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Conflict Management in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: An Appraisal of Amnesty Programme 2007 Till Date

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ABSTRACT

Managing the Niger Delta crisis has been a protracted problem for Nigeria State. This led to armed struggle by communities and other stake holders from the region. The conflict is not only between the groups marginalized and Nigeria State but also between them and oil companies. However, amnesty programme was introduced by the late former President of Nigeria, Musa Yar'dua on 25th June, 2009 to address the problem and it seems to have enthroned peace today. This study employed the aid of frustration aggression theory propounded by Gurr to observe that political and economic exclusion and exploitation injustice and inequality constitutes a problem of conflict management in Niger-Delta. Secondary sources of data were utilized in this study. We recommend among others that more effort should be made to sustain the peace already established through amnesty programme to avoid future escalation of conflict.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Amnesty Programme.

INTRODUCTION

The fact that there is a disconnection between the economic endowment potentials of the Niger Delta region and the quantum of values disbursed by Nigerian state for the development of the region has given rise to resources dichotomy is yet undisputed. This gives rise to structural imbalances in Nigeria today. Consequently, the Niger Delta is famous due to massive oil deposits and constant violence in the region. Estimates show that the Nigerian government generates over 90% of its revenue from

the region, which is characterized by crisis of underdevelopment [1]. The region remains underdeveloped despite the huge revenue it provides for the privileged social class including the public figures, public servants and beneficiaries from multinational oil corporations. The Nigerian government and multinational corporations are principal beneficiaries of the massive oil deposits in the region, while the majority of the people there battle against squalor occasioned by exploitative oil exploration,

environmental degradation, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and poverty [1].

Agitation against their marginalization induced policies and actions to address this outcry ranging from the state-led efforts and identity-based social movements as well as intervention of the civil society including the family, schools and religious organisations. The question of amnesty programme tailored towards conflict resolution is apparent in several attempts to address the crisis of human

capital and underdevelopment in the region. Human capital refers to an aggregate of people's skills and knowledge in a society. It depends on the quality of education which constitutes the bedrock of development. Nigeria's human capital situation is, however, inadequate, hence the renewed interest on the issue in the amnesty granted to militants in the region. This study examines conflict management using amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants as a case study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has become increasingly famous due to massive oil deposits and its impact on Nigerian economy. This notwithstanding, the region is neglected in terms of development despite the fact that Nigeria depends heavily on the oil produced in their communities for her revenue. Without the oil, the national budget which is dependent on the oil will run into problems. Their frustration manifests more in degradation, environmental pollution of their environment, water contamination and deforestation following the activities of oil merchants like Shell British Petroleum, Texaco and Chevron among others. This breeds militancy and escalates violence in the region. Estimates show that the Nigerian government generates over 90% of its revenue from the region, which is characterized by crisis of underdevelopment [1]. The region

remains underdeveloped despite the huge revenue it provides for the privileged social class including the public figures, public servants and beneficiaries from multinational oil corporations. The Nigerian government and multinational corporations are principal beneficiaries of the massive oil deposits in the region, while the majority of the people there battle against squalor occasioned by exploitative oil exploration, environmental degradation, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and poverty.

A major problem that appears intractable in Nigeria is escalation of violence especially as a result of the emergence of deadly militant groups in the Niger Delta since the 1990s. The most disturbing militant activities in the region include oil pipeline vandalisation, hostage taking, massacre and assassination. The realization of the need to seek redress for

several years of neglect and marginalization of resource-endowed communities of the Niger Delta fuels the growth of youth militancy and a new wave of social movement in Nigeria. Delta communities spread across nine states with reliance on fishing and farming as their major sources of livelihoods. The communities are characterized by environmental degradation, chronic poverty and escalation of violence despite huge resources that the Federal Government of Nigeria generates from the region.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian government's military approach and other top down measures for alleviating the spate of violence in the region have not yielded desired results, hence the state adoption of amnesty to promote peace in the region. Several measures to promote peace and development in the region have

failed until the adoption of amnesty, a relatively new strategy for peace building in the region. The amnesty programme has precursors such as the Ministry of the Niger Delta, Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, the Joint Military Task Force and the Niger Delta Development Commission. None of these measures has clearly demonstrated adequate plan for human capital development in the region. The region is today considered among the least advantaged in our society. The structural injustice against the Niger Delta region and the attendant violent conflict it generates calls for an investigation. Scholars like [1], [2] and others have written interesting works on amnesty programme in the Niger Delta Region but none have discussed it in the context of its conflict management strategy. This gap we intend to fill with these questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does benefits of amnesty programme resolve the conflict arising from outcry of marginalization of the Niger Delta region?
2. Does the amnesty programme address the conflict arising from the practice of federalism in Nigeria?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The broad purpose of the study is to examine conflict management in the Niger Delta Region. Specifically, the study shall:

- Examine the impact of amnesty programme in resolving the conflict

arising from outcry of marginalization of the Niger Delta region.

- Identify if the amnesty programme addressed the challenges arising from the practice of federalism in Nigeria.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

In other to achieve the objectives of this study, which is examining conflict

management in Niger Delta's region of Nigeria using amnesty programme, we

relied on the use of secondary source materials. By secondary sources, we mean data from existing records like books, journals, Monographs, United Nations documents, World Bank publications, government and other official publications, internet materials, seminar papers, newspapers, magazines as well as other related documents. This is justified due to its intrinsic values.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, we employed the technique called content analysis of written records. This technique, according to [3], was developed as a result of the need for a reliable, scientific method for assessing, analyzing and interpreting a large variety of materials. Thus, we relied heavily (but not exclusively) on this analytical technique to evaluate the data generated in the course of this study. [3] while quoting [4] explained that content analysis is a research technique adopted for the objective, systematic and qualitative analysis and interpretation of information.

In essence, therefore, this content analysis technique was applied to ascertain whether the information generated from the various sources either corroborated and validated or invalidated all the research questions raised, the hypotheses posited and the theoretical framework of analysis adopted for the research work. Objectively, this forms a

point of departure from the view of [5] that content analysis is a method of coherent logical deduction from available data to determine the validity of hypothesis in a research process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our review will focus on the issues reflecting our research questions. In this order we shall concentrate on scholarly views on amnesty, youth unemployment and marginalization arising from infrastructural problem in the Niger Delta, environmental degradation and pollution and the consequent criminality of Niger Delta youths exhibited through kidnapping of expatriates and other actions against Nigerian Federalism.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition (2000) defines "Amnesty" as a general pardon, especially for offences against a government (or for political offenses). It is a period during which a law is suspended to allow offenders to admit their crime without fear of prosecution. It could also refer to a situation or initiative where individual are encouraged to turn over illicit arms to the Authority (in this case the government).

In Nigeria, a state of Amnesty was declared by the former civilian President, Late Umaru Musa Yar'dua in 2009 to the various militant groups operating in the Niger Delta Region whose social vices

have bridged the peace of the Region in particular and the nation in general. Some of these major groups and their leaders operating in the area. include Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF); Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People; Niger Delta Vigilante, Niger Delta Liberation Front, Joint Revolutionary Council and the Ijaw Youth Council. The key leaders include Henry Okah, Asari Dokubo; Ateke Tom; Government Ekpemupolo (AKS Tompolo); Soboma George, Brutus Ebipodei, Solomon Ndigbara, Tubotamuno Angolia, John Togo, Ebikabowei Victor-Ben Godswill Tamuno and others.

Militancy can be traced to the "power of human agencies, while amnesty reflects the dynamics of state power in connection with definition and redefinition of criminality. The conception of amnesty is in line with the Nigerian Constitution. Section 175 of the Constitution stipulates that the President can grant pardon to any person concerned with or convicted of any offence." [1] The concepts of amnesty and militancy introduce contradictions and negotiations in the balance of power between the state and some powerful groups in the state. Amnesty is an indication of criminality with a pardon for specific purposes depending on the situation in question. This could be derogatory later in life of those involved; it can even affect rate of

development in the community. The Nigerian context of amnesty cannot be understood in isolation because it is affected by several socioeconomic and political factors.

CRIMINALITY AND AMNESTY IN THE NIGER DELTA

Youths within the Niger Delta area by association of various ethnic militia groups, have become restive in their bid for greater control of their natural resources [6] and [7]. According to [8], the otherwise rightful agitation for an equitable deal from the Federal Government has been criminalized. These criminal activities include illegal oil bunkering, fire arms business, kidnapping and hostage taking, piracy and armed robbery. Also identified is that the militants are the unemployed youths disengaged by political elites who had used them as political thugs and general supporters during elections [8]. Violence in the Niger Delta is estimated to have killed about 1000 persons a year between 1999 and 2004 on a par with conflicts in Columbia and Chechnya [9]. The violence in the region has led to disruptions of oil operations rising over the last 5-10 years. In the last few years, militant groups have kidnapped over 250 expatriate oil workers and cut oil production by as much as one million barrel per day [8].

The rise in militancy among the youths in the Niger Delta has been fuelled by

extreme poverty and underdevelopment, discontent with the International Oil companies, oil spillage, environmental damage and corruption by Government officials which ensures little development funding reaches the host communities. Between 100,000 and 300,000 barrels of crude oil were stolen in Nigeria daily between 2003 and 2008 not including the incidence of excess lifting or cargo theft by licensed transporters and Oil servicing Companies [8]. Sophisticated weapons are widely available throughout the Niger Delta to militia groups, cults and gangs. Political Godfathers and aspiring politicians have promoted and used gangs, cult groups, vigilantes and the militia group to exert power and influence [8]. According to the Petroleum Engineering Technology Association of Nigeria (PETAN), the hostage taking crisis on the Niger Delta region will lead to unemployment of oil workers except the Federal Government and other stakeholders have control of the deteriorating situation.

INFRASTRUCTURAL PROBLEM IN THE NIGER DELTA

[6] states that with millions of barrels of oil harvested per day and an over 90% income to Nigeria, the Niger Delta provides enough strength to sustain the country, yet the people in the region feel infuriated as their environment remains undeveloped with few or no infrastructure in health, schools,

transportation, industries as well as Federal and State Government presence. Their resources are used to develop the Federal capital and other places. According to [8] pervasive corruption within the government, oil companies and even some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) prevents the delivery of funds intended for infrastructure and community development. It has been identified that efforts by the Federal Government and Oil Companies to improve the quality of human lives and to provide infrastructural development have been insufficient to ameliorate the problems [6] and [7]. There is no doubt therefore that provision of basic amenities should be paramount in the Niger delta and for better standard of living. Funds realized from oil exports should take care of providing for the people the necessary basic facilities required for human beings to thrive comfortably.

UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM IN THE NIGER DELTA

Unemployment has been identified as the main cause of socio-economic tensions and violence rocking the Niger Delta area of the country [10].

When large number of youths are unemployed, their quest to survive may make them to become willing tools in the hands of maverick and disgruntled politicians who may want to use them for

anti-social and clandestine activities [11]. They have also been used as local militants to attack, vandalize and destroy oil pipelines, lives and property in the Niger Delta region. According to [9], over 60% of the youths in the Niger Delta are unemployed and thus many are good militants including male and female, young and old while different cultural background is never a barrier. Anti-social activities such as political thuggery, militancy, restiveness and other social vices evident among the unemployed and jobless youths are real dangers to the stability of democracy in Nigeria [11]. As part of the seven point agenda of former President Musa Yaradua, the provision of employment to young graduates and other skilled workers has been identified as an agenda to be given urgent attention. It is expected that the present regime of President Mohammed Buhari will improve on where President Goodluck Jonathan stopped his amnesty package for the Niger Delta Region. Scholars like [1], [2], [3], [4] and others have written interesting works on amnesty programme in the Niger Delta Region but none have discussed it in the context of conflict management strategy, hence the need for more inquiry.

FEDERALISM AND NIGERIAN STATE

When we talk of federalism, the starting point of the argument is with the scholar K.C Wheare [12]. He defined federalism as

a system in which two or more levels of governmental power, especially federal & regional or state government exist side by side, with each processing certain power and assigned function. The definition assume that the most fundamental and assuming character of federalism is that neither the center and regional or state government are subordinated to each other, but rather the various level of government are autonomous, and coordinate an inter-dependence. Each level operates directly with the people and neither may arrogate to himself power assigned to the other.

[12] in his monumental work titled federal government conceptualized federalism as a constitutional arrangement that makes possible for the division of power and functions between the two chambers of government. He further stated emphatically that:

I have put forward uncompressing a Criteria of federal government, The delimit and co-ordinate division of government Functions and I have implied that to the Extent to which any system of government does not form to this criterion, has no Claim to call itself federal. [12].

However, this definition attracted several criticisms from scholars. For instance, Living Stone accused Wheareas being teelogislistic, formal, rigid, Eurocentric, and idealistic. But then this argument continues to serve as the basis for judging what is federal from what is not, so much to the extent that it served as a reference point to Yekini's properties of a polity which among others includes:

- There should be a constitution deliberately written where each level of government derives its function and responsibility.
- There is division of powers, functions and responsibilities among levels of government.
- Each level of government should have sufficient financial resources to carry out its constitutional responsibilities and that financial dependence on one level of government or the other jeopardizes the survival of federalism.
- In line with this argument, J.S Mill emphasized the actuality among component limit, which is made possible through financial autonomy on the units. According to him, there should not be anyone state so Much powerful than the rest as to be Capable of weighing its strength with Many of their combine...If there be such one, and only one, it will insist on being master of the joint deliberation, if there be two, there will be irresistible. [6]

According to Sower, federalism is a situation whereby geographical distribution of power to govern is achieved in a way that gives several governmental units of the system, some degree of continued existence as organization and shareholder of power. While Hick defined federalism as a type of society or polity operating a constitution which works at two levels of government as a nation and as a collection of related but self-standing units.

In another view, Peter Markel defines federalism as a system characterized by at least two patterns of communities, one all-inclusive and the other composed of several mutually exclusive communities. According to him, the geographical nature of the community and especially the location of boundaries among the sub national units and around the whole communities are crucial to federal system. He further argued that to achieve unity in diversity and provide checks and balance against the dominance and the infusion of either two communities is assumed to be distinct, in claims or control of institutions.

The defining properties of the theory are that both governmental units and levels have separate co-ordinate legal status, a self-contained machinery of administration, physical independence, and a balanced delimitation of activities without over-lap.

According to [9] federalism is a process rather than a design and that any particular group or pattern of competence or Jurisdiction is merely a “phrase” short run view or a continually unloving political reality. Frederick further argues that federalism may be operating in both direction of integration and differentiation integration. In a sense, Frederick contends that federalism is a general principle of social organization. He further argued that the degree of federalism in a political system is a function of sociological and not legal criteria.

However, [7] in his contribution offers a systematic and logical approach throughout the perspective on the process of integration. [7] view the integrative force as either coercive (military Utilitarian) economic sanction/or normative (propaganda).All these are suggestive of sociological variables that helped in explaining the federal form of government. A central state that emerged from [7] concept is concerned with power. To him, politics is nothing short of the exercise of effective political power of an identifiable central authority. More than that, he stresses relevance of the attitudes of leaders and decision makers to the process of integration for unification. From this perspective, it could be argued that federalism belongs to that group of class or political system devised to bring out unification of political communities.

The reaction of federal imperative occupies what [5] said in his very influential note, the nature of federalism that it has to be understood as a sociological phenomenon. In order words the founding and maintenance of a federal system in any nation requires a collection of social attitudes and types of social structure which is compatible with and favorable to the development of government.

Encumbered by the notion of federal spectrum, federalism cannot be practiced in absolute sense, rather in relative terms. That is why federalism plays the role of unifying the opposing extremes, the states and center. The degree of unity it produces is limited by the degree of federal exigencies present. To that extent, this dynamism may pull a federal state towards confederation or what [7] refers to as quasi federalism or the intricacies of prefixing in federalism.

The essence of federalism is to create a central government for collective actions, preservation of integrity of the units that agreed to from the federation, preservation of their identities and the establishments and maintenance of a polity where the government by the people produces a strong self-conscious nation. It also aims to

keep the rights and cultures of the component units as contained in the cultures and tradition of the people.

FEDERALISM AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF NIGER DELTA REGION

The concept of federalism has received broad scholarly attention. To this end, each scholar tends to explain it according to their own perception. Thus, the meaning of federalism is surrounded by what Dare called “state of uncertainty and vagueness”, the meaning of federalism is yet to escape the state of uncertainty. This explains why each scholar approaches the study based on individual background and inclination. Early writers on the concept of federalism such as Jean Bodin, Olto, Cosmanus among others view federalism “as a voluntary form of political union of independent authorities”. The union either temporary or permanent was based on the need of special common purposes like defense, trade, communications and other reasons that would benefit the parties involved. Federalism is viewed as a mutual interactions between and direct contact with, at least two levels of government which rests on the fundamental principle that federalism is a form of governmental and institutional structure, deliberately designed by political “architects” to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity.

According to [7] Federalism is viewed as a method of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each, within a sphere co- ordinate, and independent of one another. Thus, [7] proposition posits that the federal principle essentially entails legal divisions of powers and functions among levels of government with a written constitution guaranteeing and reflecting the divisions. Wherea’s formulation of federalism is been drawn correctly from the United States of American which is regarded by him as the prototype of federal government. To him, federalism involves a division of functions an since the state forming the federation are conscious that they should not surrender more powers than they know, it is essential for a federal government that there be a written constitution embodying the division of powers binding all governmental authorities throughout the federation. From it, the state and federal authorities derive their powers and any actions they perform; contrary to it is regarded as invalid. Wheare’s contention is seen here to be primarily concerned with the divisions of powers between the component units, arising abinitio from their conscious surrendering of some levels of independence to the union and a willingness to share.

To [2] federalism is a union of groups united by one or more common objectives, but retaining their distinctive

group beings for other purposes. Federalism is at the inter- group level what association is at the inter- personal level. It unites without destroying themselves that are uniting and is meant to strength them in their mutual relations, infact it organizes cooperation.

Karl - Deutsche views federalism as, putting every individual under two governments at one hand and the same time, so far as the individual is concerned, these governments coincide in domain, but differ in some respects but not in others. One of these government, the national or federal, governs the entire country while the other called the state or province, union republics, canton etc by various federation usually govern only a small part of the country.

[5], federalism is a process without required form of practice a process constantly in a flux under evolution. Here we see a conceptualization with some human systemic analysis, brought to show that federalism thrives in a continuous flux. That it involves fluidity wherein the federalist from the units allow for processes of continued evolution towards the emergence of greater good for all through compromise in their diversities. Federalism is an order designed to sustain the dynamics of change. It is imbued with capabilities that assimilate the differences inherent in the various units and subsuming them,

creates an order that keeps a dynamic equilibrium for all.

To Allen, federalism is the putting of understanding and bonds through agreement in law, between independent states to satisfy the need for autonomy and freedom, on the one hand, and for order and security on the other hand. Federalism is an omnibus concept that contains as much characteristics as can be assigned to it. So long as such are designed for the good of all in the pursuit of unity in diversity. This makes it expedient for units to seek for legalistic considerations of what agreements they enter into in the course of their federating. To this end, some scholars have come to conceive federalism from a predominantly legalistic postulations.

Federalism has also been conceptualized as a formal legal set of relationships aimed at the distribution of power between central and peripheral units of government. Thus, there must exist at least two tiers of government. The need for a legal structuring of the federating units can further be understood when we look at the security needs of the units. The desire here is for a legal order that protects each unit from threats of overarching interest that are bound to emerge within the federation to threaten the autonomy of the units and to a large extent stress or conflict in the entire federation.

Livingstone also observed that the essential nature of federalism is to be sought in the shadings of legal and constitutional terminology but in the forces of economic socio- political and cultural factors that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary. Hence:

... the essence of federalism lies not in the constitutional or the institutional structures, but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which federal quantities of the society are articulated and protected.

Livingstone's conception tends to take a Holistic approach by its emphasis on the society, the essence lies on the units which are part of human society negotiating for their socio political, economic and security needs.

From the gamut of the conceptualization above, we can begin to focus on federalism with an understanding that it's a system arranged to accommodate many sets of governmental authorities, one making decisions for the entire federation and the other for the various units. Here, an indefinite consensus over sphere of authority exists to allow for adjustment within the ever- increasing needs for compromise by the federating units. Federalism is simply an arrangement by

societies to accommodate diverse interest from a broader configuration, into a codified order that guarantees unity in diversity.

The basic tenets of federalism according to [12] includes:-

- There must be at least two levels of governments and there must be constitutional division of powers among the levels of government.
- Each levels of government must be co-ordinate and independent.
- Each levels of government must be financially independent. He argued that this will afford each levels of government the opportunity of performing their functions without depending or appealing to the others for financial assistance.
- There must be Supreme Court of the independent judiciary. He argued that in terms of power sharing there is likely to be conflict hence; there must be independent judiciary to resolve the case.
- In terms of the amendment of the constitution no levels of government should have undue power over the amendment process.

He further maintained that, once a country is able to satisfy these conditions, such country is said to practice federalism.

An appraisal of the Niger Delta crisis begins with the knowledge that it is a protest against lack of development in the region. Development, as seen through the prism of the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) is a human centered enterprises and is defined as “a process of expanding human choices by enabling people to live a long, healthy and creative life”. The situation of underdevelopment in the Nigeria Delta region is best captured in the words of Denis Goulet, a pioneer of human development theory and the founder of development ethics .To him:

Underdevelopment is shocking: the squalor, disease, unnecessary death and hopelessness of it all, no man understands if under development remains for him a mere statistic reflecting low income, poor housing, premature morality or under development. The most emphatic observer can speak objectively about underdevelopment only after undergoing, personally or vicariously, the shock of underdevelopment. This unique culture shock comes to one as he is initiated to the emotions that prevail in the culture of poverty... chronic poverty is a cruel kind of hell, and one cannot understand how cruel that hell is merely by gazing upon poverty as an object. Unless the observer gains entry into the inner sanctum of these emotions and feels them himself, he will not understand the condition he seeks to abolish. This is the situation the Niger Delta region has found itself, but unfortunately, the rest of the country does not understand this condition. In the demographic and health survey conducted by the national

population commission in 2005, the commission came up with some statistics:

- The Niger Delta is rated to have performed very poorly on neonatal, post - neonatal and infant mortality rate in Nigeria... and nothing can be said about progress being made on maternal health in the Nigeria Delta.

- The region has very limited access to health care relative to other parts of the country.

- The distance between residence of pregnant women and the location of the health facilities is a major problem because of farness.

- The South South zone had the largest proportion of births attended by traditional attendants in 2003 (32.2 percent as against 6.1 percent by South East and 9 percent by North Central and the South West).

Added to this is the fact that the Nigeria Delta region has one of the highest prevalence of HIV & Aids in the country, and the incidence of death associated with malaria and tuberculosis is still very high. The predisposing factors for the Aids scourge include the prevalence of commercial sex workers patronized by oil company workers, sailors and the long stretch of beach which beckons to global visitors.

However, the former managing director of NDDC, Mr Timi Alaibe, while decrying the poor quality of education, in adequate water supply, lack of infrastructure and poor health facilities in the Niger Delta

region stated that: contrary to claims that HIV/Aids is the highest killer disease, water borne disease kill more than any disease in the Niger Delta because of the lack of portable water for the people.

The human development index computed by the United Nations Development Programme in the 2005 also showed that all was not well with the region. Although the human development situation for the whole country was considered “deplorable the HDI for the Niger Delta region was described as unacceptable considering that it has produced wealth fueling development in other parts of the country. The report observed that although the HDI for Nigeria witnessed a decline between 2002 and 2005, “the drop off appears to be steeper for the Niger Delta states than for the rest of the country. The report regretted that the human development and poverty situation in the Niger Delta region was not comparable to what is obtained in comparable oil ridiculing countries or regions in the world. The report stated succinctly, “if the various government in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta region are not doing this, the local people are making these comparisons and genuinely feel that should fare much better than they are at present”. The report explained as follows:

In contrast to the poor development situation in Nigeria generally and the Niger Delta region in particular, Saudi Arabia, the world’s leading oil producing

country, has been doing rather well. According to the 2003 global Human Development Report, the HDI for Saudi Arabia was 8.838 on educational attainment and 0.721 on per capital income. It is easy to say that the oil wealth of Saud Arabia has served the country well in terms of enhanced human development. Indonesia’s HDI for 2002 was 0.895, which is higher than the Niger Delta average 0.564. Life expectancy in Indonesia was rated at 0.662, compared with 0.527 for the Niger Delta. Adult education for Indonesia was at 0.895, compared with 0.671 on the education index for the Niger Delta.

It should however, be stated that the Nigeria Delta’s appalling human development. Situation cannot be completely captured by the HDI, as some critical issues impinging on comprehensive and meaningful assessment /computation of the HDI such as roads, water, electricity, appropriate waste management, environmental degradation (items the region is bathing with) are not usually accommodated in the computation. The HDI does not also capture severe environmental degradation and poor infrastructural provision. Added to this, the computation included oil revenue derived from the region without understanding that it is basically utilized in areas outside it.

NIGER-DELTA AND THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME

The Niger Delta amnesty programme was set up to curb militant unrest in Nigeria's volatile oil producing states. The ex-agitators laid down their weapons and under the programme, were to be trained in vocational skills, mostly out of the nation's shore. During the Niger Delta crisis, whenever the militants sneezed, the rest of the country inevitably caught cold. Their engagement in kidnapping of expatriate oil company workers, destruction of oil pipelines, illegal bunkering, establishment of illegal refineries and other forms of criminality seriously affected the total production of oil and the revenue the country realized from oil which is the main source of the revenue. The effects of the actions of these militants was not lost on anyone as a state of general insecurity pervaded the entire Niger - delta region and with the nation losing revenue from a shut in of about / million barrels of oil daily. It was expected that the government would take a drastic action to prevent and subsidized the violence.

It was on this note that the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua made significant milestone when in 2009, he created the first ever federal ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. The creation of this ministry brought a sigh of relief to the Niger Delta region that had been yearning for greater social and infrastructural development of their region. The Amnesty programme

was a huge success as the militants accepted the offer and began coming out of hiding to hand over their arms and ammunition to the government through the peace committee set up to coordinate the programme. The rehabilitation centers were established and the born again militants commenced the process of rehabilitation.

NIGERIAN STATE AND POST AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN THE NIGER-DELTA

It is noteworthy that the late president Yar' Adua had good intentions for granting the militants of Niger- Delta regions amnesty, with the hope that the kind gesture would effectively stop the ranging restiveness in the crisis - ridden Niger Delta region, help considerably in the socio- economic development of the area, engage the ex-militants in gainful employment, as well as other meaningful activities that could help improve their living conditions.

But it is regrettable that since the demise of the late President Yar'adua on May 5, 2010, it seems the Amnesty programme for the Niger Delta ex- militants has developed a cold feet. The laudable amnesty programme was intended to, among other things assist in disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and integration of remorseful militants. However, it is saddening that not many of these youths have benefitted from the programme, while those that have graduated are yet to be gainfully employed. More

disheartening is the fact that most of the ex- militants granted Amnesty and were promised benefits from the amnesty programme seem to have been abandoned. Only the prominent leaders, some of whom have been awarded oil pipeline protection contracts worth billions of naira and have become multi-billionaires overnight, have been settled. A handful of the ex- militants are now aggrieved and are alleging exclusion from the amnesty programme and as a result, some of the aggrieved ex-militants threatened to resume their dastardly acts, having been excluded from the Amnesty largesse. This has led to the return of various forms of criminality in various forms of criminality in the Niger- Delta.

This study examined conflict management in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria with emphasis on the appraisal of the amnesty programme.

The first section introduced the study, statement of the problem, and two research questions were raised as a result of the problem stated, along with the hypotheses, purpose of the study, and Methodology of the study was highlighted.

Second section addressed the first research Question through content analysis . In the process marginalization and crisis in the Niger Delta was examined with a

If the Amnesty programme has been faithfully implemented in a holistic manner, the return of criminal activities would not have arisen. It is unfortunate and unthinkable that inspite of the huge contracts awarded to a clique of ex - militants to protect oil pipelines, the flagrant destruction of oil pipelines and theft of oil still persist in Niger Delta. This has also become a deal for enriching the boys at the expense of the economy of the country. The amnesty programme should be a holistic plan to be vigorously pursued, to provide the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the ministry of Niger delta affairs opportunity to justify their existence.

SUMMARY

historical survey of the crisis as a prelude while subsequent issues focused on the crisis and the challenges of internal security.

Third section addressed the second research question through examination of Nigerian Federalism and Niger Delta Question. This is done with emphasis on underdevelopment of Niger Delta region, agitation by the region and challenges of the practice of federalism by Nigerian state.

The last section summarizes the work. It also concludes and makes appropriate recommendation to sustain the peace so far achieved through amnesty programme.

CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta region is mix porridge of ills, misgivings, agony, penury, displeasure and disenchantment [4]. The crisis is confronted by appropriate management technique in view of the unending agitation against their marginalization by Nigerian state. The endemic underdevelopment of the region despite the amnesty programme constitutes another problem of peace building in the region. Unfortunately, the government seems to have relaxed and felt accomplished creating a situation of

possible escalation of conflict. Today the amnesty has secured an environment for maximum daily oil harvest and production, peace, security and development for the government .However, the amnesty has proved incapable of bringing commensurate infrastructural and human development to the region as the government has indirectly accepted. For this reason, the amnesty programme may soon wither away except adequate effort is made to prevent a repeat of militancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The amnesty in a way has addressed the Niger Delta problem although more efforts is needed to avoid further resurgence of conflict. The huge funds spent on ex-militants and their leaders solved the problem of stomach infrastructure but attempts should be consistent on how to assuage considerably the environmental and infrastructural demands of the people and rehabilitate their communities.

This is a true step to attaining true peace however, the federal government should be mindful of the fact that achieved needs is the least of other needs. To this effect it is expected that when these militants get trained, their agitations for development will become more severe in

violent and non-violent ways because they have fully been exposed to know their rights.

It is very much out of place to recommend establishment of commissions to develop the Niger Delta region because NNDC and its predecessors have proved dysfunctional. The first effort in solving the Niger Delta problem is to engage in a consistent dialogue with all the stakeholders involved. However this dialogue has to be convened by an independent third party with no alliance to the government or the oil merchants. This dialogue will provide the opportunity for the people to duly air their views, grievances and the

preferential ways they want their problems to be solved.

Furthermore, restructuring of the Nigerian federalist principles and revenue allocation formula is suggested as a way of addressing the Niger Delta problem. Revising revenue derivation and proper federal structure to accommodate and represent all the regions of the country will immensely help in solving this problem. This study does not undermine the effectiveness of this measure in dousing the problem but its concern is that lack of political will by government will make it unachievable. Incorporating equal development for the diverse parts of the country seems infeasible in the present system of government and has created deep feelings of sidelining and marginalization. Hence, Nigeria state should address the question of resource control, self determination by the Niger Delta and other regions in Nigeria. Massive infrastructural delivery to the Niger Delta region is the sure answer to

the desired peace. Lastly, there is the need to have a social reengineering of the Niger Delta area. So many abuses have been committed by the Nigerian security forces, loss of lives, properties, detentions, torture, rape and all the social ills. Many communities have experienced total crackdown and some militants are still held and being tried in law courts. These militants should be released in line with the principle of amnesty programme as an effort in social reengineering of the region. The government should choose his choice of words when addressing these people because it tends to influence them and make them act in such manner in which they are addressed. They have been labeled as criminals instead of freedom fighters or at worst militants and this simply has shaped government's perception and actions. Families and communities should be rehabilitated and compensated to socially stabilize and reintegrate them back to the society.

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