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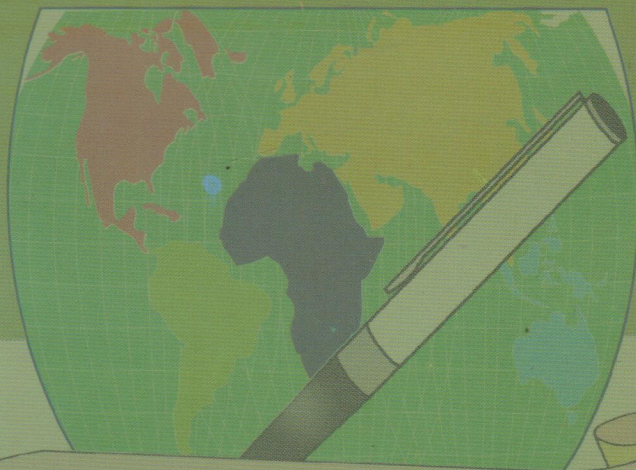
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# PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA REGION

By

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## ABSTRACT

*Major indicators of insecurity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria include militancy, kidnapping, hostage taking, oil bunkering, assassinations and vandalism. These activities combine to make the region highly insecure. The amnesty programme initiated by the federal government of Nigeria has attempted to stem the tide of insecurity in the region by training the ex-militants in some skills and employing them. However, the programme has not accommodated the employment needs of majority of the Niger Delta youths especially those who are not militants. This paper therefore identifies unemployment as a major threat to security in the region, using Anomie/Strain theory as the theoretical framework. The paper posits among others the high rate of unemployment in the region ensures that many people resort to crime to make a living; that increasing unemployment correlates with increasing insecurity in the region; and that current effort of the federal and state governments in the region cannot solve the problem of insecurity. We recommend that massive jobs creation, capacity building, infrastructural development and the promotion of small scale enterprise are rather viable options which could guarantee security/stability needed for development in the region.*

**Key Words:** Unemployment, threat, insecurity, Niger Delta, amnesty programme.

## Introduction

The Niger Delta region, also called the South-South geo-political zone in the current six geopolitical structures, is made up of six states namely; Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. The region is

made up of a medley of ethnic nationalities referred to as minorities in relation to the three major ethnic groups in the Nigerian Federation (Obi-Ani, 2004). However, the politics of oil in Nigeria has necessitated the integration of Imo, Abia, Ondo and Anambra (the newest oil state) States into the Niger Delta. Hence, the current definition of the Niger Delta includes ten states, out of the thirty-six states, of the federation. The region is simply a rich deposit of oil and gas, flora and fauna.

Estimate shows that the Nigerian government generate over 90% of its revenue from the region, which is characterized by crisis of underdevelopment (Ikein, 2009). The major oil companies operating in the region include Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron, AGIP, B.P, Exxon Mobil and Texaco (Akpan, 2005). The region also occupies a strategic position in the Nigerian economy as well as in the world economy due to its vast oil deposit.

Ironically, the abundance of oil and its exploitation by the oil multinationals have not ensured better living conditions for the people of the region who remain largely poor, marginalized and exploited. In fact, the region does not have corresponding infrastructural and human development to show for decades of exploitation of its natural resources. The poor living conditions and inadequate development in the region have provoked insecurity in the region vis-à-vis the entire country. It is obvious that as the region plays a significant role in the nation's economy, insecurity in the region no doubts affect the entire country. The region is characterized by high incidence of insecurity manifesting in the forms of militancy, kidnapping, hostage taking, killings, oil bunkering and vandalism of oil pipelines.

It is true that some appreciable efforts have been made by both the governments at federal and states level and the oil multinationals towards combating insecurity and ensuring better living conditions in the region. However, such efforts have failed to stem the increasing trend of insecurity in the region. This is so because the major actors (the oil multinationals and the Nigerian governments) have failed to identify and treat unemployment as a threat to security in the region. This paper relying on secondary data

sources, recognizes the need for a study into this neglected, but vital, threat to security in the region.

### **The Niger Delta Crisis: Background**

Nigeria's Niger Delta has outstanding long historical background of conflicts and insurgencies, which result from poor infrastructural and human development in the midst of rich deposits of oil and gas, flora and fauna in the area. The Nigeria infrastructural crisis, as noted by Oloya and Ugbeyaywighren (2009), does not seemingly respect natural resources endowment. In spite of this, some scholars think that the Niger Delta case is the result of oppressive, exploitative and discriminative policies of the federal government against the region. This is to the extent that the Niger Delta is considered the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg. However, the anger of the people seems to be the goose is treated with disdain and may even be faced with the risk of death.

Although the bulk of crude oil, Nigeria's main source of revenue, is derived from the Niger Delta, the region belongs to the ranks of backward marginalized groups in the country (Osaghae, 1995). The picture of infrastructural neglect painted above is made worse by the menace of environmental degradation. This largely unintended consequence of oil exploration activities is a threat to the livelihood of majority of the inhabitants of the region. The devastation caused by oil spillage and gas flaring has made it virtually impossible for the people to eke out a living (Egwemi, 2010). As argued by Ajaero (2008), exploration activities have led in some cases to the systematic debasement and assault on the oil communities, leading to the collapse of the ecosystem in some areas, and to negative impact on livelihood of the people and the survival strategies they have designed for generations.

A disconnection between the economic advantage of the Niger Delta and the quantum of resources disbursed for the development of the region has given rise to structural imbalances in Nigeria. Thus, the region is increasingly famous for constant violence and remains underdeveloped despite the huge revenue it generates. The Nigerian government and multinational corporations are principal beneficiaries of the massive oil deposits in the region, while the people in the region battle against squalor,

environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and poverty (Akinwale, 2010).

Several reactions have been put up by the people of the region. Some predate Nigeria's independence. According to Oloya and Ugbeyavwighren (2009), the struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta dates back to the pre-colonial era when the Royal Niger Company (RNC) tried to deprive the people of their legitimate trade and industry. In attempts to challenge and resist the British merchants, some indigenous kings were deposed and exiled. For example, King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny was deposed and exiled to Fernando Po in 1854; King Jaja of Opobo to the West Indies in 1887; Prince Nana of Itsekiri to Accra in 1894; and Oba of Benin to Calabar in 1897, he later died in Calabar in 1913 (Oloya and Ugbeyavwighren, 2009).

Isaac Adaka Boro's declaration of the Niger Delta Republic in Kaima on February 23, 1966 was engendered by oppression by the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria (Oloya and Ugbeyavwighren, 2009). In reaction, the federal government declared war on Boro and clamped him (and his rebels) down within twelve (12) days (Oloya and Ugbeyavwighren, 2009). Also, Ken Saro-Wiwa leader of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), who vigorously pursued and popularized the Niger Delta struggle was hanged with eight others in 1995 by the Abacha's administration after conviction by a special tribunal. Unfortunately, his death marked the beginning of militancy in the Niger Delta struggle. Thus, several militant groups spread up in the region, significant among them include the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEIND) and the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF). Furthermore, the international outcry that greeted the killings led to the suspension of Nigeria from the commonwealth, among other sanctions (Igwemi, 1998). The emergence of militancy changed the pattern of the Niger Delta struggle from the non-violent to violent/armed activities of "a new generation of restless youths who desire change. To these youths, change can only come through violence" (Igwemi, 2009).

According to Omotola (2009), government has responded by establishing institutions to solve the problems of the region. For example, based on the

Willink Commission's recommendations, the government established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB). The next response was the award of 1.5% by the presidential committee set up in 1989, followed by the establishment of Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) by President Ibrahim Babangida (Oloya and Ugbeyawighen, 2009). In 2000, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established by President Obasanjo for the development of the oil-rich Niger Delta region. In his determination to overcome the crisis of the Niger Delta region, especially underdevelopment and insecurity, President Umaru Yar'Adua set up the Niger Delta Ministry in September 2008 and also the Niger Delta Technical Committee. According to Akinwale (2010), Yar'Adua initiated the current option when he allocated ₦44.60 billion in 2009 for security in the Niger Delta region and for a programme of sustained dialogue between the region and the federal government. The amnesty deal was the outcome of the dialogue (Akpan and Ering, 2010). Its main intent is to arrest unemployment and insecurity in the region, since it is believed that "the boys are fighting because they have no jobs".

### **Major Indicators of Security Concerns in The Niger Delta**

There is high incidence of insecurity in the region especially among the youths. Crises of all sorts have dominated the area. Such include kidnapping and other forms of terrorism that have become a trade for most unemployed youths who partly succumb to the quest of some greedy self seeking leaders that recruit them for all manners of 'dirty jobs'. There is insecurity of lives and properties in the region to the extent that the region has become a refuge for kidnappers as well as being investor unfriendly. Therefore, the wealth in the region has continued to generate crises and struggle for resource control (Dumoye, 2002). In the Niger Delta, there has been escalating conflict caused by environmental degradation attributed to the activities of oil multinationals in the region. Also, socio-economic changes in Nigeria over the past two decades have had impacts on the lives of people especially youths in the region. Thus, it is not surprising that youth unemployment is alarming; poverty is widespread; and strong feelings of exclusion from the development agenda of the federal government of Nigeria and MNCs is rife. This has sparked violence and restiveness in the region and the effect of this has been the increasing

conflicts experience in the region. Other causal factors of conflict in the region are the insincerity of the parties involved in resolving conflicts and the goal-blocking attitude practiced by the government. The government continues, to marginalise the people, militarise the area and suppress opinions. Cases in point are the well documented killings of Isaac Boro and Ken Saro Wiwa and the suppression of youth activities (Akpan, 2005).

The emergence of militant groups in the late 2005 has aggravated the insecurity situation of the region through their incessant activities which include vandalisation of oil pipelines, illegal bunkering of oil, attacks on oil companies and their installations, kidnapping and hostage taking. Initially, the main target of the militants was the oil multinationals and their expatriate staff. Now, they indulge in kidnapping politicians, businessmen and others. This shows that the insecurity situation in the region is becoming more dangerous than ever.

Nigeria has indeed become the very symbol of oil-related violence. The Niger Delta where most of the oil is produced is laterally aflame. Forceful occupation of flow stations, vandalization of pipelines, kidnapping of oil managers, bunkering, clashes between heavily armed militias, and retaliation by armed forces became manifestations of oil-related violence in the region (Traub-Merz and Yates, 2004). Between 1990 and 2010, oil-related conflict escalated to unprecedented height. This volatile condition in the Niger Delta constitutes grave affront to the security of the Nigerian State as it affects the entire spectrum of the oil and gas industry, prompting equally forceful response by the federal government (Bassey, 2010).

Conflict as one of the indicators of insecurity in the Niger Delta has many implications for the people of the region in particular and the Nigerian society in general. In all cases, conflict in the region has resulted in widespread killing, maiming and displacement of people, destruction of properties, suspension of economic activities, and loss of livelihood means. Therefore, Niger Delta problem is a threat to nascent democracy and the overall stability of Nigeria. Oil exploitation in the region has destroyed the traditional economic activities and engagements of the people and devastated their environment (Ekpebu, 1990; Fowler, 1997; Iheriohanma,

2005). Development opportunities including employment and human capital development have not been properly articulated and utilized in the region. Consequently, some people resort to militancy and other vices to survive.

The security situation is more critical because it distracts rather than allow the institution of a people driven development process and the development of enterprise oriented rural economy that are foundations for sustainable growth and competition required for participation in the global economy (The World Bank, 2002). The crises situation also constrain development opportunities in the region (Iheriohanma, 2007). Pursuant to the determination of the Nigerian government to stem the rising tide of insecurity in the Niger Delta region which is having widespread multi-sectoral impact on the entire country, President Obasanjo set up the National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons on July 2001 to carry out disarmament of militants in the region. Various arms and ammunitions were mobbed up and destroyed (Outlet 5, pp. 11-12). The aim was to engender security in the region via restricting access to arms and ammunitions. However, insecurity increased in the region. This indicates that the response of government has always been what is severally described as the military option. This could be understood further by looking at the activities and priorities of the various joint military task forces set up to maintain security of lives and properties in the region.

The failure of these military task forces to ensure security in the region is an indicator that the military option is not a good option to solving the problem of insecurity in the region. The situation therefore, calls for the urgent need to explore other options in finding effective solution to the problem of insecurity in the region. We believe that since redundant youths are the major agents of insecurity in the region, provision of mass employment opportunities and better living conditions as well as ensuring peoples participation in decision making process could engender the needed security and stability in the region vis a vis the country in general. Our position stems from our concern that insecurity problem is high in Nigeria and that governments have the responsibility of guaranteeing security for its citizens (Oluseyi, 2007).



### **Issues in Unemployment: Reflections on Nigeria**

Unemployment exists when members of the labour force wish to work at the prevailing wage rate but cannot obtain a job. It is used in the sense of involuntary unemployment rather than the voluntary decision on the part of someone who chooses leisure over work (Adebayo, 1999; Onwukwe, 2003). Individuals who are willing and able to work constitute the labour force. Unemployment poses a serious challenge but youth unemployment constitutes a peculiar dimension of the widespread unemployment in Nigeria. Most youths in Nigeria are unemployed and the consequences are too grave to ignore (Eminuc, 2005). Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, young people are compelled to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources, often of a criminal nature (Gibb and George, 1990). The large-scale unemployment among youths is encouraging the development of street youths in Nigeria. They, denied of legitimate means of livelihood, take to criminal behaviour (Chigunta, 2002).

Youth unemployment is a function of combination of poor economic performance and limited availability of assets such as education, experience, health and finance. This is a vicious circle of low growth, which reduces availability of assets, which leads to even lower growth. Insufficient aggregate demand, lack of skills among young people and the relative size of the youth labour force are the most commonly cited causes of youth unemployment (Blanchflower and Freeman, 1999). Low levels of education and skills mismatch reduce chances in the labour market thereby causing unemployment (UNDP, 2004; Licibrant and Mfatsheni, 2004). Skills mismatch results when skills demanded by the labour market are not matched by the educational product. This illustrates a deficient feedback between educational institutions and the labour market. In other words, inappropriate school curriculum leads to lack of employable skills in Nigeria.

High unemployment incidence of young school leavers reflects improper coordination of the educational system. Substantial growth of higher education has been accompanied by increasing difficulties in finding suitable employment by graduates in a variety of courses. This shows that the rapid expansion of our educational system acts directly to increase the

supply of educated manpower above the corresponding demand for them and consequently contributes its quota to the problems of urban youth unemployment in Nigeria (Adebayo, 1999). Other causal factors of unemployment in Nigeria include socio-cultural factors like as ethnicity, tribalism/nepotism, xenophobia, quota system, indigenization practices, and rules of residence; underutilization and poor mobilisation of idle labour resources; unstable economy; government imposed embargo on employment/ retrenchment; undeveloped nature of small scale enterprises; lack of commitment by government and policy failures. These factors are structural and policy determined (Eminue, 2005).

Unemployment has severe consequences on the society and individual. These consequences include loss of national output and low standard of living (Onwukwe, 2003), underemployment (Udu and Agu, 1989), higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2004), delinquency, crime, violence and drug abuse (Igbinovia, 1988; Carmichael and Ward, 2001; Fleshman, 2001; Chigunta, 2002; WHO, 2004; ILO, 2005), destruction of family life (Alli, 1989) and psychological problems (WHO, 1985). The rate of unemployment in the Niger Delta region is high and the region is facing the above mentioned consequences.

As much as unemployment, especially youth unemployment, engenders insecurity in Niger Delta, insecurity itself perpetuates unemployment and poverty in the region. Thus, the relationship between unemployment and insecurity is two way (Dunoye, 2002). According to him, crises of all sorts have characterised the area; kidnapping and terrorism have become a trade for the jobless youths who partly succumb to the material quest of some greedy persons who recruit them. There is insecurity of lives and property to the extent that the area has become a haven for kidnappers as well as being investor unfriendly. It therefore behoves to say that as far as there is high unemployment in Niger Delta, the achievement of stability and security in the region will keep eluding us.

Obviously, the high rate of unemployment in the Niger Delta has been blamed largely on neglect, environmental degradation and marginalisation by the majority stakeholders in oil exploitation (Nigerian government and oil multinationals). But these major stakeholders hold a different view

about the people of Niger Delta. According to Iheriohanma (2005), they present the idea that the people are; lazy and enjoy idleness expecting government and oil companies to provide manna for them always, phobic, prevalently polygamous and have poor orientation and attitude towards development, government policies and programmes. This argument is used to justify the structural poverty inflicted on the oil producing rural communities. In an environment infested with structurally persistent poverty, crises remains unabated, development and investment are scared. These constraint job creation, improve livelihood and poverty reduction (Iheriohanma, 2007).

### **Theoretical Explanation of Unemployment and Insecurity in Niger Delta Region**

Robert K. Merton's anomie/strain theory, a variant of structural functionalism, provides a suitable framework for the analysis of the relationship between unemployment and insecurity especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Merton adapted Emile Durkheim's notion of anomie to explain why people accept or reject the goals of a society, the socially approved means of fulfilling their aspirations, or both (Schaefer, 2001). Anomie occurs when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals, and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them (Merton, 1968).

According to Merton, anomie is the form that societal incoherence takes when "there is a significant detachment between valued cultural ends and legitimate societal means to those ends" (Ake's, 2000). Anomie can be separated into two specific categories: macro-side and micro-side. The former is caused when society fails to regulate the conduct of members in the society. The latter, more commonly referred to as strain, stresses its attention towards the breakdown of society and the increase in deviance associated with declining change that produces a stronger pressure among members of society to commit crimes (Calhoun, 2003).

The basic idea of Merton's theory is that in complex and rapidly changing societies, there are dislocations between ends and means that encourage individuals to commit acts that are defined as deviant (Douglas and Waksler, 1982). This theory explicitly defines deviance as a social problem

rather than a personal trouble; it is a property of the social structure, not of the individuals. Consequently, the solution to deviance lies not in reforming the individual deviant but in reducing the mismatch between structured goals and structured means (Brinkerhoff and White, 1988).

Merton's theory clearly explains the insecurity situations in the Niger Delta. The high incidence of unemployment has ensured that the people of Niger Delta especially unemployed youths indulge in different forms of deviant and criminal behaviours such as violence and conflicts, militancy, killings, illegal oil bunkering, kidnapping, hostage taking and vandalism of pipelines and public property in the region. However, the perpetrators of these deviant and criminal behaviours see them as survival strategies and means of enriching themselves especially in a country like Nigeria where wealth is emphasised irrespective of the means used to attain it. Individuals make rational choices for criminal activities based on benefits and costs. The benefit of crime includes monetary gains and emotional gains such as the thrill of committing criminal acts. The labour market conditions are believed to have significant effect on the nation's crime rate. If unemployment rate goes up, the legitimate income earning opportunities declines and crime tend to increase because the cost of crime goes down for the unemployed (Becker, 1968). It is ironic that a country which cannot provide jobs for its citizens expect them to be of good behaviour and peace-loving. This expectation cannot be attained in Nigeria where unemployment rate is as high.

**Table 1: Unemployment Rates of Niger Delta States**

States	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	March, 2009
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Abia	14.8	11.4	9.65	7.9	13.5	10.9	14.5	14.5
Akwa- Ibom	12.30	14.4	14.4	14.4	15.3	13.5	34.1	34.1
Bayelsa	3.5	7.1	14.0	20.9	16.0	6.9	38.4	38.4

Cross-River	7.9	12.0	11.5	11.1	16.9	11.8	14.3	14.3
Delta	14.9	17.1	10.8	4.5	13.8	18.9	18.4	18.4
Edo	4.8	3.1	6.5	9.9	8.6	5.10	12.2	12.2
Imo	19.9	22.1	19.3	16.5	21.5	7.6	20.8	28.8
Ondo	16.8	7.3	6.8	6.2	6.7	5.8	14.9	14.9
Rivers	6.6	15.3	11.2	7.0	25.0	4.7	27.9	27.9
All States (Nigeria)	12.6	14.8	13.4	11.9	13.7	14.6	19.7	19.7

*Sources: Central Bank of Nigeria, 2009; Federal Office of Statistics, 2010; National Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Njoku, A. and Ihugba, O. A. (2011). Unemployment and Nigerian Economic Growth 1985-2009. Proceedings of the 2011 Conference on Teaching, Learning and Change. International Association for Teaching and Learning (IATEL).*

The Table above clearly shows that unemployment in the Niger Delta states is higher than the national average. The high rate of unemployment especially among the youths is the main reason for pronounced youth restiveness in the region. With the recent flood palaver in the country, it is obvious that the level of displacement in the Niger Delta region is now very high. Flood has taken over some communities in the region, especially in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. This will no doubt generate its peculiar conflict problems.

### **Amnesty Programme: A Viable Attempt to Address Unemployment and Insecurity in Niger Delta**

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th ed.), amnesty refers to an official statement that allows people who have been put in prison for crimes against the state to go free. The conception of amnesty is in line with the Nigerian constitution, whose section 175 stipulates that the

President can grant pardon to any person concerned or convicted of any offence. Amnesty is an indication of criminality with a pardon for specific purposes depending on the situation in question (Akinwale, 2010:202). The amnesty programme was initiated by President Yar'Adua in 2009 as an attempt to address unemployment and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. Let us recall that human capital development was one of the seven points agenda for the Vision 20/2020 designed by Yar'Adua. Human capital refers to an aggregate of people's skills and knowledge in a society. It depends on the quality of education and constitutes the bedrock of development. Nigeria's human capital situation is, however, inadequate, hence the renewed interest on the issue of amnesty granted to militants in the region (Akinwale, 2010:201).

The agenda include infrastructure, security, food supply, housing, employment and wealth creation. The late President granted amnesty to militants of the Niger to create an atmosphere for lasting peace in the region. It is believed that the development of human capital is also necessary for the maintenance of peace in the region. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the President held a consultative meeting with the Governors of the Niger Delta to deliberate on the need for amnesty and disarmament of militants in the Niger Delta. He also consulted the Council of State on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009 to solicit further support for the proposed amnesty. These actions were followed by a nationwide broadcast, thereby encouraging all to embrace amnesty by denouncing militancy and surrendering their arms and ammunitions in preparation to meet training needs of the registered ex-militants (Akinwale, 2010:202).

Based on unanimous endorsement of the programme, the Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament of Militants in the Niger Delta was inaugurated with Godwin Osagie Abbe as its chairperson. As a result, the amnesty agenda was divided into three broad phases. The first phase deals with disarmament and demobilization of militants, while the second and third phases accommodate rehabilitation and integration of ex-militants. The first phase has been implemented. As at October 15, 2009, about 15,260 militants have accepted amnesty and surrendered various types and quantities of arms and ammunition including communication gadgets, bullet-proof jackets, tear gas, rifles and cartridges (Abbe, 2009).

Arrangements made for the implantation of the second and third phases include issuance of identification cards, identification of skills acquisition/training needs, deployment to various rehabilitation centres, and payments of stipends/feeding allowances. Four rehabilitation centres (two each in Aluu, Rivers State and Agbarho, Delta State) have been opened to meet training needs of the registered ex-militants. Thus, as a result of this, an attempt has been made to rehabilitate ex-militants in batches. Each batch is expected to spend four weeks in the rehabilitation programme, which entails reorientation, counseling and moral or spiritual regeneration of ex-militants. A survey of the career aspiration of the ex-militants shows a wide preference for about ten (10) sectors ranging from Oil/Gas, Maritime Services, Fabrication and Welding technology, Exploration and Production, and Processing Engineering, among others. The projected duration of training ranges from 3-18 months and after their completion of training, the ex-militants could choose between wage employment and self-employment. They could also decide to return to school for further education and be trained up to the university level at public expense as to be handled by the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (Akinwale, 2010).

On June 25, 2009, President Umar Musa Yar'Adua granted amnesty to all persons who have been directly or indirectly involved in militant activities in the Niger Delta. From the date of this amnesty, militants had a 60-day period to lay down their arms. The amnesty offer was President Yar'Adua's last solution to the lingering crisis in the Niger Delta region. The crisis of the region had grown to the point of embarrassment for the entire country. In the period before the amnesty, militant activities covered a whole range of activities ranging from kidnapping of expatriates (and even Nigerian) workers in the oil sector, blowing up of flow stations and sundry activities which sometimes bordered on criminality (Egwemi, 2010:136). Amnesty was a political solution to a problem which seemed to have defied other solutions. It is on record that before the granting of amnesty, President Yar'Adua had tried other solutions such as drawing up the Niger Delta Master Plan and establishment of Niger Delta Ministry (Ikenya and Iwuagwu, 2007; Omotola, 2010).

The leaders of the militants, including *Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo), Henry Okah, Asari Dokubo, The Young Shall Grow, Fara Dagogo, Ebi*

*Ben, Ateke Tom, Saboma Jackrich (alias Egberipapa), and Shoot at Sight*, among others, gave up their weapons after the off-the-scene negotiations. Tompolo and his group gave up 117 assorted rifles, 5,467 rounds of live ammunition, 20 camouflage bullet-proof jackets, 26 camouflage uniforms and two helmets. *The Young Shall Grow* and his followers also surrendered 97 assorted guns, 26, 102 rounds of different ammunition; and so on. With them, over 5,000 other militants surrendered their weapons and accepted the amnesty deal. By October 4, 2009, when the offer of amnesty closed, over 8000 militants had surrendered their arms and ammunition and pledged to cooperate with the federal government (Akpan and Ering, 2010:151). Following the success of the Amnesty programme, the federal government quickly released the sum of 50 billion naira to the Presidential Committee on Amnesty (PAC) to implement the post-Amnesty programmes for the repentant militants. In the Post-Amnesty Programme, each militant is paid the sum of 65 thousand naira as monthly allowance and made to undergo skills acquisition training programmes, so as to be taken off the creek and ensure human capital development and security in the Niger Delta region.

Indeed, the failure of all other efforts of successive governments necessitated the adoption of amnesty by President Yar'Adua as the last option to end the lingering Niger Delta Crisis. The Niger Delta crisis has elicited lots of scholarly reactions (Omotola, 2009, 2010; Dibua, 2005; Ojatorotu, 2006; Ibeanu and Lukham, 2006; Iyayi, 2007; Egwemi, 2009). This is as a result of the strategic nature of the region for Nigeria. First, the region occupies a large portion of Nigeria's coastline; it is a major gateway to the country. Secondly and more importantly, it is Nigeria's treasure base because the bulk of the country's oil resources are located in the region. Thus, the effort to maintain peace and stability in the region has been a major concern for successive governments in the country. Over the years, the crisis in the Niger Delta has been a critical component of the Nigerian crisis or what Omotola calls the "national question" (Omotola, 2010).

At the time President Yar'Adua came into office on 29 May, 2007, the Niger Delta crisis was at its zenith. Resentment in the region had been festering for so long that the crisis in the region had become an albatross to the Nigerian project (Omotola, 2010; Egwemi, 2009). The amnesty



programme commenced on June 25, 2009 and ended on October 4, 2009. A new phase in the programmes was immediately commenced namely, making the deal reached with the militants and indeed the entire region work in the post amnesty period (Egwemi, 2010:139). The first step in this period (for the militants) involved a rehabilitation process that will ultimately lead to their full rehabilitation and integration back into peaceful life (Idris and Bello, 2009). This is what has come to be known as the post-amnesty programme, though a part of the amnesty deal. Indeed, the amnesty programme has been widely applauded because of its ability to usher in peace and development in the country. In fact, it has been able to stem the tide of unemployment and insecurity by training some ex-militants and employing them gainfully. This is indeed a viable attempt. However, the amnesty programme only answered to the employment needs of few people (ex-militants), while leaving the majority of youths who are not militants to wallow in unemployment. Therefore, the amnesty programme is not the remedy for unemployment and insecurity in the Niger Delta region.

The amnesty programme has elicited different reactions. Some see it as a successful project (Jega, 2009; Ofehe, 2009, Uduaghan, 2009, Ajaero, 2010). Ajaero's view captures that of those in the "success" camp thus: "For those who actually know the cost of violence and the quantity of arms and ammunition in the region, the decision of the repentant militants to embrace peace is one of the best things that have happened to the country in 2009. A state of war has been averted by their decision to lay down arms. This is a great act of patriotism" (Ajaero, 2010). On the other hand, some scholars see the amnesty programme as a "failure" (Ojo, 2009). Some have moderate views on the programme. While some thinks it lacks transparency (Okoko, 2009), others see the preparation for amnesty as inadequate (Peterside, 2009), and some think that amnesty alone cannot resolve the Niger Delta question (Mitce, 2010; Adaramola, 2009).

Akinwale (2010:206) argues that beyond agitation for resources control, militants became criminal entrepreneurs deriving huge rewards from violence in various ways including bunkering and hostage taking. **Therefore**, the paltry financial rewards granted to militants during amnesty **are incomparable** with huge amnesty of money that accrues to them during

illegal oil bunkering, hostage taking and other violent activities. The monthly stipend of ₦20,000.00 (\$132,45) and ₦1,500.00 (\$9.43) daily feeding allowance per person as well as the promise of vocational training in the ongoing rehabilitation of militants appear to negate the already established militants' identities and alternative routes to upward social mobility in the Nigerian society. In the light of the above, Akinwale predicated that a resurgence of violence is likely to occur in the Niger Delta after the amnesty except the undesirable socio-economic situations that fuelled militancy are fully addressed.

Whatever reactions elicited by the amnesty programme, two things are clear. First, it is an unprecedented action in the history of political engineering in Nigeria. The amnesty offer was a masterstroke in terms of giving Niger Delta a sense of belonging in the Nigerian project. As a corollary, amnesty has helped to advance the course of national integration and the forging of unity in the country. Secondly, there has been a high level of peace and stability in the Niger Delta region in particular and Nigeria in general. The peace and stability in the area have in turn given more profitable oil exploration activities in the area, and this has impacted positively on Nigeria's revenue profile and has also enhanced development efforts in the region (Egwemi, 2010: 139). In the presence of reduced oil-related violence in the region and federal government's commitment in the post-amnesty course, several ex-militants have been sponsored to acquire certain employable skills and are paid about ₦65,000 monthly. This shows a huge prospect for human capital development in the region.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

No doubt, the Niger Delta region contributes greatly to the Nigerian economy because of its rich oil. However, the region remains highly impoverished, exploited and marginalised. The exploration of the oil wealth of the region by the oil multinationals such as Chevron, Elf, Exxon-Mobil and SPDC has caused several environmental problems. Some of these problems include flooding, land degradation, oil spillage, gas flaring, biodiversity depletion, fisheries decline among others. These problems are worsened by the neglect of the region by the oil multinationals who explore the oil deposited therein, and the Nigerian government which benefits from the oil profits. Thus, the current level of development in the Niger Delta

does not correspond with the economic benefits derivable from the oil exploration. In this regards, developmental issues in the Niger Delta are yet to receive adequate attention.

The perceived neglect of the Niger Delta region has also resulted in severe socio-economic problems among which are high incidences of unemployment and insecurity. High rate of unemployment promotes high rate of insecurity; because a greater number of people in the Niger Delta region are unemployed and poor, they are likely to engage in militancy, illegal bunkering, kidnapping, hostage taking, conflicts and vandalism of public property and oil pipe lines. All these constitute the major indicators of security concern in the region.

In turn, insecurity perpetuates unemployment and poverty in the region. Of a truth, the alarming rate of insecurity in the region has stagnated economic activities, industrialisation and investment. Militancy, kidnapping and hostage taking have ensured that the region remain investment unfriendly. Thus, the relationship between unemployment and insecurity is two way. Insecurity of lives and properties remain high in the region because unemployment has not received the priority it deserves by the governments and oil companies. In other words, they are yet to identify unemployment as a threat to the security of the region in particular and the entire nation in general. Until we learn how to prioritise and threat unemployment as both a social and policy problem, insecurity will keep mounting high in the region. It is true that the Nigerian government has made appreciable effort to demilitarise the region since 2001, however, such efforts at promoting security in the region is not yielding desirable results. Thus, we suggest that the insecurity problem in the Niger Delta could be solved by adequately addressing the issue of unemployment especially among the youths. The Niger Delta people particularly the youths need more employment to at least dissipate their energies constructively.

The government should adequately and more vigorously pursue job creation and infrastructural development in the region. A situation whereby majority of the teeming population of the Niger Delta wallow in poverty and suffers unemployment will inevitably push most of them into activities that would make the region insecure. On the other hand, lack of

infrastructural development (especially, inadequacy of power) has ensured that unemployment remains a high profile issue in the region as most companies operate below capacity, thus compounding the unemployment situation in the region. The government alone cannot undertake job creation and infrastructural development in the region. The oil multinationals that operate businesses in the region should also prioritise job creation and infrastructural development as a major component of their corporate social responsibility.

Small scale enterprises have the potential for creating employment opportunities in the region. They should be adequately assisted through the provision of credit, the granting of tax exemptions, the provision of incentives for enterprising behaviours and relaxation of legislations hampering the creation of new enterprises. In the foregoing direction, the promotion of employment oriented industries will generate multiplier effect which could be captured within the economy and which would improve the security situation in the Niger Delta region in particular and the country in general (Eminuc, 2005).

The oil multinationals operating in Niger Delta should execute their corporate social responsibilities dutifully. They should prioritise the welfare of the communities in which they operate by providing infrastructural facilities, to minimizing environmental pollution and degradation, providing educational institutions or scholarships for the youths, and empowering the people economically, among other things. In so doing, the oil multinationals shall contribute to the stability and security of the region.

Good governance should be promoted in the region as a sure way for achieving sustainable development and security in the region. It can only take government with qualities of dedication, probity, accountability and transparency to empower the people of Niger Delta and thus ensure safety and security in the region.

The amnesty programme initiated by the federal government of Nigeria is a commendable attempt to address the unemployment and insecurity problems in the Niger Delta region. It has taken some militants who embraced it out of the creek to be trained in some desirable skills. In fact,

some of the ex-militants have been gainfully absorbed or employed by some industries within and outside Nigeria. However, it is pertinent to note that all the militants did not accept the amnesty programme, and they are still in the creek and on streets perpetuating evils. Also, the programme only focused on militants, without attending to the employment needs of majority of youths who are not militants. If the federal government can come up with programmes that can effectively tackle youth unemployment, insecurity will definitely be reduced drastically.

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