

# The Nigerian State and Peace Building Mechanics in the Niger Delta Region

Written by Paul-Sewa Thovoethin and Shamsudeen Adio Yusuf

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### Introduction

The emergence of democratic institutions in Nigeria's Fourth Republic featured a quantum of crises and violent conflict. Theoretical underpinning in favour of the causes of plethoric crises could be underscored in the context that a doused conflict situation imposed by an authoritarian regime (in this case, a series of military regimes) could re-emerge immediately after the demise of such a regime even when there is an emergence of a seemingly freedom-oriented dispensation (democratic era). This is what Adebayo Adedeji, three months before the inauguration of President Olusegun Obasanjo on 29 May 1999, referred to as the "scary inheritance"[3] of the Fourth Republic, in which case not only did civil rule provide a base for citizenry to become a challenger of infringement on their socio-cultural, environmental and political life, but most importantly, it allowed for the explosion of hitherto bottled-up emotions. Among the crises that re-emerge at the inception of civil rule in Nigeria is the Niger Delta crisis.

The Niger Delta crisis was initially indexed on a prolonged socio-economic and political alienation marked by poverty, hunger, disease and environmental degradation. The Niger Delta – especially in the oil-producing communities – featured perpetuated human insecurity (basic needs), lack of infrastructures, wanton ecological damages, theft and unjust distribution of revenue from the sale of oil, coupled with perceived apathy on the part of government and the multinational oil companies in spite of significant contribution of crude oil to the Nigerian and global economy. Thus, the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, instead of serving as means of blessing for the region brought total deprivation of the people from their own property and consequentially endangered meaningful growth and development. As a result, social conflict[4] which featured between militants on one hand and the local elites, government and the multinational oil companies on the other hand ensued. This also degenerated into the problem of hostage-taking and kidnapping of expatriates in the Niger Delta region, for whopping ransom. Prominent indigenes and political elites within the region were not also spared in the hostage for ransom threat. Thus, what started as resource control militancy, transformed into kidnapping and hostage taking business in the Niger Delta region, and which has also extended to other regions in the Country.

Suggesting reasons for the prevalence and causes of conflicts, Abidde notes that *"as inevitable as conflicts are, they worsen if there is a crisis of governance and weak or failing institutions"*[5]. Nigeria government has apparently proved beyond reasonable doubt that its failed institutions could not amiably halt the festering crisis in the region. Rather, the institutions of the state are used as an instrument of oppression at the detriment of peoples' wishes. Thus at the initial stage of their struggle, militants, in championing the course for socio-economic and environmental emancipation, engaged in sabotaging oil installations, hostage taking, and carrying out lethal car bombings.[6] This, perhaps, indicates a pragmatic shift from the initial Ghandi-like revolutionary struggle[7] by Ken Saro-Wiwa (after the Isaac Adaka Boro era) to a militarised violent movement towards ascertaining the wishes and desires of an average people of the Niger Delta. And, finally, to the worse form of kidnapping and hostage-taking.

Historically, measures to curtail the lingering crisis in the region had prompted the establishment of special federal

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agencies to find lasting solution to the unwitting phenomena. Among these special agencies is the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB), the Oil Mineral Producing Areas commission (OMPADEC) and the current Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Despite fervent moves towards curbing the activities of the militants and addressing the problems of the region, the crisis persisted. Amid the course to avert the unrest in the region, former President Umar Musa Yar'Adua (Late) in 2009, initiated an amnesty policy meant to subside the prevailing insurgency, kidnapping, hostage-taking, insecurity and address issues paramount to the priority of the people of Niger Delta. And as a final outcome achieve peace and ensure security to lives and properties in the region

Against this background, the core thrust of this paper is to examine the amnesty policy as a peace building framework for addressing the lingering crisis in the Niger Delta. In this context, the paper will be divided into five sections; the first will introduce the subject matter; secondly, background to the crisis will be examined; thirdly, peace building efforts by the government prior to amnesty option and challenges these efforts faced will be examined; fourthly, amnesty issue will be analysed and be preceded with an assessment of the tendency of the policy in addressing the priorities of the people of Niger Delta. In the final analysis, the paper will conclude and make recommendations.

## **Crisis in the Niger Delta: An Overview**

The Niger Delta region has a population of 27 million[8] and covers an area of 70,000 square kilometres[9], covering the greater part of the South-South region in Nigeria. The geographical location of the region distinguished it from other regions; as it was described as a largest oil producing region in Africa. Besides, the region is rich in both renewal and non-renewal natural resources such as oil, gas bitumen, non timber forest products and timber forest products, wildlife, among other, thus, 95 percent of Nigeria's total revenue is generated from the region.[10]

It is this paradox of 'wealth' and poverty in the Niger Delta that speaks to plight of Niger Deltans. Importantly, the laudable annihilation of the people of the Niger Delta had a long history. The degradation of the environment of the oil-producing communities did not begin with the discovery of oil in 1956; rather, it started with the distortion and gradual annihilation of the culture of the people by the forces of colonial capitalism.[11] During colonial epoch, the political institutions, culture and the economy of the people of Niger Delta was subsided in favour of colonial egocentric institutions. The political structures, culture and the economic orientation of the people were overthrown through coercion and formulation of obnoxious act in order to favour the economic interest of the colonialist. This annihilation was further heightened when oil was discovered in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to say here that the alliance between the state and the foreign oil companies started in the colonial state. The common interest for the extraction of oil in Nigeria brought about an alliance between the British Petroleum (BP) and the Shell in partnership with the Royal Dutch Oil Company. This started in 1937 for joint exploration of oil in Nigeria. This alliance aggravated the pains and deprived them ownership to their property through the 1914 Mineral Act which bestowed the ownership of every mineral resources in and above the land on the colonial state. Instead of this dehumanised act be eroded, the emergence of post colonial Nigeria State fattened the phase of incorporation of the State into the international capitalist world and farther devastation and pains of the people of the Niger Delta. Nonetheless, the degradation of the environment in the Niger Delta became totalistic in scope[12] by the refurbished 1967 Oil Decree, the Petroleum Act of 1969, then the Land Use Decree of 1978 later the Land Use Act of 1980.

Crude oil was discovered in commercial quantity in Oloibiri, Ogbia Local Government Area, Bayelsa State in 1956[13]. By 1958, the profile of Nigeria oil sector has grown tremendously to the extent that the country became sixth largest oil producer in the World[14]. As a result of development in her oil sector, Nigeria joined the Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971 and established the Nigeria National Oil Company (NNOC) in the later year. In 1977, Decree 33 changes the nomenclature of NNOC to the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) charged with the responsibility of upstream and downstream petroleum development. The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is a body that represents the interest of the federal government as it was to the British Petroleum (BP) during the colonial era. The NNPC has many subsidiaries; the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) in the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Pipelines and Product Marketing Company

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(PPMC) and many others were established to formulate petroleum policies, regulate, supervise and monitor the industry.[15]

The development in oil production in the Niger Delta has ironically contributed to the underdevelopment of the region. The initial joint venture by Shell and British Petroleum (BP) was immediately entered into by the NNPC and the multinationals; Shell, AGIP, Chevron, ELF, Mobil and Texaco after independence. In this context, the crisis in the Niger Delta initially revolves around the activities of three interest groups; the State, multinational oil companies and the communities in the Niger Delta. At this juncture, a number of questions suffice. What is critical to the crisis in the Niger Delta? Is the crisis a corollary of maladministration and deficiency in governance on the part of Nigerian State? What are the natures and dimensions at which the agitation for emancipation from the shackles of environmental degradation being taken? What are the resolvable measures taken by the government to curb such societal misdemeanour?

In understanding the critical issues of the crisis in the Niger Delta, lies in the understanding of the question of, 'who owns the land'? Answers to this question require some retrospective analysis. Retrospectively, the colonial state promulgated Mineral Act in 1911 for their economic interest, which denied communities ownership to their natural endowment. The disempowerment of the people's right to natural resources also become the peculiarity of the post-colonial state. After independence, the Nigerian State formulated the Oil Mineral Act of 1969 which established the power to control, absolutely, all mineral resources, including oil, within the territory of Nigeria in the Federal Government. This was further strengthened by the promulgation of the *Land Use Decree* in 1978. The Land Use Decree invested the ownership of all lands in Nigeria in the government. Prior to this decree, land was communally owned and the various traditional rulers, clan heads, and community leaders had the power to determine customary law insofar as this affected land tenure and use.[16]

The implication of the Act, in relation to the belief of the people, is that the people of the Niger Delta becomes a tenant in their own homeland and a subject to institution that they neither recognise nor able to understand or relate to. As the Act bestowed power to allocate land for development purposes to the government (represented by the NNPC), the government and the oil companies deeply reap the enormous benefits from the exploration of oil in the regions and the people of the Niger Delta were left to be engulfed by a recycled poverty. The multinational oil companies; mainly Shell, Chevron/Texaco, and Elf, have treated both the people and the environment with total disdain and hostility[17] and align with brutal and corrupt regimes to protect their exploitation of the land and people by providing the Nigerian military and police with weapons, transport, logistical support and finance.[18] This, invariably, subject the region to what Rowell (1996) described as 'ecological disaster zone[19]'. Most often, oil spills and fires are regular occurrence, causing the death of the local people as well as the destruction of wildlife and property. To further expose exploitative alliance between government and multinationals, issue relating to oil spill has been politically attended to over decades. As argued by Daniel A. Omoweh (2006)

*"The 1978 Land Use Decree further re-asserted the state's ownership of the land, inclusive of its content..... As such, it will be illegal for those who live in oil-producing areas to protest against oil spillage, gas flaring and other forms of environmental degradation since they do not own the land or oil, and no attention is given to pollution in a minefield"*[20]

In furtherance, he noted that:

*"Until the oil companies spill about 10,000 barrels in a single incident, the state regards it as no spill, though, with such volume of oil lost to the ground, severe havoc been wreaked on the environment"*[21]

Against the backdrop of Daniel's assertion, it becomes unequivocal that the state and oil companies had engaged in some sort of exploitative partnerships, which subject the oil-producing communities to an unabated poverty and their irresponsibility in the discharge of their legal and social responsibilities. This exploitative partnership had enriched the opportune political class and the oil companies through primitive accumulation of wealth from the bowel of the region. Scourge of poverty in the region is grim with people lacking basic human needs and the environment wilfully and constantly degraded by the oil companies.[22] The level at which poverty rate was rooted in the region was pointed

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by World Bank (1995) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006). World Bank's comprehensive study pointed out that "the Niger Delta is the least developed area of Nigeria. Per capita income was less than \$280 per annum, with high rising population. Indices of development such as education, health, sanitation, job creation, water and other physical infrastructures were far below acceptable standards. Environmental resources were gradually being degraded and there was an extremely poor human capacity and basic skills"[23]. In the same vein, the 2006 Niger Delta Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted that "the Niger Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructures and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth, squalor, and endemic conflict"[24].

At the behest of the juggernaut underdevelopment nature of the Niger Delta region, several environmental, human and social movements sprouted to revolutionary struggle for the emancipation of the people from neglect, poverty and environmental turbulence; the popular social movements in the Niger Delta in the mid 1980s were Ijaw National Congress (INC), Movement for the Payment of Reparations to Oghia, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Isoko Youth Movement, Nembe Youth Movement, Chikoko Movement, among others[25]. Although, the first revolt against the government on Niger Delta issues was championed by Isaac Jaspa Adaka Boro, who campaigned for the creation of a Niger Delta Republic in 1966. Among them, first, was the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) that began the struggle for ethnic and environmental rights for the Ogoni ethnic nationality as affirmed in the "Ogoni Bill of Rights"[26]. The killings of Ken Saro Wiwa and other eight Ogonis in 1995 pragmatically change the dimension of the movement to a more militarised *tactics of terror* phase.

As the militarised movement engaged in their quest, the Nigerian government met their demand with violence including extra-judicial killings and mass murder, torture, rape, the burning of homes and property, and increased militarism[27]. In spite of Nigerian government's use of military as a declining measure for the protest of the militarised social movements, their (the militants) strength grows as they indulged in unrelenting protest, seized to succumb to the whims and caprices of the government and pathetically, the rivalry degenerated into hostage taking and kidnapping of expatriates. The hostage taking and kidnapping was highly reported in the fourth republic as many expatriates were kidnapped. For instance, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 witnessed kidnapping of five South Korean employees from Deawoo Nigeria Limited, provider of oil services, which was executing the required oil services following a contract signed with Anglo Dutch oil Company, Shell[28]. Besides, those who felt being fenced off the political cabal bitterly engaged in illegitimate oil bunkering in the context of environmental protest, those who are the merchant of small arms and light weapons are also tangential to the raging crisis in the Niger Delta. Insofar, personal interests are also elemental to the raging crisis in the oil-producing communities.

## Governmental Policy Framework as a Reconcilable Measure: A Synopsis

Prior to independence in 1960, the colonial state set-up Sir Henry Willink's Commission best strategies for enhancing development in the region. The report of the commission in 1958 emphasised the need for prompt attention to the special needs of the region. An institutional approach to the problem resulted to the establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) by the federal government in 1960[29]. Since NDDB was at best moribund and did not achieve the lofty objectives for which it was established[30], its failure facilitates the establishment of Niger Delta River Basin Authority in 1976. Besides, through decree No. 23, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was established in July, 1992. This commission was assigned the responsibility to receive and administer the monthly sums from the allocation of the federation account in accordance with confirmed ration of oil production in each state for the rehabilitation and development of oil mineral producing area[31]. The peculiarity among these special agencies is that they were established during a military regime and were bedevilled by gross mismanagement, copious corruption, and shortage of funds.

The advent of democratic government in 1999, under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, recognises the scary nature of poverty and environmental deterioration in the region and commissioned Niger Delta

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Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000; although, the impact of the NDDC activities on the festering crisis in the region is still prone to questions. Among other legal frameworks is the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) (1988), the National Policy on the Environment (1989), Natural Resources Conservative Council (NRCC), the Oil in Navigable Water Decree (1968), the Petroleum Decree (1969), and the Associated Gas Re-injection Act (1980)[32].

Most of the strategic moves by the government to avert the festering crisis in the region were however adjudged as being mere paper strategies; lacking implementation and monitoring mechanisms. This was capable to neither halt the lingering crisis nor curb the pollution of the environment by the multinational oil companies. Rather, the federal government defy the primary motive of social contract and used state machinery as an instrument of oppression – the case of Odi in 1999, among others.

## Halting the Juggernaut: *An Option for Amnesty Policy*

Beyond the threat posed by the crisis in the Niger Delta to economic and political stability in Nigeria are its consequential effects on the development of oil production and supply in international market. Palpably, the sharp drop in the nation's daily output from its peak of 2.6 million barrel per day (bpd) to 500,000 bpd in the mid 2009 and the dwindling oil price in the world market buttress the fact that issues at the root of the crisis have to be given paramount priority. Against this backdrop, an administrative approach to solving the crisis was made by President Musa Yar'Adua, christened "Amnesty Policy." It becomes an alarming approach that gains publicity in academic, media and the public.

Amnesty is a legislative or executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to the positions of innocent people. It includes more than pardon, inasmuch as it obliterates all legal remembrance of the offense[33]. Amnesty offer is a transversal approach towards addressing socio-economic problems of the people. It was believed that by granting amnesty to the militants in the Niger Delta region, means of enhancing development-induced alliance between the government and the people in the oil-producing commodities could be realised. Such an alliance would defy initial threat status posed against the survival of Nigerian State. The subdued belligerent and eventual serenity would institute an environment for government to properly embark on capacity building policies and projects in the region, boost the revenue of the national government and eventually, have multiplier effects on international oil production and supply.

An amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta region was initiated by Nigerian former President Umaru Yar'Adua in July 2009 following regular outbreaks of violence from 2006-2009 culminating in a May 2009 military incursion by government troops into the Niger Delta's creeks, which left thousands displaced. Yar'Adua setup Presidential Committee on Amnesty for the Niger Delta Militants, chaired by Major General Godwin Abbe, which was to implement, in details, amnesty programme focused at disarmament and demobilisation of militants in the oil-producing region. The programme, which started on August 6, 2009[34] and lasted for 60 days (October 4, 2009) was financed with billions of naira; accordingly, those who surrender their arms and enter into the rehabilitation program will receive 65, 000 naira (\$450) stipend per month[35]. In explaining the goals of the programme within the context of challenges faced by the people of Niger Delta, Late President Yar'Adua noted that:

*"This administration understands the challenges of the Niger Delta region and the challenges people are facing and that is why from the beginning I made Niger Delta a top priority in our seven-point agenda. I want to say that the amnesty is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a means to peacefully and lovingly with brotherly understanding bring to an end all insurrection and misunderstanding between brothers. It is a means to bringing stable peace and security to the Niger Delta region. It is a means of making the two of us work together to ensure that our youths do not take up arms again".[36]*

The essence of amnesty is to bridge the unfriendly lacuna between the government and the people clamouring for environmental, political and cultural freedom. It intends to ensure that youths in the regions have meaningful lives through the programme, be trained and help in businesses, and those that have a flare for education attain that to his/her utmost level, which is a reversal of expectation and a significant change in strategy of resorting to violence

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and repression with maximum ferocity – an unmistakable footprint of blood, tear and sorrow[37]. Thus, it trails towards youth capacity building through working together with the people by knowing their problems and laying down arms against the state. This was later followed by *rehabilitation and re-integration*.

When the programme was first announced by Late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, it received antagonistic opinion not only from the Nigerian public, but also from the Western press as being another sham move by the government. In the work of Thomas Strouse (2009), "there had been scepticism in the beginning as to the sincerity of the proverbial olive branch dangled before the freedom fighters, usually referred to as militants[38]" Also, the threat of resistance confronted the success of the programme. For instance, Ateke Tom demanded the withdrawal of the Joint Task Force (JTF) troops from the restive region as a condition for surrendering his weapon while Tompolo demanded for an extension of the deadline by three months[39] which was not conceded by the government.

However, the programme was claimed to be an historic movement towards peace and reconciliation by the Federal Government as most militants' leaders eventually accepted the programme as a means to peace, stability, togetherness and harmony, in spite of pessimistic and antagonistic views they commonly shared. Indeed, the new administrative approach, which prompted a declaration of ceasefire by the militants, yielded some tangible dividends; for example, vandalisation of oil facilities, hostage taking, kidnapping and similar crimes in the region have significantly gone down, coupled with the nation's crude oil production which plummeted to about 1.2 million barrels per day and already close to 2 million bpd.[40]

In general, approximately 15,000 militants accepted the amnesty offer[41]. The arms and ammunitions surrendered by 22 militants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, includes 95,970 rounds of assorted ammunition, 520 different categories of rifles and other weapons, rocket propelled grenades, 30 machine guns with NATO capacity, 76 hand grenades, 22 mortar bombs, 34 dynamites of 13kg capacity and 14 gunboats.[42] Inclusive was weapons surrendered by Tompolo (the last militant to surrender). These include 14 AK47, 6 rocket propelled guns, 24 G3, 6 RPG bombs, 44 AGL bombs, heaps of dynamites and caps, tear gases, several hundred boxes and heap of other assorted weapons.[43]

On the rehabilitation and reintegration of the militants that accepted the amnesty offer, several government institutions like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF), and the Ministry of Niger Delta[44] would be involved in the rehabilitation of militants.

However, the insecurity that had threatened the nerve of the nation's economy does not come to an end with the euphoria of amnesty or that of former combatants laying down their arms unless the root causes of the crisis and the vagaries and vices against development of the regions are adequately attended to. The deprivation and pervasive poverty of several communities, amidst large oil installations with cutting edge technology in the middle of vast bodies of water, fuelled the crisis in the first place. Corrupt practices of states' leaders, neglect by the government and subjective nature of oil companies kindles the light of the conflict. In this manner, does the amnesty programme address the issues paramount to the people of Niger Delta region? Does it provides means of putting an ending cut to total deprivation, environmental degradation and corrupt practises of the states' government, which proves efforts towards the development of the region abortive? What really is the firmness of government towards the post-amnesty promises? If answers to these questions are negative, how can re-occurrence be prevented? How should policies be formulated in such a way that they will institute confidence-building? How can sustainable peace and harmony be promoted while also rebuilding lives and the society?

## Settling the Unsettled?

Ideally, any post-conflict period should be characterized by motions and ordered-disorder by governmental and non-governmental organizations and by members of the civil society – all trying to put in place plans meant to discourage a repeat of the conflict, and encouraging policies meant to rebuild lives, the environment and infrastructures that were destroyed[45]. In other words, once hostilities cease, several parties – especially the government and its agents –

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executes plans that are meant to rebuild confidence, rebuild the physical environment and rebuild lives.

The Amnesty offer comes with the intent of deterring militants from their quest for emancipation from the shackles of internal colonisation. If this speculation is true, does it mean that amnesty is a means to an end? What becomes paramount at this end is to emphasise the fact that violent conflict does not seem to have ended with a mere ceasefire but rather with total removal of the contradictions and attitudes that result in the perpetuation of conflict. Holistically, granting amnesty to militants in the region has identified militants as criminals; those that their course poses threat to the survival of Nigerian state. However, all criminals are militants but not all militants are criminals. Although, the act of criminality ensued when persons resort to means of violence in pursuit of pre-determined ends[46]. What defines one as a criminal in this regards is the objectivity of ones' violence act. For instance, the crisis in the Niger Delta region was instigated by freedom fighters that see overbearing sovereign has a threat to the exercise of their environmental, political, social and economic freedom. Besides, there are so-called fighters, whose involvement could be defined by their egocentric emolument. So, if truly that amnesty offer by the federal government is granted to known and unknown criminals in the armed struggle in the Niger Delta, what has it granted the genuine agitators? Definitely, those engrossed with the incessant injustice and lack of democratisation that pervaded Nigerian state and being bear mostly by the people of Niger Delta will exhibit and re-exhibit militant criminality if their priorities have not been addressed.

The commitment of the government towards achieving the aims of the amnesty deal was faulted by what characterised the outcome of the deal. It was evident that the rehabilitation programme of the federal government for post-amnesty period seems short of fact. Rehabilitation centres were located in mosquito infected school complexes. In Aluu, it was found that the facilities provided can only accommodate a maximum of 1000 persons[47]. Even, the delayed rehabilitation programme witnesses ruckus and irrational act by the ex-militant as their claims concerns exclusion from the list of ex-militants registered by the Presidential Committee on Amnesty, inhumane facilities for rehabilitation – the camp had no potable water – and inability of government to hasten development projects in the region. Secondary to this, it could be suggested that government (particularly political office holders) have not shown genuine commitment to the rehabilitation and reintegration of the repentant militants. Rather, their actions presume to be shrouded with undisclosed intention. There is also sceptic belief that the crisis cannot be resolve only by dolling out money to the militants. It was against the impossibility of the deal to amicably avert the crisis via dolling out money that former militant leader Edward Udoiwei asserted:

*“When I was in the forest, I made more than three million naira (\$20,000) per month. I can call the oil companies, ‘Hey! My boys are hungry, bring two million naira.’ and they will answer me quick quick,”[48].*

In furtherance:

*“What I am now being paid per month is what I spend in two or three hours in the bush on my boys. In the bush, I enjoy better than this. I get more money than this. The N65, 000 is too small for me as a leader.”[49]*

It becomes apparent on the premises that conflict in the Niger Delta has not reached what Zartman refers to as “*hurting stalemate*”[50]. That is, militants have not realised that conflict violent is not means to an end and see it as too costly and not beneficial to their needs. Thus, there is tendency that the conflicts will persist as long as the parties involved think that they have something to gain from its continuation. The monthly stipend of 65,000 naira is a far cry from the millions of naira militant leaders made running guns. Rather, the situation requires a sincere approach by the government towards addressing the issues that the crisis revolves around and the provision of basic amenities and services.

Post-amnesty packages are not only limited to rehabilitation and reintegration of militants in the region but also towards execution of development projects. As part of the government commitment to ensure viable development in the region, former President Umaru Yar'Adua-led Federal Executive Council (FEC) approving N179.13 billion for the execution of 44 projects by the NDDC in the nine states it covers. The projects cover construction of bridges, roads, drainages, hospitals and the acquisition of hospital equipment. Other priority areas are provision of potable water, educational facilities and environmental impact assessment programmes. In addendum, realizing that the money set

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aside for them will not make the necessary impact, especially against the backdrop of the tough terrain of the region, he sent supplementary appropriation bill of N352.85 billion, a part of which would go towards implementing more projects in the Niger Delta; East-West highway; the East-West coastal road; the East-West rail line; Inland water ways transportation; reclamation to link all oil producing communities and environmental clean-up activities. Besides, a greater proportion of state funding was channelled into local development. In April 2010, Delta State authorities passed their budget of US\$2.2 billion, 63 percent of which is earmarked for building up infrastructure in affected states, including rebuilding the Gbaramatu kingdom, an area made up of several villages in Delta State, which was destroyed in fighting between government troops and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in May 2009[51]. Bayelsa State Governor Timipre Sylva also said its \$1.28 billion budget will include rebuilding access roads in the creeks, supporting youth centres and rehabilitating health centres.

However, since the repentant militants have not been adequately rehabilitated and reintegrated into Nigerian society, violence that seems disappeared from the volatile region in the early days of the amnesty programme displayed its ugly, destructive head and taking an even more deadly aspect with bomb blasts recorded in Delta and Bayelsa States[52] respectively, after the commencement of the amnesty programme. Besides, it was reported that furious ex-militants planned to take Alaiibe and some top government functionaries in Obubra camp (in Cross-River State) hostage to demonstrate their seriousness[53]. With the development of upstaged protest and ruckus, the so-called development project to be executed in the region would be hindered as the region becomes encapsulated with unleashing inferno. Besides, execution of development project does not holistically address the agitation of the people of Niger Delta. Aside the clamour for economic alienation, environmental degradation by the activities of oil multinationals forms the caprices of their demand. Obviously, the amnesty deal does not take such into account as the blueprint that stated the aims of the deal remains dumb on the issue. Even, if certain developments could emerge out of government speculations, confrontation between the multinationals and the militants requires effective legal actions.

## **Conclusion**

Experience shows that dousing any seemingly intractable conflict violent requires an act of lucid understanding of complex local realities and peculiarities. By the virtue of this understanding, both remote and immediate reason(s) that prompted such a violent conflict would form the caprices of strategic peace building efforts. People of the Niger Delta had, for years, clamoured for a better life through the provision of social amenities, inclusion in decision making processes, environmental upgrading etc., and if these had not been provided, any peace building efforts would be desperately in vein. It is obvious that genuine agitators for the socio-economic, political and environmental emancipation of the people would be unrelenting in the quest for freedom. Government which was defected in the implementation of what could stabilise the region for development projects; has ineffectively implement the post amnesty since the issue of rehabilitation and reintegration was handled with leprosy hands, which pathetically, would endanger stability and signal re-welcoming of the crisis.

Sequel to this fact, dedicated efforts from the government would play inestimable role in loosing conflicting veins that connected different warring parties to the conflict. The government should be dedicated to rehabilitating and reintegrating the repentant militants and commence the much flogged development projects in the region. Besides, the established environmental policies tailored towards creating a healthy environment for the people should be adequately attended to. It should, however, be well monitored and implemented. By these, it would not only emancipate the fate of the people from the militants (those that benefited materially from the crisis) but also quench the unleashing inferno in the region. Through this historic step, the militants, who have seen their place in creek synonymous to riches, would at a point lose the support of their people if they (people of the Niger Delta) have been provided with their demands. Consequentially, the development would make their agitation redundant and create an environment for the commencement of more development efforts that could have a multiplier effect on the Nigerian economy.



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[8] S.O. Aghalino, "The Olusegun Obasanjo Administration and the Niger Delta Question, 1999-2007", in *Stud Tribes Tribal* 7 no. 1 (2009): 58

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[12] The environment is not restricted here to mean only the physical land, creeks, swamps and rivers alone, but includes the cultural, social and economic environment of development in the oil-producing areas in the Niger Delta. It means the total destruction of the means of livelihood of the people, their cultural, psychological and sociological bases of existence. (ibid: 19)

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[16] Egi Women Movement: Charter of Demand (1999), Article 2, Section 1.1.

[17] Rowell A. 'Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement' (New York: Routledge, (1996))

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[www.feministafrica.org/uploads/File/.../feature%20article%204.pdf](http://www.feministafrica.org/uploads/File/.../feature%20article%204.pdf) (accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2010)

[19] A place where rusty pipelines run through farms and in front of houses

[20] Daniel A. Omoweh "Petroleum Production, Environmental Degradation and Conflict in the Niger Delta", in Kayode, F., Stella, A. and Ololade, B. Towards an Integrated Development in the Niger Delta, (Center for Democracy and Development (2006)): 29

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[22] See Daily Independent, February 9, 2008. pg 11

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