegbe & Umokoro 2014).

Different types of amnesty programs exist. Delinquent taxpayers amnesty get a onetime chance to settle their accounts by paying taxes and interest without facing criminal penalties. Tax amnesty may help governments generate more income, but it may also enrage law abiding taxpayers who don't like it when tax defaulters receive tax incentives. The goal of the amnesty policy was to lessen France's overcrowded prison system. However,

governments all around the world now regularly implement such policies (Ogannah, 2009).

Amnesties, which target common crime, are now a common part of presidential campaigns. Historically, they were utilized as a tool for national reconciliation following political crises. The goal of the so called housing amnesty initiative is to give the populace access to inexpensive housing. Although the concept of amnesty is not new to Nigerians, the current amnesty program's scope and significant financial implications is to assist end insurgency in the oil rich Niger Delta region. It was for this intent the Nigerian government made the decision to implement the approach (Akinwale, 2010).

According to Watts (2006), the Nigerian scenario serves as an example of how oil based development fails. The Nigerian government was unable to ignore the Niger Delta issue any longer, primarily because crude oil, which provides roughly 90% of the country's foreign earnings, has steadily grown to be the foundation of the Nigerian economy. Crude oil production in the Niger Delta hit a record low of 700,000 barrels per day during the height of youth unrest. This is because young people in the Niger Delta actively participated in activities that disrupted the region's exploration process, such as vandalizing oil sites, kidnapping oil workers, and bunkering. Following extensive discussion, the Late Umar Ya'Adua administration chose to implement a new policy known as the "Presidential Amnesty Program" in order to help provide a solution to the threat of violence in the Niger Delta region (Ejovi, & Ebie, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The goal of the Niger Delta insurgents' amnesty was to bring about a lasting peace and foster an atmosphere that would hasten sustainable development. It was a tactic used to put an end to militancy or insurgency and

restore peace to the unstable Niger Delta region of Nigeria in order to enable the continuous oil exploration and consequently increased revenue for the Nigerian state and to generate revenue that would be used to address a variety of issues related to underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. It was therefore intended to clear the Niger Delta of the militant youths in order to protect the oil industry in the region. This study examines how the amnesty program has brought about peace and sustainable development to the Niger Delta region. The statement of problem for the study is: What are the noticeable consequences of the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

### **Research Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a historical research design that relied on secondary data sources and content analysis.

### **Conceptual and Literature Review**

#### **The Amnesty Program**

The Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament of Militants in the Niger Delta made recommendations that served as the basis for the amnesty program for the region. The panel was established on May 5, 2009, to carry out the NTDC's recommendations on giving Niger Delta militants amnesty. Then, on June 25, 2009, President Umaru Yar'adua declared amnesty for the insurgents in the Niger Delta. Section 175 of the 1999 constitution, which grants the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria certain powers, was a major source of support for the declaration (Iyabobola, 2015).

1. I hereby offer everyone who has directly or indirectly taken part in the commission of crimes related to militant activity in the Niger Delta amnesty and unconditional pardon.

2. The pardon will take effect when the affected individuals surrender and turn over

all weapons, ammunition, and equipment, as well as complete the renunciation of militancy forms listed in the schedule hereto, at the closest collection center set up for government purposes in each of the Niger Delta states.

3. Everyone currently facing charges related to militant activity will be eligible for the unconditional pardon granted under this proclamation.

4. This declaration will no longer be in force as of Sunday, October 4, 2009. None of the militants were forced to accept the offer of amnesty by the proclamation of the amnesty program. Only those who willingly accepted the offer were given contracts by the government, and they were thereafter subjected to a proper and non-coercive DDR procedure (Iyabobola, 2015).

There was a 60-day opportunity for the militants to turn in their weapons (i.e., accept the offer of amnesty). August 6–October 4, 2009, was the time frame for the 60 days. There are four parts to the amnesty scheme. These include the DDR, infrastructure, petroleum, and environmental subcommittees. Nonetheless, peace and stability in the Niger Delta are directly impacted by the DDR component (Iyabobola, 2015).

Ndutimi Alaibe, the Federal Government's National Coordinator and Chief Accounting Officer, claimed that in order to calm the unrest in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian federal government granted militants amnesty in 2009. The then President responded to the security issues by implementing a fundamental reduction in the level of violence occurring. Following stakeholder deliberation, it was determined that the militants needed to surrender their weapons. That served as the foundation for the amnesty, which was intended to maintain, stabilize, and solidify the security situation in the Niger Delta region as a necessary condition for fostering regional economic growth (The Daily Independent, June 3, 2012). The Niger Delta saw around

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seven years of comparatively calm conditions following President Umaru Musa Yar'adua's 2007 proclamation of amnesty (Igbini, 2020).

The amnesty procedure raised a lot of problems. First, all three elements of the process must be integrated and carried out for "disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration" (DDR) to be successful. Reintegration, which should involve resettlement, training, alternative jobs, etc., was not thoroughly planned for in the Niger Delta's current approach. The willingness of certain oil firms to help with technical training to improve the employability of those granted amnesty was one possible resource that was not utilized. Second, it was likely that just a small portion of the weapons that were in use were turned in, and it's unclear even if the weapons being turned in were utilized by the militants. This is true of most DDR programs worldwide. Third, a DDR process must be a component of a larger peace process in order to be fully successful.

DDR is unlikely to be successful if the militants' and other Delta residents' complaints were not addressed. Fourth, inviting foreign monitors as witnesses with the guarantee that the weapons surrendered were rendered useless will boost the trust of many militants in the disarmament process. The administration, however, opposed foreign observers. Fifth, some militants believed that the amnesty process is being used to incite conflict among the militants. What is the government's plan at the conclusion of the amnesty program, one could wonder? Are there going to be real peace talks with the demobilized militants? What happens if the main insurgent leaders reject the amnesty?

The area was once more besieged by militants known as "the Niger Delta Avengers" in May 2016. Utilizing the Delta's intricate, creek filled terrain to keep one step ahead of the Nigerian soldiers pursuing them, they operated in groups, carried small arms and explosives, blow up pipelines, and sabotage

installations in order to destroy oil infrastructures.

### **Militants: Disarmed and Registered**

Disarmament is the process by which former combatants turn in their weapons and ammunition at specified locations or camps, signifying the end of hostilities. Amnesty in the Niger Delta has helped a sizable portion of militants give up their weapons and accept peace. In accordance with the amnesty granted 30,000 members of various militant groups from the nine (9) oilproducing states that made up the Niger Delta turned in their weapons and ammunition and registered at the various arms collection centers for the demobilization process. In particular, it further demonstrates that in the first phase, 20,049 militants were disarmed and registered; in the second phase, 6166 militants were disarmed and registered; and in the third phase, 3,642 militants were disarmed and registered. While precise numbers on the number of militants in the Niger Delta states are not given, the literature recorded the total, which is used for the third phase appropriately demonstrating that, by the conclusion of the third stage, the states of Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta had the most number of militants disarmed (Lanre and Shaibu, 2019).

### **Ex-militants were Demobilized and Reintegrated**

Demobilization, according to Egwu (2013), is the process of leaving combat and militarized life behind and returning to civilian life. It entails dismantling and disbanding paramilitary and non-state fighting units, which are typically gathered in camps for a change in life orientation that includes professional and non-violent life counseling. Reintegration, on the other hand, entails reintegrating former fighters or militants into society through profitable training and empowerment aimed at achieving self-empowerment and economic independence as

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well as the peaceful and civil responsibilities that former combatants should play in society. By providing support in the form of education, professional training, microcredit, skills development, and help to return to peaceful and sustainable livelihoods, reintegration helps to meet the unique needs of former combatants, veterans, and disabled combatants as well as their families and communities.

According to the study, demobilization (transformational training and counseling in various camps) and reintegration of the former militants by attending to their specific needs and those of noncombatants in the area are two more significant areas where the Amnesty program has helped to build peace in the Niger Delta. Approximately 15,434 were changed as part of the peacebuilding process to help former militants reintegrate into civilian life between June 2010 and May 2011. 6,067 exmilitants were reintegrated through formal education between 2013 and 2014; 2,500 went to universities; 13,000 took part in skill- building programs at domestic and international training facilities; 113 worked in welding fabrication and the maritime industry; and others in various domestic and international agencies. Niger Delta ex-militants and noncombatants who were beneficiaries of the Amnesty program's reintegration component received specialized and vocational training, as did the numerous international organizations that served as the scheme's human infrastructure building component, a proliferation of noncombatants and former soldiers in formal education (B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc., MBA, M. Engr., and L LM courses) Primarily postgraduate degree programs offered by international universities in various academic fields. The United States of America (USA), Sweden, Cyprus, Dubai, Malaysia, Belarus, and the United Kingdom (UK) are the training host nations, correspondingly. However, the majority of the Niger Delta recipients under the Amnesty

scheme were housed in Universities in the UK and Malaysia (Lanre and Shaibu, 2019).

### **Government Financial Contributions for Reintegration of Transformed Ex-militants.**

There is general agreement that the Federal Government of Nigeria, in its endeavor to establish peace in the Niger Delta, has contributed billions of dollars to the Amnesty program through the annual budget from 2009 to 2018 in order to ensure that the DDR scheme results in enduring peace in the area. The program's budgetary contributions and allocations made it clear that the Federal Government was financially committed to peace building in the Niger Delta. In addition to the government's demonstrated financial commitment to the Amnesty program, data regarding finances shows that exmilitants protested in 2015 in response to grievances or concerns that the government intended to discontinue the monthly payment, as well as the low funding for the program. However, the Amnesty Office was able to pay all of the ex-militants' backlog of stipends through the end of 2016, thanks to the increase in funding in 2017. In addition to giving the former militants a monthly salary of between N65,000 to N66,000, the Amnesty program has continuously provided for reintegration activities (Premium Time, Wednesday, August 22, 2018) (Lanre and Shaibu, 2019).

### **Prospects and Challenges Facing the Implementation of the Amnesty Program in Nigeria**

According to government reports, the country's oil production increased from 800,000 barrels per day (during the 2006-2008 periods) to 2.3 million barrels per day after the ceasefire brought about by the amnesty declaration. This is because the security situation in the oil region has improved. A daily increase of 1.5 million barrels translates into daily revenue of \$124.45 million for the national coffers.

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Additionally, other businesses used the occasion to fix some of their damaged oil facilities. Undoubtedly, the amnesty program is anticipated to enhance the nation's currently poor level of human capital development. Nigeria is ranked 156th out of 187 countries and territories with a 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.459, which includes the three fundamental components of human development: a long and healthy life, access to information, and a respectable level of living (UNDP 2011).

The "resource curse" argument, which holds that resourcerich economies like Nigeria, Congo, Angola, etc. are more vulnerable to poor management, underdevelopment, and violence, may be disproved if the amnesty program in Nigeria is carried out properly. With effective institutions and sound governance in place, the resource curse can be avoided, as demonstrated by the examples of the UK and Norway, two significant oil exporting nations. Despite the program's successes, elders in the Niger Delta region called for the dissolution of the Presidential Amnesty Committee after reports from the group established in January 2010 to examine the DDR's rehabilitation component showed certain shortcomings. Among these are the following: the overabundance of registered exmilitants; the ongoing detention of multiple militants; some training centers operating with subpar facilities and falling short of acceptable standards; and the fact that approximately 80% of the budget was allocated to paying consultants and contractors, with only 20% going toward the rehabilitation of the ex-militants (Obi & Rustad, 2011).

NwajiakuDahou (2010) commented on the shortcomings of the amnesty program, saying: "Among the many flaws of the Amnesty program are: Lack of a wider political settlement involving the larger Niger Delta population that has borne the costs of conflict, vast differences in compensation between

former militant commanders and foot soldiers, restricted access to rehabilitation training and allowances for those who turned in weapons after the deadline, inadequate training provision, limited employment opportunities, and the politically motivated staffing of organizations tasked with implementing and coordinating the amnesty program." Five new committees were established to address postamnesty programs and expedite development difficulties in the Niger Delta after the Federal Government abolished the Presidential Committee on Disarmament and Amnesty for Militants in the Niger Delta on December 2, 2009. These included the Environmental Remediation Committee, the Oil and Gas Assets Protection Committee, the Disarmament and Reintegration Committee, the Presidential Monitoring Committee on Amnesty, and the Infrastructural Committee. Poor execution of the amnesty package is one of its main problems (Olubayo & Olubisi, 2012).

The amnesty scheme was not carried out as suggested in the Niger Delta Technical Committee's report. The consultations took place at the highest levels of the federal government, with top government officials of Niger Delta origin and Niger Delta elites/elders negotiating with the militant commanders, instead of holding open talks or signing a formal peace agreement with the militants (Obi & Rustad, 2011). Since the militants on the ground feel deceived and ignored by the government, this topdown, non-inclusive strategy, implemented by militant leaders who are only interested in what is profitable to them or for their own personal advancement, poses a severe threat to the amnesty program. The failure of earlier unsuccessful development initiatives like the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), and Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) based on a topdown approach demonstrates

that the Nigerian government has not really learned anything from them.

Adopting a bottomup strategy that incorporates aspects of democracy, accountability, equity, and active public participation from all stakeholders—including grassroots individuals, militants, youth organizations, women's groups, and civil society—is necessary to achieve sustainable peace and development in the Niger Delta. Additionally, compared to the 26,358 militants who registered for the amnesty program, the overall number of weapons and ammo turned in by the militants—1,798 rifles, 1,981 guns of various sorts, 70 RPGs, 159 pistols, one spear, and six cannons—is undoubtedly low. The numerous strikes that militants have taken out even after the disarmament exercise demonstrate how armed the region is. The region is extremely hazardous and vulnerable to a return to violence as long as there are a lot of weapons in circulation, hence the disarmament program needs to be strengthened (Olubayo & Olubisi, 2012)

### **Amnesty, Militia Insurgency and Violence in the Niger Delta?**

There is ample evidence that, in spite of the Amnesty program's enormous achievements and contributions, violent attacks on multinational oil companies (MNOCs) continued to occur between October 2010 and 2016, which is essentially the post-amnesty period. There is ample proof that the Amnesty program was tangled with issues of violent attacks and revival associated with the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in Bayelsa state, Delta state, and Abuja, the Nigerian capital. Even yet, it was noted that the program's largest beneficiaries were in Delta and Bayelsa States. The activities shown in Tables 1 as well as the reemergence of militant organizations under the MEND banner are proof that the

Amnesty program was unable to stop violence or establish a peace regime in the Niger Delta.

**Table 1: Evidence of Militia resurgence and violent attacks 2010-2016**

S\N	Date	Millitia Attack\Millitant Organisation	Outcome
1	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2010	Nigeria's 50th independence Celebration. Allegedly MEND	Detonation and blast of 2 car bombs killing 2 persons and wounding 36 others
2	October, 2010	Agip Pipeline in Bayelsa. MEND	Explosion
3	March 5, 2010	Post Amnesty Conference at Warri, Delta State. MEND	Car bombing near event. 1 person killed and 11 injure
4	November 8, 2010	Raid on Oil rig and kidnapping of seven foreign staff. MEND	Kidnapping of seven staff
5	November 15, 2010 .	Attack on Exxon Mobil Oil platform. MEND	Kidnapping of seven Nigerian workers.
6	February 4, 2012	Attack/ bombing of Agip trunk pipeline. Allegedly MEND	Bombing of Agip trunk Pipeline
7	March 20, 2013	Attack on Oil Pipeline. Allegedly MEND	Bombing and Destruction
8	April 13, 2013 .	Attack on Shell oil well in Nembe L.G.A, Bayelsa State. Allegedly MEND	Bombing and destruction
9	July 4, 2013	Attack on oil pipeline. Allegedly Militants affiliated to MEND	Bombing and Destruction
10	December 20, 2013	Attack on Oil Plant	Kidnapping of 4 South Korean
11	January 15, 2014.	Agip facility in Nembe- Brassanbiri, Bayelsa. Allegedly New group of MEND trainee fighters	Kidnapping of vessel staff. Hostages released (Ransom allegedly paid)
12	October 14, 2016	Attacks on pipeline Niger Delta Avenger (NDA)	Bombing and Destruction
13	October 25, 2016	Attacks on pipeline Niger Delta Avenger (NDA)	Bombing and Destruction
14	November 16, 2016	Attacks on pipeline Niger Delta Avenger (NDA)	Bombing and Destruction

**Source: Authors compilation 2024**

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The activities shown in Tables 1 as well as the reunification of militant organizations under the MEND umbrella reveal that the Amnesty program was unable to stop violence or establish a peace regime in the Niger Delta.

Even worse, Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016) found that in addition to MEND's violent operations, there have been occasional outbreaks of new and resurgent militia activities, including those of John Togo in the western Delta in 2011, Keiti Sese's camp at Foropa in Bayelsa state in 2010, Coastal Revolutionary Forces, and the Idiot Family in Bayelsa state in 2014. Additionally, the same MEND was found to have been involved in various criminal operations, including piracy, oil theft, and sailor kidnapping, between 2011 and 2014—a time that could be described as a new face of militancy (Ejovi & Ebie, 2013). Despite a drop following the 2009 Amnesty, maritime and waterway piracy has sharply increased since 2011. Between December 2012 and March 2013, attacks occurred on 39 vessels and coastal craft in Nigerian waters, resulting in approximately 7 fatalities and 33 hostages taken.

In 2013, there were 29 piracy incidents in Nigerian waters, including two hijackings, the boarding of 11 ships, attacks on 13 vessels, and attempted attacks on three more. The Niger Delta Avengers (NDAs) also carried violent attacks in 2016 by bombing and demolishing Chevron installations and oil pipelines in Warri (Ejovi & Ebie, 2013).

## **Theoretical Frame Work**

### **Conflict transformation theory**

In the realm of peace building, conflict transformation theory is a relatively recent development. Nonetheless, a lot of the well-known ideas of conflict management and conflict resolution are incorporated into the theory's foundation. Conflict transformation is viewed as a reconceptualization of the field to make it more relevant to modern conflict circumstances, rather than a completely new

method, due to its ideological connection to these (Miall, 2004). The nature of modern conflicts has changed, making this rethinking essential. For instance, the majority of modern wars takes place inside national borders and are exacerbated by structural factors such as unequal power dynamics and the allocation and appropriation of resources.

Additionally, many modern confrontations are drawn out and characterized by intermittent intervals of violence and quiet, as noted by Smith (2004). Conflict in this situation arises in waves, rising sharply until some compromise is made, then sharply declining (nearly to the point where conflict is no longer evident), and then rising once again. In the end, protracted conflicts damage society and cause complex emergencies in addition to upsetting social stability. Three separate theoretical processes are embodied in the conflict transformation approach: conflict transformation (Lederach, 1995), conflict management (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998), and conflict resolution (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000).

"Positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence" is how Bloomfield and Reilly (1998) defined conflict management. Instead of promoting strategies for eliminating conflict,... tackles the more practical issue of conflict management: how to resolve it in a positive manner, how to unite opposing sides in a collaborative process, and how to create a workable, realistic, cooperative system for the constructive management of differences. Violent conflicts, according to theorists and practitioners in this tradition, arise from disagreements over values and interests ingrained in the social structure. These distinctions cannot be eliminated since they are ingrained in both macro and micro social structures, including historical experiences, institutional ties, resource appropriation and distribution, current power coalitions, racism, ethnicity, tribalism, egos, and so forth. The best course



of action for society is to control the dispute and keep it from getting worse to the point where it might interfere with daily operations. .

As noted by Miall (2004), there are times when a historic compromise may be reached that leads to the temporary suspension or renunciation of violence in order to promote peace. Therefore, achieving political settlements via the use of the resources of a few important actors who are strong enough to put pressure on the disputing parties to reach a settlement or steer the inevitable conflict in the right directions is the aim of conflict management. In contrast to conflict management theory, conflict resolution theory emphasizes the role of knowledgeable but helpless outsiders who work outside of the political system to help disputing parties comprehend, investigate, evaluate, challenge, reframe, and synthesize their interests and perspectives.

Conflict management theorists' systemic approach is criticized by theorists in this lineage as being ineffective and unable to resolve disputes because it fails to take into account the depths of identity and community from which conflicts originate. They contend that individuals engaged in identity based disputes are frequently unwilling to engage in compromise negotiations; rather, it is necessary to investigate the conflict's origins in order to develop innovative solutions that the disputing parties might have overlooked because of their deeply held beliefs.

Accordingly, conflict resolution basically entails assisting the disputing parties in shifting from harmful zero-sum interactions to constructive ones (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). This method has been critiqued by Lederach (2003) due to its "definitiveness" or "finality" and the way it uses terminology that "implies finding a solution to a problem." Consequently, it obsesses about "ending something that is not desired" rather than creating "something that is desired." The goal

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of conflict transformation is to create the kind of peace that all parties involved want. Therefore, conflict transformation goes beyond conflict management and conflict resolution theories that only reframe positions and identify positive outcomes. It also addresses the creation of a new system, procedure, or method that integrates and uses the benefits of ending a conflict to promote peace.

It explores the nature of the conflicting parties, including their operational structures, historical experiences, and relationships that extend conflicts beyond specific sites. Lederach (2003) defines it as envisioning and responding to "the ebb and flow of social conflict as life giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real life problems in human relationships." It is a "process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict," according to Miall (2004). Conflicts may be changed from their virulent, destructive form to circumstances that are acceptable to all parties involved by affecting and influencing these domains (i.e., both the epicenter of conflict, such as the web of relational patterns, including the history of lived episodes from which new episodes of conflict emerge, and the actual fighting).

Theoretically, this NDAP analysis might be examined under the heading of conflict transformation. The theory provides a framework for talking about the Niger Delta conflict's cause or causes as well as the best ways to alter the intricate dynamics of the conflict in the delta. Using this method, it is common to see the NDAP as being caught in the middle of a significant conceptual divide: the need for order in light of current realities, particularly declining oil revenue and the

potential impact of the delta violence on Nigeria's economic and political stability; and a historical legacy of ecological abuse combined with structural violence that has sparked massive rage, protests, and violence. The NDAP must foresee and address the multitude of factors that led to the conflict in the first place, including the coercive structural cracks, if it is to bring about enduring peace. Conflict transformation, as a result of peace building, denotes a qualitative shift from a state of violence to one of peace with little to no chance of reversal. The conflict itself, certain facets of the socio historical and political system in which it takes place, the individuals engaged, and the connections between adversaries are all transformed by this change system (Notter and Diamond, 1996). Ebiede (2017), asserts that peace is ultimately the result of transformation at the several levels. Thus, it is clear that the Niger Delta is threatened by the current oppressive sociopolitical structures, inequality, lack of legal economic access, pollution, extreme poverty, illegal oil bunkering, and class and ethnic differences in human development. To address these issues, more serious peace building efforts are needed to transform the infrastructures that are required to achieve a relatively successful outcome.

Conflict transformation, a byproduct of peace building, denotes a qualitative shift from a state of violence to one of peace with little to no chance of reversal. The conflict itself, certain elements of the socio historical and political system in which it takes place, the individuals involved in the conflict, and the relationships between adversaries are all transformed by this change system (Notter and Diamond, 1996). Ebiede (2017), asserts that peace is ultimately the result of transformation at these several levels. Thus, it is clear that the Niger Delta is threatened by the current oppressive sociopolitical structures, inequality, lack of legal economic access,

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pollution, grinding poverty, illegal oil bunkering, and class and ethnic differences in human development. To address these issues, more serious peace building efforts are needed to transform the infrastructures required to establish a comparatively successful peace system.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **The amnesty was exclusive:**

Without any formal negotiation or mediation process that could have explicitly stated the other essential elements of the peace process that the amnesty deal was backing, the federal government forced the Niger Delta amnesty arrangement on the people of the region. The amnesty agreement was founded on the idea that the Federal Government, which was denied unrestricted access to the Niger Delta's oil resources, was the target of any crimes the militants in the region may have committed. This is because the Nigerian amnesty agreement did not adhere to the best international standards for empowering victims, particularly the communities in the Niger Delta that have been devastated by oil exploration and by the numerous military operations that have occurred there. The victims (and not just the Federal Government in this instance) were given the opportunity to come forward and describe the crimes committed against them in other parts of the world. These were included in the amnesty.

The Nigerian Government amnesty only targets militants and disregards the victims of hostage taking and militancy in the area. Presumably because they lacked the means of violence, mothers and children who had lost fathers, sons, and houses due to the fighting were left out of the amnesty package. The militants' arms surrender and renunciation of violence did not relieve the discontent of the entire people, given the grassroots' exclusion from the sustainability of the existing calm in the region. The Niger Delta deprivation did not affect only militants. The focus on only

former militants and the amnesty scheme could exacerbate the resentment of those who refrained from using force against the Nigerian government. This leads us to the conclusion that the frustrations that fuel insurgency were not addressed; violence may erupt or recur in the area. Therefore, resolving these annoyances is necessary for the region to achieve peace. The government's empowerment program might have been applied to all local residents in the area; if not, it might give the false impression that crime is profitable to those who have been left out and could encourage others to pick up arms in order to get attention.

Only militants were eligible for the government's empowerment program, which included training and employment prospects. Addressing the militants alone while ignoring the region's appalling poverty, underdevelopment, and predicament will not resolve the issue or accomplish the amnesty's goal. The appalling state of affairs, the region's poverty and underdevelopment, and corporate and governmental poor governance all contributed to the militancy and subsequent criminality in the area. These factors will undoubtedly mark the end of the amnesty program. Only a small portion of the Niger Delta's population— 31,224,577 million according to the 2006 population estimate— are militants currently being reintegrated under the program (Nigerian News Census, 2006). The Niger Delta population has to be lifted out of the "poverty trap," which is characterized by a declining environment, bad health, poor education, inadequate infrastructure, and a low level of living.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of the amnesty for Militants in the Niger Delta was to bring about a lasting peace and foster an atmosphere that would hasten sustainable development. The study evaluated and discussed the amnesty contributions to

peace building in the Niger Delta, specifically how militants were disarmed and registered throughout the region; how many former militants were demobilized and reintegrated through formal education, vocational training, and specialized training; and the significant financial commitment made by the Federal Government of Nigeria through various budgetary contributions to the Amnesty program since 2009 to the present. . Nevertheless, evidence from 2010 to 2016 demonstrated that the Amnesty program did not prevent insurgency and violent attacks, including piracy, oil theft, and kidnapping in the Niger Delta, despite the funding allocated to it.

Fascinatingly, the reasons behind this resurgent threat were found and categorized into sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and environmental issues. This classification largely showed that the DDR peace building efforts lacked the framework necessary to deal with the underlying causes of the issues. Therefore, the Niger Delta amnesty program undoubtedly represents a temporary crisis management win, but the Niger Delta issue has not yet been resolved. The initiative disregarded fundamental principles of global best practices for resolving disputes and promoting peace. Although it was promoted as a "comprehensive" DDR exercise, reintegration was hardly mentioned. No provisions were made for institutional reform, dialogue, mediation, or reconciliation. Unresolved local level conflicts within and between communities continued to be open wounds and a haven for violent attacks, revival, and radicalization.

### **Recommendation**

Regardless of their ethnic background or affiliation, all social segments should have equal access to the Amnesty program in order to build a peace system. All levels of government— local, state, and federal— should fulfill their duties to the populace in

order to allay the Niger Deltas' demands for unrestricted rights.

Insecurity and the spread of weapons should be addressed appropriately nationwide by the federal government and its National Security Agencies (NSAs). If not, peace building would continue to be difficult. To achieve the desired stability in the Niger Delta, the government and all other entities involved in the implementation should adhere to the provisions of the amnesty deal with ex-militants.

The fundamental principles of international good practice and diplomatic tools for conflict resolution, such as the availability of mediation, dialogue, reconciliation, or institutional reform to handle local level

conflicts within and between communities, should be acknowledged and utilized by amnesty programs.

Peace building efforts in the Niger Delta should involve sufficient cooperation between the government and regional players, such as militant commanders, regional politicians, and traditional authorities. Before acting in a way that may breed mistrust, the federal government should discuss matters.

The government should provide microcredits to the trained Niger Deltas so they can practice the skills they have learned. Government representatives and contractors must demonstrate transparency and accountability as duty givers or holders.

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