HORROR IN PARADISE
Frameworks for Understanding the Crises of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Edited by
Christopher LaMonica
and
J. Shola Omotola
Horror in Paradise

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Contents

Acronyms ix
Series Editor's Foreword xii
Foreword xiii
Preface xv
Map xxvi

INTRODUCTION

Ch. 1 Why the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria Matters
Christopher LaMonica, US Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT, USA
J. Shola Omotola, Redeemer's University, Ogun State, Nigeria 3

Part I: CULTURE, GENDER, AND THE ENVIRONMENT 25
Ch. 2 Oil and Cultural Crisis: The Case of the Niger Delta
S.O. Aghalino, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria 27
Ch. 3 Women and the Niger Delta Question
J. Shola Omotola, Redeemer's University, Ogun State, Nigeria 39
Ch. 4 Environmental Justice, Democracy, and the Inevitability of Cultural Change in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of the Niger Delta Dilemma
Kelly Bryan Ovie Ejumudo, Delta State University, Abraka State, Nigeria 51

Part II: GOVERNANCE 65
Ch. 5 Minorities and Resource Allocation in a Transitional State:
The Nigerian Experience
Ekanade Olumide, Redeemer's University, Ogun State, Nigeria 67
Ch. 6 Notes from the Field: Challenges to Democratic Elections in Nigeria
Mourtada Deme and Bodunrin Adebo, UNDP, Abuja, Nigeria 85
Ch. 7 The Role of Leadership in Promoting Successful Dialogue in a Fragile State: Contextualizing the Yar'adua-Jonathan Administration in the Niger Delta
Uzochi Nwagbara, University of Wales, United Kingdom 95

Part III: DEVELOPMENT 111
Ch. 8 'Agony in the Garden': Incongruity of Governance and the Travails of Port Harcourt City, Niger Delta, Nigeria, 1912–2010
Akachi Odemege, Department of History, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria 113
Ch. 9 Charting Pathways to Development in the Riverine Areas of the Niger Delta Region
O.J. Offong, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, and Jude Coccodia, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Ch. 10 Moving Beyond Ideological Approaches to the Crises of the Niger Delta
Christopher LaMonica, US Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT, USA

Ch. 11 From Operation Law and Order to Operation Restore Hope: Human Security Crisis in the Niger Delta
Lere Amusan, North-West University, South Africa

Ch. 12 Re-Framing the Public Sphere Through Community-Based Resistance: The Role of the Media and Civil Society in a Fragile State
Uzochi Nwagbara, University of Wales, United Kingdom

Part IV: SECURITY AND THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME

Ch. 13 Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation and Instability in the Niger Delta: An Analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Process
George I.J. Obuoforibo, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Ch. 14 Armed Militancy in the Niger Delta: Quintessential Play-Off of Sub-Regional Economic Disparities
Franklin A. Samu, Delta State University, Abraka State, Nigeria

Ch. 15 The Amnesty Programme and the Future of the Niger Delta: An Overview of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Strategy for Sustainable Peace
Atare Oritie and Nathaniel Umukoro, Delta State University, Abraka State, Nigeria

Ch. 16 Amnesty and Peace-Building in the Niger Delta: Addressing the Frustration-Aggression Trap
Ibasu Samuel Iba, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Ch. 17 The Niger Delta Amnesty Programme: What Manner of Peace Deal? Akachi Oduneme, Redeemer’s University, Mowe, Nigeria.

CONCLUSION
Why “New Civilizing Arrangements” Are Required for the Restoration of Paradise
Christopher LaMonica, US Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT, USA
J. Shola Omotola, Redeemer’s University, Ogun State, Nigeria.

About the Editors

Index
Chapter 15


Atare Otite and Nathaniel Umukoro,
Delta State University, Abraka State, Nigeria

Introduction

Like physicians searching for the cure to AIDS, the Nigerian government has been searching for a solution to the struggle for justice, equity and development in the Niger Delta. The search in post-colonial period started in 1962 when the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was set up to serve in advisory capacity and provide government with information that would lead to the alleviation of the plight of the area in conjunction with the Development Act of 1961. The NDDB’s reports were never made public; they died with the first republic when the military took over power in 1966. Between 1960’s and late 1980’s, nothing significant was done to solve the environmental and developmental problems of the Niger Delta. In 1989, the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, in an attempt to assuage the people of the Niger Delta, set up the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) but failed to actualize its objectives due to wastefulness and corruption. During the Obasanjo’s administration the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established in 2000 with the sole mandate of developing the oil-rich Niger-Delta region of southern Nigeria. Like OMPADEC a magnifying lens is required to see its performance. This has made the Federal Government to create a new ministry called Ministry of Niger Delta in 2008, to address the Niger Delta issue. In spite of the presence of these institutions, militant activities, violence and rebellion have been the order of the day in the region. This has resulted in the military approach to ensuring peace in the area using the Joint Task Force. The military approach has not been successful in bringing peace to the area. In pursuit of the Seven Point Agenda, the Federal Government under Musa Yar’Adua inaugurated a technical committee headed by Ledum Mitee on September 8, 2008 to distill the various reports, suggestions and recommendations on the Niger Delta from the Willinks Commission Report of 1958 to the present and give a summary of the recommendations necessary for government action. The committee was also expected to present a detailed short, medium and long term solution to the problems in the Niger Delta and make any other recommendations that will help to achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta region. On December 1, 2008, the report was submitted to President Yar’Adua and he assured that the crisis in the littoral region of Nigeria would have a final resolution (Adegbanigbe, 2009:16-19). Following the report of this committee, the Federal Government introduced the amnesty program as a strategy for bringing peace to the Niger Delta. This paper examines the extent to which the amnesty program can go in bringing a bright future to the people of the Niger Delta. It argues that sustainable peace can only be ensured if the government uses the relative peace produced by the amnesty program to
address the root causes of violent conflicts in the area.

**Concept and Philosophical Bases of the Amnesty Program**

The concept amnesty became popular in Nigeria’s political vocabulary as a result of militant activities in the Niger Delta. According to Ikelegbe (2010:11-12):

An amnesty is a guarantee of exemption from prosecution and pardon from punishment for certain criminal, rebel and insurgent actions hitherto committed against the state. It indemnifies persons in terms of safety and protection from punitive actions, retributions and associated losses. An amnesty is usually within a specific time within which offenders admit crime and take advantage of the general pardon.

Buttressing the above postulation Amoda (2009) espoused the view that the amnesty approach to security, politics and conflicts is a legal approach and asserts that amnesty is a general pardon of offence by government, a deliberate overlooking of offenses against a government. To pardon is to release the criminally-culpable from the just punishment of the law; it is to cancel or not to exact punishment due for an offence. Thus, the relationship assumed by government between it and the Niger Delta militants is juridical; the militants are pardoned instead of being punished. Based on this conception, the amnesty program is conceived out of the need to prevent insurgents who ought to have been punished for engaging in criminal activities from facing the wrath of the law in order to foster peace and progress. In other words the amnesty program is explicit or implicit acceptance by the government that militant activities in the Niger Delta is the product of neglect and underdevelopment which can be attributed to corruption and lack of political will. The amnesty program is based on the understanding that violent conflict can easily develop if large numbers of people become convinced that taking up arms is not only legitimate but may perhaps be the only way to secure the necessities of life. Those engaged in the struggle feel that they are in an unjust situation and must therefore decide to rectify it (Smith, 2002). This argument can be supported with late President Umaru Yar’ Adua’s statement in his 2009 Independence Day broadcast that ‘with a view to engendering lasting peace in the area, we proclaimed a general amnesty and granted unconditional pardon to all those who had taken up arms as a way of drawing attention to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta'. He further stated that ‘on this day and in the spirit of rededication, we renew our commitment to confronting the challenges of critical infrastructure, the Niger Delta, food security, security of lives and property, human capital development, land tenure and wealth creation' (The Guardian, 2009).

The amnesty for militants operating in the Niger Delta was announced by Nigeria's former President Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua on June 25, 2009 with the condition that the militants will renounce militancy within 60 days. He granted the amnesty in accordance with section 175 of the 1999 Constitution which provides that 'the President may grant any person concerned with or convicted of any offence created by an Act of the National Assembly a pardon, either free or subject to lawful conditions'. A presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of militants in the Niger Delta was then set up to manage the process. The militants were expected to demobilize and their arms surrendered at designated centers to pave way for rehabilitation and reintegration. The amnesty initiative started on August 6, 2009 and ended on October 4, 2009.
Amnesty Program as a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Strategy

The amnesty program can be described as a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) strategy. Disarmament is defined by the United Nations (UN), as “...the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone.” In general, physical disarmament occurs in assembly areas predetermined during the peace negotiations, where fighters are gathered together in camp-like settings, weapons are confiscated, safely stored and eventually destroyed (Anderlini and Conaway, Undated). Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centers to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion. This means the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs and can last up to one year (Conoir, 2007:7). Reintegration is a much longer-term process with the goal of ensuring permanent disarmament and sustainable peace. It includes assisting the community and the ex-combatant during the difficult transition to civilian life. In this phase, former fighters may enter job placement services, participate in skills training, credit schemes, scholarships or rehabilitation programs. It involves a long-term process of reentry into the community, building livelihoods and returning to a peacetime lifestyle (Anderlini and Conaway, Undated).

The aim of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict situations so that recovery and development can begin. The DDR of ex-combatants is a complex process, with political, military, security, humanitarian and socioeconomic dimensions (Conoir, 2007). Several important policy and operational implications of viewing DDR from this perspective has been identified by Conoir, (2007:13-14) as follows:

1. DDR is only one of many post-conflict stabilization interventions. It should therefore be planned and closely coordinated as part of the other broader political and reconstruction efforts that are taking place at the same time;
2. DDR processes should deal very thoroughly with all aspects of disarmament and weapons control and management. While a DDR program focuses on the immediate stabilization of the situation in a country through a disarmament process, longer-term stability can only be achieved through responsible and carefully thought out arms management program;
3. DDR programs should support the process of turning combatants into productive citizens. This process starts in the demobilization phase, during which the structures of armed forces and groups are broken down and combatants formally acquire civilian status;
4. DDR programs are designed to achieve sustainable reintegration. On their own, DDR programs cannot do this. Therefore, DDR should be linked with the broader processes of national reconstruction and development;
5. The ultimate aim of DDR programs is to prevent a return to violent conflict, i.e., to make peace irreversible. To achieve this, DDR programs should encourage trust and confidence and deal with the root causes of conflict;

6. DDR is a flexible process that should be adapted to the unique needs of a particular country (and region). Depending on circumstances, not all of its aspects may be employed in a particular situation, and they may not be carried out in the same order during each operation;

In the Niger Delta, following the disarming of the militants, demobilization involved the identification, registration and documentation of militias, who gave up militancy before the October 4, 2009 deadline for the amnesty program in designated camps. It also included reorientation program to facilitate demilitarization or transformation of attitudes and perceptions away from violence and combat to those of civilian lives. The militants were expected to be paid N1,500 per day feeding allowance and N20,000 per month for the period of demobilization. It was later increased to N65,000 (Ikelegbe, 2010). At first the militants opened accounts with specified banks and were paid through the banks. Afterward it was changed to a system of payment through militant leaders. The reintegration aspect of the program was expected to achieve the following objectives;
1) Re-orientation program of 20,192 ex-militants.
2) Training and capacity building in technical and vocational skills such as welding,
3) Entrepreneurial development, employment placements, and identification of employment opportunities. In the new reintegration phase, advisers and counselors are to determine individual militant’s profile, skills, vocations, education, and ascertain reintegration requirements, in terms of further education, skills, vocational development and employment. This phase according to the then Minister of Defense would have representatives of ex militants in various sub-committees (The Nation, 2010; Ikelegbe, 2010).

Relative Success of the Amnesty Program
The amnesty program brought relative peace to the Niger Delta. The impact of the relative peace on oil production and government's revenue shows that militant activities have negatively affected wealth creation in Nigeria. For example in April 2009, oil production averaged 2.2 million barrels per day but declined in June to less than 1 million barrels per day following the face-off between the Niger Delta militants and the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta. This was because the militants blew up every pipeline on their way as they faded into the creeks (Agbo, 2009). Following the amnesty program, daily crude oil production increased to over 2 million barrels per day. Increased crude oil production also led to improved revenue flow into the federation account for distribution to the three tiers of government. Revenue accruing to the federation account from mineral earnings which stood at N138.511 billion in October rose to N330.636 billion at the end of November (Vanguard Newspaper, 2009). Following this development the federal and state government’s share of proceeds to the federation account increased.

The Amnesty Program and Root Causes of Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta
Since the end of the cold war, there has been an impressive growth in the scope of scholarly research and literature on the causes of intra-state armed conflicts. These researches on internal conflicts focus particularly on ethnic, environmental, political and economic factors. For example Gurr (1995) focused on the relative deprivation theory which offers an explanation that
is based on the contrast between groups’ expected and actual access to prosperity and power. This approach is closely related to group entitlement theory (Horowitz, 1985), which places more explicit emphasis on ethnic factors which accompany the economic and political (Gurr, 1995). However, ethnic diversity does not in itself seem to be a cause of war (Smith, 1997). Homer-Dixon (1994) researched on the links between environmental degradation and conflict and explores the varying (sometimes catastrophically low) capacity of states and societies to adapt to changing environmental conditions without resorting to violence. The contention now is simply that there are some armed conflicts, such as those in Haiti and the Philippines, whose causes cannot be understood without reference to environmental degradation (Homer-Dixon 1999; Smith, 2002). After a careful study of these theoretical explanations of the causes of intra-state conflicts, Smith (2002) arrived at the following general conclusions:

- Poor economic conditions are the most important long-term causes of intra-state armed conflicts today;
- Repressive political systems are also war-prone, especially in periods of transition;
- Degradation of renewable resources (specifically soil erosion, deforestation and water scarcity) can also contribute significantly to the likelihood of violent conflict, but are in general not as central to the problem as political and economic determinants;
- Ethnic diversity alone is not a cause of armed conflict, but parties to a conflict are often defined by their ethnic identities.

According to UNDP (2006), more than 60 per cent of the people in the Niger Delta region depend on the natural environment for their livelihood. The negative impacts of the activities of multinational oil corporations affect the environmental resource base of the people. These include; agricultural land, water for fishing and forest for hunting. Pollution and environmental damage therefore affects the existence of the people. Another negative impact of oil spillage and other forms of degradation activities is the effect on tens of thousands of families in the Niger Delta who rely on fishing – in inland rivers as well as offshore – for both income and food. Damage to fisheries is widely acknowledged by governmental and non-governmental sources as one of the major impacts of the oil industry (Amnesty International, 2009). Commenting on this problem the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (2008) states: “For brackish-water resources, the state of the resources is deplorable. Fishing pressure is very high, arising from the lack of alternative employment for estuarine communities. Oil pollution further complicates the scenario, with the devastation of aquatic life in the area.” With regards to oil spillage, oil spill figures vary considerably depending on sources, and figures are contested (Amnesty International, 2009). Only SPDC reports publicly, from year to year, on the number of spills in its operations (SPDC Annual Reports 2000 – 2006). Between 1989 and 1994 the company reported an average of 221 spills per year involving some 7,350 barrels of oil per year (SPDC, 1995). The Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) has reported that 4,835 oil spill incidents were recorded between 1976 and 1996, with a loss of 1.8 million barrels of oil to the environment (Orubu, O dusola and Ehwarieme, 2004). According to UNDP (2006), more than 6,800 spills were recorded between 1976 and 2001, with a loss of approximately 3 million barrels of oil. Both local and international environmental experts claim that the system for reporting of oil spills in the Niger Delta has been completely dysfunctional for decades, and that the figures provided by the companies and reported by DPR do not reflect the full scale of oil spillage. Petroleum, pollution and poverty in the Niger Delta. Drawing on available data, a group of independent environmental and oil experts visiting the Niger Delta in 2006 put the figure for oil spill, onshore and offshore, at 9 to 13 million barrels of oil over the past 50 years (Amnesty

For many people, the loss of environmental resources due to environmental degradation has been a direct route into poverty, as natural resources have traditionally been primary sources of sustenance. Based on the above theoretical background a proper diagnosis of the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria requires a tripartite dissection of conflict. These are: structural background conditions of conflict, conflict accelerating factors and the triggers (Adekanye, 1999). The structural background conditions of conflict at best only point to the existence of conflict potential but cannot explain the actual occurrence of a given conflict. They include: differences in ethnic groups, languages, religion and culture. They require other factors or force to activate them in order for an actual conflict to break out. These factors are the conflict accelerating factors. They include rising cases of unemployment, rising poverty, marginalization (perceived or actual), the demands for empowerment, stress and strains of environmental cum human insecurity. The combined effects of the structural background conditions of conflict and the conflict accelerating factors produce alarming social and ethnic tensions and conflicts. Wealth creation in a monocultural manner without development has made the Niger Delta a harbor of conflict accelerating factors which are igniting from time to time.

**Requirements for making the Amnesty Program a Success**

Present efforts to ensure that the Amnesty program is a success mainly revolves around ensuring that the ex-militants are properly re-integrated and the execution of some development projects. The reintegration strategy started with the allocation of trainees to training centers across the country and overseas. A total of 38 ex-militants left the Nigerian shores for South Africa to be trained in marine related courses. Another batch of about 212 ex-militants is expected to receive training in industrial welding and fabrication techniques at the national vocational institute in Ghana.

In furtherance of the effort of the government to develop the Niger Delta, the 2010 budget made provision for over N61.288 billion for the Niger Delta Ministry. This is exclusive of the N35.6 billion provided as statutory transfer to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The Niger Delta Ministry plans to see to the completion of on-going projects such as the:

- East-West Road
- 673KM Niger Delta Coastal Road
- New Town Development in collaboration with Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN)
- Construction and equipping of skills acquisition centers in each of the oil producing states
- Environmental support program for the Niger Delta
- Reclamation/shoreline protection
- Oil and Gas Assets protection program
While these efforts on the part of the government are laudable more is required. Some of these requirements are:

1. **Job Creation:** In 2009, the government announced that militants who lay down their guns and came out of the bush would be granted amnesty from prosecution, given jobs training, and an allowance. This tends to indicate that priority will be given to the militants in terms of employment. Creating jobs for militants without giving consideration to the teeming youths in the area without jobs may not really ensure sustainable peace. In other words, if adequate job opportunity is not provided for the youths some may become future militants with the hope of receiving future amnesty. This assertion can be buttressed with what happened in July in Edo State were some youths who claimed to be militants came out of the bush to surrender their guns in order to receive the amnesty package.

2. **Infrastructural Development:** Infrastructure can be defined as the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, (Online Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2009) or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function (Sheffrin, 2003). The term typically refers to the technical structures that support a society, such as roads, water supply, sewers, power grids, telecommunications, and so forth. Viewed functionally, infrastructure facilitates the production of goods and services; for example, roads enable the transport of raw materials to a factory, and also for the distribution of finished products to markets. It also includes basic social services such as schools and hospitals (Wikipedia, 2009). According to a U.S. National Research Council Panel (1987:7), infrastructure entails …both specific functional modes - highways, streets, roads, and bridges; mass transit; airports and airways; water supply and water resources; wastewater management; solid waste treatment and disposal; electric power generation and transmission; telecommunications; and hazardous waste management - and the combined system these modal elements comprise. A comprehension of infrastructure spans not only these public works facilities, but also the operating procedures, management practices, and development policies that interact together with societal demand and the physical world to facilitate the transport of people and goods, provision of water for drinking and a variety of other uses, safe disposal of society's waste products, provision of energy where it is needed, and transmission of information within and between communities. The cardinal place of infrastructure in an economy was underscored in the United States of America by the introduction of the National Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2006 in March of that same year in the Senate to focus on the deteriorating conditions of drinking water systems, roads, bridges and other public works in the US. The US National Infrastructure Improvement Act defines infrastructure as nonmilitary facilities including water supply and distribution system, wastewater collection and treatment facilities, surface transportation facilities, mass-transit facilities, airports and airway facilities, resource recovery facilities, waterways, levees and related flood-control facilities, docks or ports, school buildings and solid-waste disposal facilities. This act established the National Commission on the Infrastructure of the United States, charged with ensuring that the nation's infrastructure meets current and future demands and facilitates economic growth (allAfrica.com, 2007). This shows
that a country that lacks adequate and functional infrastructure cannot function properly. There must be chaos. A major reason why developed and industrialized countries are more productive is the fact that infrastructure performance was generally much better in advanced industrial countries. In developing and transition economies a main cause of deteriorating infrastructure performance is corruption.

3. Sincere Fight against Corruption: Corruption has resulted in the diversion of money meant for development into other illegal uses. Corruption has been defined as the abuse of public trust for private gain; it is a form of stealing (Todaro and Smith, 2006). The Federal Government of Nigeria’s Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act (2000) states that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related offences. Osoba (1996:372) also argued that corruption is a form of antisocial behavior by an individual or a social group which fixate unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators against established legal norms and agreed moral ethos of the society. The absence of corruption encourages investment and efforts to expand the pie rather than fight over its distribution and thus encourages growth; to this extent, improvements in governance in general and reduction of corruption in particular could be means to accelerate the process of development (Todaro and Smith, 2006). For decades the government has accrued huge oil revenues, yet the country suffers from lack of basic infrastructure, and tens of millions live in poverty due to corruption. In recognition of the harm corruption has been doing to the nation, several policies and institutions have been established to fight it. These include; War Against Indiscipline and Corruption and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Presently, the fight against corruption in Nigeria is carried out mainly by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC). The Niger Delta region is riddled with bad governance and corruption on the parts of government officials, both at the state and local government levels. It has been argued that if government officials in the region have utilized judiciously their monthly allocations, to better the lots of the ordinary people, through the creation of jobs, and embark on infrastructural development of the region, the situation would have been better than this current sorry state. For example the Rivers State government had a budget of $1.3 billion in 2006 which includes transportation fees of $65,000 a day for the governor’s office; $10 million for catering, gifts and souvenirs; $38 million for two helicopters (Ejibunu, 2007:18). Health services received $22 million. Another example is the former Governor of the oil rich Bayelsa State, DSP Alameiyesegha, who stashed hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign bank accounts to buy mansions in the United States and send his children to private schools in London (Usman, 2007; Ejibunu, 2007:18). These examples show that most of the state governors spend their monthly allocations on frivolous things that have no corresponding value on teeming and suffering population. The wastefulness of some States and Local Governments especially those in the oil region made the then Minister of State for Finance, who later became the substantive Minister, Esther Nenadi Usman, to asked for greater scrutiny of the activities of governors, particularly those receiving huge sum from derivation each month. In her words:

States have been a source of worry to us, lately. If you look at the way money is shared at the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC) meeting, Federal Government gets about 48 per cent, while state and Local Governments take the remaining 52 per cent...... Three to four days after the FAAC meeting, exchange rate rates jump up, which means they are using them to buy foreign exchange. If you look at the States, the States that get so much, you can hardly see anything to show for it”. Continuing, she said
“make telephone calls to any of the States and ask after the governor and you will be told that he has gone abroad. Not Only the governors, even the commissioner for finance” (Ejibunu, 2007:18).

Although the blame for the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is often heaped on the federal government, the reality is that the Federal Government alone is not responsible. Corruption on the part of state governors contributes significantly to the underdevelopment of the area because funds set aside for development purposes are often embezzled. This assertion can be buttressed with the observations of the former Special Adviser during the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo on Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Professor Julius Ihonvbere that the Niger Delta governors (1999-2007) did not manage the resources that accrued to them for the overall benefit of the people of their states. The following are his words:

If you go to the Niger Delta, some states that collected over N600 billion (about 34 billion euro) since 1999, have nothing to show for the huge money. He therefore called on the new administrations in the states of the Niger Delta to put in structures at the local government levels if the problem of militancy in the region and abject poverty must be resolved (Vanguard Newspaper, 2007:6).

Commenting on the extent in which public funds were mismanaged, the former head of the Nigerian Anti-Corruption Agency, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, estimated that in 2003, 70 per cent of oil revenues, more than $14 billion was stolen or wasted (Usman, 2007). The situation in which earnings on crude oil sales continues to sustain a class of corrupt people, with essentially none of it reaching the ordinary people, has created condition for insurrection. Confirming why the militants were fighting against the system and bad governance to Jeff Koinage of CNN, a leader of the foremost militant group operating in the region, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), General God’sWill said, “we are in the middle of a struggle for the liberation of the Niger Delta, the most devastated and the most threatened region in the world” (CNN, 2007). The former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, also decried the situation in the Niger Delta despite the 13 per cent of revenues from onshore and offshore oil fields without much impact on the ordinary people. In his words, “so far not much impact has been made on the lives and living standards of most ordinary people of the Niger Delta” (Thisday Newspaper, 2007:1).

The Amnesty Program and the Possibility of Sustainable Peace in the Niger Delta

The success of programs that relate to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of former combatants into civilian life is dependent on four crucial aspects. First, it is essential that there is insightful and comprehensive planning that is based on sound research and analysis in order for a realistic strategy to be developed. Second, it is critical that the requisite political will exist at all levels to implement this strategy efficiently and effectively. Third, these programs are typically expensive and time-consuming processes, and hence the necessary resources, namely financial and material support, and technical expertise, need to be secured. Fourth, it is vital that effective monitoring and evaluation systems are included in DDR processes, and that these systems are an integral part of the implementation strategy (Lamb, 2008). The above assertions indicate that the success of DDR strategy depends on its proper
implementation. This explains why Kostner and Wiederhofer (1995) defined a successful DDR program as "the key to an effective transition from war to peace.

The possibility of the amnesty program to ensure sustainable peace in the Niger Delta has been questioned by scholars. For example, Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011:44) assert:

Nigeria's Amnesty Program raises questions about its prospects for achieving sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. Since the 1990s, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs have been a core component of the peace-building model used by the United Nations and other institutions. A disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program is typically adopted as a means of transition from conflict to peace since its function is to remove one or more of the disputing parties from the scene. Accordingly, peace negotiations generally include disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration clauses, yet in peace-building theory, a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program is expected to comprise only the preliminary phases of a much broader process of addressing root causes that initially motivated the combatants. By failing to include the latter, the Amnesty Program does not conform to this model and therefore raises doubts about its efficacy. By unpacking the notion of amnesty, the Amnesty Program's weakness may be identified. The strategy for conflict resolution in the region centers on amnesty from prosecution and fails to incorporate a deeper strategy of peace building. By presenting amnesty as a beneficent gift to Delta militants, the state seeks to reinforce its claims to exclusive legitimacy and sovereignty. Additionally, the legalistic nature of the Amnesty Program reflects the state's effort to criminalize the militants, thereby sidestepping their claims of grievances, many of which are shared by the general population. The construction of amnesty as the state's gift to criminals is the major challenge to a durable peace because the state ignores the local population's widely shared grievances and fails to address the structural violence in which militancy germinates. The program may be considered a manifestation of the state's integrated win/lose approach to insurgency in the region, thereby suggesting the need for a third-party intervention to bring a fresh, more consensual, and hopefully more promising peace process.

The argument above shows that ensuring sustainable peace in the Niger Delta goes beyond Amnesty. It requires addressing not only physical violence against the people but also structural violence. Structural violence, a term which was first used in the 1960s and which has commonly been ascribed to Johan Galtung, denotes a form of violence which corresponds with the systematic ways in which a given social structure or social institution kills people slowly by preventing them from meeting their basic needs (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2010). Life spans are reduced when people are socially dominated, politically oppressed, or economically exploited. Structural violence and direct violence are highly interdependent. Structural violence inevitably produces conflict and often direct violence, including family violence, racial violence, hate crimes, terrorism, genocide, and war. Kelly (1984:15) states that:

Third of the people in the developing countries are starving or suffering
from malnutrition, twenty-five per cent of their children die before their fifth birthday [...] Less than 10 per cent of the 15 million children who died this year had been vaccinated against the six most common and dangerous children's diseases. Vaccinating every child costs £3 per child. But not doing so costs us five million lives a year.

These are classic examples of structural violence. The existence of massive poverty in the Niger Delta and the incredible wealth in the region is potentially destabilizing. It is an indisputable fact that there are significant disparities in the development of the different regions of the country and the failure of the government to create viable institutions that can help curb poverty. Knowing that the Niger Delta is the economic lifeline of the Nigerian nation there is need for multi-dimensional strategies to ensure grassroots sustainable economic development. In spite of the oil wealth, the Niger Delta still remains one of the least developed parts of Nigeria. Outside the major urban areas, the level of infrastructural development and the provision of social amenities such as electricity, health care and education are very poor. The state of infrastructure in the Niger Delta made the World Bank to warn in 1995 that ‘an urgent need exists to implement mechanism to protect the life and health of the region’s inhabitants and its ecological systems from further deterioration’ (World Bank, 1995). Fourteen years after this warning the Niger Delta still suffers from infrastructural decay and underdevelopment (The News, 2009). Even though the activities of oil companies affect the health of the people in the rural areas, health facilities and personnel are concentrated in the cities and the quality of health care delivery is poor because of inadequate facilities and personnel. The people of the Niger Delta still suffer from debilitating diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and yellow fever (Niger Delta Environmental Survey, 1995).

Conclusion
A bright future for the Niger Delta depends on curbing the root causes of violent conflicts in the area. These include human security challenges and infrastructural decay. The UNDP (1996) noted that human security implied safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and oppression and also protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of everyday life. Also the Global Environmental Change and Human Security Science (GECHS) plan maintained that Human Security is achieved when and where individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate or adapt to threats to their human, environmental and social rights; have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options; and actively participate in pursuing these options (GECHS, 1999). The government should fight against corruption sincerely and use the relative peace made possible by the amnesty program to address the problems in the region.
References


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