

13 YEARS OF THE AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS IMPACT ON THE NIGER DELTA REGION

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Abstract

The study is aimed at assessing the impact of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta Region over the 13 years period. The historical method of data collection involving a systematic and critical analysis of secondary data was adopted for the study. The findings indicated amongst other things that while the amnesty programme has succeeded in reducing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta Region, the general state of underdevelopment, environmental degradation, poor infrastructure, lack of sustainable employment still constitute visible features of the Niger Delta Region. The study further noted that the amnesty programme has been inundated by corruption, political manipulation/interference, poor monitoring and evaluation of the programme, delay in payment of stipends to ex combatants, lack of meaningful economic engagement activities for trained ex militants amongst others. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were outlined: there is need for transparency in the implementation of the programme, proper monitoring and evaluation of the programme, proper engagement in meaningful economic activities should also be made a priority. Furthermore, focus should be given to agricultural entrepreneurship and local communities should work with the Amnesty Programme to determine their unique development needs and objectives.

Keywords: *Amnesty Programme, Presidential Amnesty Programme, Disarmament, Rehabilitation, State Capture, Development.*

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1. Introduction

Due to a number of issues, including environmental deterioration, poverty, and lack of access to fundamental social services, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has long been plagued by conflicts and instability (Ikenga and Agah, 2020). As a result, militant organizations that have waged an armed conflict against the Nigerian government and regional multinational oil

companies have emerged. Several efforts have been made to quell the grievances and tensions that have been a constant feature in the region (See Ikenga, Edo and Ighoshemu, 2022). One of such effort is President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua amnesty programme for militants in the Niger Delta which was introduced in 2009 in an effort to address the root causes of the insurgency in the area (Ekeh, 2017). The programme's objective was to provide former militants with training, education, and employment prospects to help their transition from a life of armed conflict to normal life. In response to years of turmoil in the Niger Delta, where militant groups had attacked oil facilities, abducted foreign workers, and engaged in other violent behaviours, the amnesty programme was implemented (Idada, 2016). With oil production hampered, local residents uprooted, and the ecosystem harmed by pollution and oil spills, the conflict had taken a terrible toll on the area.

Militants who willingly gave up their weapons and decided to stop using violence were qualified for a number of incentives under the Amnesty Programme, including a monthly stipend, training in entrepreneurship and vocational skills, and educational opportunities (Ogbemi, 2018 & Ikenga, 2012). The initiative also included provisions for the improvement of the region's infrastructure and social services, as well as the reintegration of former militants into their communities. The Amnesty Programme was initially successful in reducing violence in the Niger Delta, with many former militants taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the programme to start life anew. However, some critics have argued that the programme fell short of delivering on some of its promises, such as the development of infrastructure and social services, and did not go far enough in tackling the core causes of the violence in the region, such as inequality and environmental degradation. Notwithstanding these concerns, Nigeria's efforts to solve the problems in the Niger Delta region continue to include the amnesty Programme as a key component (Alagboso & Nwankwo, 2019). It has helped to lessen violence and encourage development in the area by providing a framework for tackling the intricate and linked problems that are the root of the conflict in the region. But, much more effort has to be done to address the conflict's root causes and ensure that the people of the region have a peaceful and sustainable future.

Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been marred by violent conflicts and instability for several decades, largely due to the activities of militant groups in the region as a result of exploitation by oil multinationals and the Nigerian State (Agah and Ikenga, 2007). These oil

companies in collaboration with the Nigerian government have acted in total disregard to the many environmental laws regulating oil exploratory activities in the region (Edo et al, 2022, 2023). Consequently, the region has over the years witnessed the emergence of non- state actors or militant groups who in expressing their grievances have engaged in a variety of criminal activities, including oil theft, piracy, and kidnappings, and have frequently clashed with government forces in the area (Eze, 2021). The Nigerian government has responded to this situation in a number of ways, including the implementation of the Amnesty Programme. The Amnesty Programme for militants in the Niger Delta region was initiated by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2009 as an attempt to address the long-standing conflict between the Nigerian government and armed groups in the region. While the programme was intended to be a solution to the problems facing the region, there are several significant challenges and issues with its implementation that have limited its success. One of the biggest problem with the Amnesty Programme is its inadequate implementation (Asuni & Ukah, 2020). Despite the government's success in disarming many militants, there have been several instances of militants resuming hostilities. Others claim that the programme was poorly executed and failed to address the conflict's fundamental roots. Many claims of corruption in the execution of the Amnesty Programme have also been made. There have been allegations of programme participants, including contractors and officials, embezzling funds, diverting resources, and failing to account for programme-allocated resources. Another significant obstacle to the successful implementation of the Amnesty programme in the words of Ibaba, (2018) has been political involvement. Politicians have occasionally used the programme for their own political advantage or advancement, which has hampered the programme's effectiveness, instead of acting in the region's best interests. Although the Niger Delta region was supposed to benefit from the Amnesty programme's prospects for growth, the implementation hasn't produced the desired outcomes. The fundamental causes of violence and insecurity in Nigeria and specifically in the Niger Delta region continue to be unemployment, poverty, and lack of basic amenities, (see, Ikenga, and Agah, 2020) which have not been sufficiently addressed by the programme There have also been tales of unhappiness among ex-militants who have given up their weapons and disarmed themselves, blaming bad living conditions and lack of proper government support. The government's pledge to give education, training, and employment, which were the main justification for their involvement in the programme, has allegedly been criticized by some of these militants. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined the impact of the Amnesty Programme over the period of 13 years of its implementations in the Niger Delta Region

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to do an assessment of the impact of the amnesty programme over the period of 13 years of its implementation, while the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the implementation structure of the amnesty programme
2. Identify and discuss the various challenges that confronts the effective implementation of the programme's objectives
3. Identify and proffer solutions to the plethora of challenges confronting the implementation of the programme and the entire developmental issues around the Niger Delta Region

2. Assessment of the implementation structure of the Amnesty Programme

A protracted struggle between numerous militant groups, the Nigerian government, and foreign oil companies present in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has an impact on the area. The Nigerian government has ran a number of amnesty initiatives throughout the years in an effort to end the conflicts in the region. The late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua started the current amnesty programme, known as the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), in 2009. Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) of former combatants is one of the PAP's four stages (Igbuzor, 2017). A management team, a governing board, and numerous departments are all included in the PAP's organizational structure and are in charge of carrying out the programme's many elements. The management team is in charge of daily operations, while the governing board is in charge of policy development and monitoring. In exchange for amnesty and job training, the programme's DDRR component collects weapons and ammunition from former militants. Together with schooling and counselling services, the rehabilitation component also involves training in a variety of skills and professions. Ex-militants are placed in work or self-employment options as part of the reintegration process.

Presidential Amnesty Programme Office: The PAP has the following responsibilities: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-militants: One of the primary responsibilities of the PAP is to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate ex-militants into society. The PAP provides training and education for ex-militants, as well as job placement and

entrepreneurial opportunities. This process is aimed at facilitating the reintegration of ex-militants into the community as productive and law-abiding citizens (Isichei & Salihu, 2015).

Rehabilitation of Communities: The PAP is also in charge of rebuilding the Niger Delta villages that have been harmed by the region's hostilities. Infrastructure like schools, hospitals, roads, and clean water supply are all included in this. To help raise the standard of living of the populace in the area, the PAP also encourages the growth of agriculture, fishing, and other revenue-generating industries (Ofoegbu & Nwakanma, 2019).

Conflict Resolution: In the Niger Delta, the Presidential Amnesty Programme is essential in resolving disputes between many ethnic communities and groups. To encourage peaceful cohabitation and stop further violence, the initiative collaborates with a range of stakeholders, including community leaders, traditional leaders, and government representatives (Ofoegbu, & Nwakanma, 2019).

Environmental Restoration: The Niger Delta's environmental deterioration brought by oil exploration and extraction falls under the purview of the PAP. To ensure that the environment is safeguarded and repaired for future generations, the programme supports the remediation of polluted areas, the use of environmental best practices, and the promotion of sustainable development methods.

Empowerment of Women: The PAP is dedicated to advancing women's emancipation in the Niger Delta. To ensure that women have equal opportunity to thrive and contribute to the growth of their communities, the programme offers education and training to them as well as support for their economic activities. A scholarship programme for former militants and their dependents to attend universities and other higher education institutions is also part of the PAP (Ofoegbu, & Nwakanma, 2019). The programme also pays the ex-militants stipends during the periods of rehabilitation and reintegration. The slow rate of implementation, problems with funding, and corruption have all hindered the PAP's implementation. Yet, the programme has helped to significantly reduce violence and improve the Niger Delta's general security condition. In an effort to address this conflict and bring about lasting peace, the Nigerian government, under the leadership of the ruling party then, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), implemented a four-stage approach known as Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) for ex-militants in the Niger Delta region. This approach was later modified by the current ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2015. This section

will provide an overview of how the PAP implemented the DDRR approach in the Niger Delta region, looking at each stage in turn.

Disarmament: Disarmament is the first phase of the DDRR strategy. Here, firearms owned by armed groups in the Niger Delta region are gathered and destroyed. The PAP began a disarmament drive in 2009 to accomplish this goal, which included granting amnesty to militants who turned in their weapons and abandoned violence (Akpan & Isangedighi, 2016). The goal of this effort was to persuade militants to lay down their arms in exchange for the assurance of legal immunity and a number of social and economic advantages. Many militants welcomed the amnesty programme because they regarded it as a chance to leave the bloodshed and unpredictability of their existence as armed combatants. Several militants gave up their weapons as a result, and the disarmament stage of the DDRR approach.

A number of methods were used to carry out the disarmament process, including the deployment of weapons collecting centres where militants may hand in their weapons and obtain the benefits of an amnesty (Amadi, 2018). In order to ensure the safe and orderly collection of weapons, the collection locations were manned by a combination of government security officers, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders. The DDRR approach's disarmament phase, which collected and destroyed thousands of weapons, was generally successful. As it marked a large decrease in the amount of firepower accessible to militant organizations, this was viewed as a significant victory in the attempts to bring peace to the Niger Delta region.

Demobilization: Demobilization is the second phase of the DDRR strategy. This entails the official dissolution of armed organizations and the reintegration of former combatants into society. This included offering former militants in the Niger Delta region a variety of support services, such as healthcare, education, and vocational training (Azaiki & Esegbue, 2017). The PAP established a variety of demobilization facilities where former militants may receive assistance and instruction. These facilities were manned by a variety of experts, such as psychologists, social workers, and career trainers, who collaborated to offer comprehensive approaches to demobilization. Ex-militants were also given financial assistance by the PAP in order to start their own enterprises or improve their education (Azaiki & Esegbue, 2017). This assistance was deemed essential since it helped to ensure that ex-militants had a stable source of income, which decreased the likelihood that they would resort to violence again. Overall, the DDRR's demobilization phase was successful in giving former militants the knowledge and

assistance they needed to reintegrate into society. In the quest to establish long-term peace in the Niger Delta region, this was regarded as a great accomplishment.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation is the third phase of the DDRR strategy. In order to assist ex-militants in reintegrating into their communities, this entails offering them a variety of social and economic benefits. Beneficiaries received education and training under the PAP's Rehabilitation component. Those who lacked formal schooling were to receive technical and vocational training to improve their employability and entrepreneurial skills in addition to basic literacy and numeracy skills (Igwe & Eke, 2019). The programme also offered counselling and other psychosocial support services to assist beneficiaries in overcoming the trauma and shame connected to their prior involvement in hostilities

Reintegration: The PAP's Reintegration component sought to reintegrate beneficiaries into society and offer them stable means of subsistence. Beneficiaries who wished to establish their own enterprises were given start-up money, assistance with company creation, and mentoring by the programme. Also, the programme gave beneficiaries job chances if they opted to work for well-known companies or organizations (Omoju & Obayori, 2018).

Ultimately, a number of collaborations across the public, commercial, and non-profit sectors were used to implement the PAP's Rehabilitation and Reintegration components. Beneficiaries received a variety of educational, training, and economic empowerment services from the programme, which also assisted in lowering the rate of crime and violence in the area. The programme's implementation, meanwhile, wasn't without its difficulties. Beneficiaries' selection and identification, as well as the administration of monies and resources, were both problematic (Omoju & Obayori, 2018). Other beneficiaries have criticized the programme's lack of accountability and transparency, as well as its delayed implementation. These challenges highlight the need for more effective and efficient implementation strategies in future programmes.

3. Theoretical Framework

The influence of the Amnesty programme over a 13-year period was examined using the state capture hypothesis. According to the state capture idea, a small number of people or groups can have an outsized influence over the state and its institutions, frequently to their own advantage and at the expense of the general populace. This hypothesis is particularly applicable to Nigeria's Niger Delta region, which is one of the least developed areas while having some

of the nation's largest natural resources. The analysis that follows gives a thorough explanation of how the state capture theory contributes to the understanding of the origin, character, and state of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region.

Susan Rose-Ackerman is a renowned expert in the study of corruption in government. According to her, state capture happens when a select few people or organizations are able to influence crucial government decision-making procedures in order to pursue their own agendas. Rothstein is a political scientist who has conducted in-depth study on state capture and corruption. State capture, according to his argument, is a widespread issue that happens when influential parties are able to utilize their authority to change the law to their advantage. Daniel Kaufmann is a development economist who has researched in corruption and leadership in several nations. According to him, state capture is a type of grand corruption in which influential groups use the government to further their own goals. Political scientist Alina Mungiu-Pippidi has specialized in the functions of institutions in government. She contends that state capture is a sign of weak institutions because it occurs when the state is powerless to stop strong interests from capturing its institutions. Ultimately, the state capture theory's proponents contend that it is a major issue that threatens democratic governance and produces a system in which a few very strong interests can direct policy and resource allocation for their own gain. They contend that building institutions and enhancing openness and accountability are key to countering state capture.

Relevance of the theory to the study

With enormous oil reserves and a wealth of other natural resources, the Niger Delta Area is one of Nigeria's most resource-rich regions. But the area has long struggled with underdevelopment, poverty, and social upheavals. The Niger Delta Region's underdevelopment can be explained in terms of its causes, characteristics, and current situation using the state capture hypothesis. According to the state capture theory, influential people, organizations, or corporations appropriate state institutions and assets for their own benefit at the expense of the general welfare of society. State capture, as used in the context of the Niger Delta, is the process through which a small number of wealthy elites and multinational corporations come to control the state's institutions and resources.

These actors have shaped legislation, extracted resources, and managed the distribution of benefits in the area using their influence and authority. State capture theory emphasizes the

role of small elite in dominating the state and its institutions for their own profit, which helps to explain the causes of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. This elite group consists of politicians, officials, and businessmen who have exploited the region's natural resources, mainly oil, at the expense of the general populace. They have achieved this by establishing a patronage system in which they grant access to public resources, such as contracts and jobs, in return for allegiance and support. This system has supported a corrupt culture in the region.

State capture theory emphasizes the involvement of outside influences in increasing the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region in addition to the role of the elite. For instance, international oil companies have contributed significantly to the region's resource exploitation while ignoring the demands and interests of the local populace. They have also contributed to the region's environmental degradation, which has had a terrible impact on the health and way of life of the local populace. The British government issued oil exploration permits to foreign firms during the colonial era, which is when state capture in the Niger Delta began. This system of awarding licenses to foreign businesses, which the Nigerian state inherited, has allowed multinational firms to dominate the oil industry. These businesses have influenced government decisions and policies in their favour by using their financial clout. For instance, while local communities have not benefited from the oil resources, global firms have been able to win tax exemptions and other government incentives.

Corruption, violence, and environmental damage have been hallmarks of state capture in the Niger Delta. The elites that run the oil business have employed coercion and threats against public servants in order to win lucrative contracts and quell criticisms. The bulk of the population now lives in poverty as a result of the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small number of people. The extraction of oil resources has also resulted in serious environmental degradation, which has an impact on local residents' health and way of life. State capture's after-effects are to blame for the Niger Delta's current underdevelopment. Resources are distributed unevenly, local communities are marginalized, and there are few chances for economic growth as a result of the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small number of elites. Due to teenage unemployment and the growth of militant groups calling for greater benefits from the oil business, this has led to a cycle of poverty and social unrest. Local communities have been uprooted as a result of the environmental damage brought on by oil extraction, as well as the loss of agricultural lands and the destruction of natural habitats.

In conclusion, state capture theory provides a useful framework to understand the causes, nature, and state of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta Region. The control of the state's resources and institutions by powerful elites and multinational corporations has led to corruption, violence, and environmental degradation. The consequences of state capture have resulted in a cycle of poverty and social unrests, with limited economic opportunities and unequal distribution of resources.

4. Challenges that confronted the effective implementation of the Amnesty Programme

Issues of Transparency: As was clearly stated above, the Nigerian government initiated the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta region in 2009 to address the area's long-standing problems with violence and insecurity. Former militants who had engaged in armed combats with the Nigerian government and nearby oil firms were granted amnesty as a result of the initiative. The programme's objectives were to disarm the militants, give them education and job training, and establish lasting peace in the area. Nonetheless, according to Agbibo (2020), there have been a number of difficulties with the programme's implementation, including problems with transparency. Below are some instances of documented transparency problems that have affected the Niger Delta region's amnesty programme implementation.

Mismanagement of funds: There have been numerous complaints of money intended for the amnesty programme being mismanaged. The misappropriation of monies intended for the amnesty programme by government officials was one of the most well-known corruption scandals. For instance, in 2018, the Nigerian government allegedly mismanaged funds intended for the amnesty programme and recovered \$151 million and N8 billion from the bank accounts of Diezani Alison-Madueke, a former minister of petroleum resources. According to Akinbobola & Amadi (2018), the money was misappropriated for personal purposes and did not help the Niger Delta region's residents. The awarding of inflated contracts to contractors who failed to complete the tasks they were given was another corruption instance that had an impact on the amnesty programme. The Presidential Amnesty Office awarded contracts totalling N3.3 billion in 2012, and the Nigerian Senate opened an investigation into the matter. The contracts were given out to provide school supplies, uniforms, and other instructional resources to programme beneficiaries. According to Alagoa (2020), some of the contractors that received contracts were not registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, and others had no resources to complete the projects. The politicization of the amnesty programme also hindered its successful execution. Political figures in the Niger Delta were accused of abusing

the scheme to reward their partisans and backers and to ignore real needs, access to the programme's benefits for beneficiaries. The politics of the programme also resulted in the inclusion of fictitious recipients on the amnesty list, resulting in resource mismanagement and failure to meet the programme's goals. A committee was established by the House of Representatives in 2011 to look into the misuse of programme funding. Almost \$5 billion had been allocated to the initiative, but the committee found no proof that the money had been used appropriately. A number of officials were charged with misusing and embezzling money intended for the programme. For example, in 2016, the then-coordinator of the Amnesty Programme, Brigadier-General Paul Boroh (rtd), was accused of diverting N6 billion meant for the payment of stipends to beneficiaries of the programme (Edo & Onwumere, 2018). He was subsequently removed from his position.

Nepotism and favoritism: Inoni & Akpan (2017), also adduced that the selection of amnesty programme beneficiaries has been accused of nepotism and favouritism. According to allegations, the programme administrators allegedly gave preference to their friends and family at the expense of other eligible applicants. For instance, the Presidential Amnesty Office was charged in 2015 with giving a contract worth N3.6 billion to a businessman allegedly controlled by the family of the programme's former coordinator, Kingsley Kuku.

Poor monitoring and evaluation: Despite the programme's initial success, insufficient monitoring and evaluation have significantly reduced its efficacy. The insufficient tracking of recipients is one way that the monitoring and assessment have hampered the successful execution of the amnesty programme (Oyovwe-Tinuoye & Obi-Ani, 2021). Some beneficiaries have reportedly been added to the programme more than once, while others who have fulfilled the conditions have not. The programme's legitimacy has been damaged by the programme's inaccuracy in tracking beneficiaries, which has raised concerns that it is being used for personal advantage. The insufficient provision of training and employment possibilities for beneficiaries is another way that poor monitoring and evaluation have hindered the proper implementation of the amnesty programme. The programme was created to offer participants options for employment and skills development, but reports by Ukwai & Ndoma (2019), indicated that many participants have not gotten the promised training while others have been placed in low-wage positions with few opportunities for promotion. Beneficiaries have experienced frustration and disillusionment as a result.

Moreover, ineffective monitoring and assessment have hindered the amnesty programme's effective execution by making it challenging to gauge the programme's effects on the overall development of the Niger Delta region (Etuonovbe, 2019). The programme's long-term effects on the socio-economic development of the area are still unknown, despite some promising trends including a decline in violence and a rise in oil output. Thus, determining the programme's contributions to successful development outcomes is challenging given the current framework. According to Okoro (2017), the participants of the programme cannot be clearly monitored in terms of their growth. Some programme beneficiaries haven't received the required training and equipment for the professions they were supposed to take on after the programme due to lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation. For instance, in 2018, a few recipients of the amnesty programme protested in Abuja, claiming they had not received the help and training they needed to launch their own enterprises after the programme (Akinyoade, 2020).

Corruption: Delays in payments have also hampered the Niger Delta's economic growth. Some of the former militants who signed up for the amnesty programme had received training in a variety of trades, such as welding and fabrication, which may help the area prosper (Ekeh, 2017). Unfortunately, because of the payment delays, many of these people were unable to launch their own firms or take on new endeavours, which restrained regional economic growth. In conclusion, the implementation of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region has been significantly hampered by delayed payments. These have sparked protests, fostered mistrust and suspicion, and impeded the region's economic development.

Politicization of the programme: The government-sponsored amnesty programme aims to give ex-militants in Nigeria's Niger Delta alternatives for rehabilitation and reintegration. In response to the escalating conflict between the Nigerian government and armed groups in the area, the programme was started in 2009. Yet over time, the politicization of the amnesty programme has hurt how well it is put into practice. The selective nature of the programme is one way that the politicization of the amnesty policy has impacted its implementation. Instead of addressing the needs of the ex-militants who legitimately need the programme's support, politicians instead utilize it to reward their friends and allies. For instance, Seriake Dickson, the former governor of Bayelsa State, was charged with manipulating the Amnesty scheme to reward his political allies in 2016. Former militants from his local government area were

reportedly chosen for the programme; those from other regions were reportedly not included (Ekeh, 2017).

Lack of political will: The political will of the government will determine whether the amnesty initiative in the Niger Delta region is successful. Regrettably, some administrations have lacked the political will necessary to put the initiative into action. For instance, Prof. Charles Dokubo, the coordinator of the Amnesty programme, charged that the federal government lacked the political will to carry out the initiative in 2018. He said that the programme's implementation was being hampered by the government's insufficient funding for it (Ogbemi, 2018).

Interference by ex-militants: Ex-militant intervention in the amnesty programme's implementation is another problem. Some former militants have organized organizations that are not sanctioned by the state and are calling for increased rewards. The execution of the amnesty programme has been hampered by accusations against these groups of upsetting the peace in the area. For instance, in Delta State in 2017, a group of ex-militants obstructed the East-West Road's entry, causing the local economy to suffer (Alagboso & Nwankwo, 2019).

5. Assessment of the Impact of the Amnesty programme after 13 years of Implementation in the Niger Delta Region.

The Niger Delta region's launch of the amnesty programme wasn't made with addressing environmental deterioration in mind. It was established in 2009 as a means of resolving the protracted war between the Nigerian government and armed groups operating in the area who were vying for more authority over the oil wealth of the area. It is true, though, that the Niger Delta conflict has had considerable impact on the environment, a diverse ecology of wetlands, rivers, and mangrove forests can be found in the area, although it has been seriously damaged by pollution from gas flare-ups, oil spills, and other sources (Alagboso & Nwankwo, 2019). These environmental issues have had an impact on global climate change as well as the livelihoods of the populations in the area.

Although they have been few, the amnesty programme has had some favorable effects on the ecology in the area. As a result of the initiative, there has been less violence and unrest in the area, which has made it simpler for business and government to solve environmental issues. For instance, the government has been able to start a small number of clean up initiatives in areas afflicted by pollution and oil spills. The Niger Delta region faces numerous obstacles in the fight against environmental deterioration, and the amnesty programme has not been able

to adequately overcome these obstacles. The lack of coordination and cooperation among the numerous regional players is one of the main challenges. This comprises local communities, oil firms, and government organizations, all of which can have competing agendas and interests.

Lack of resources and experience to solve the environmental issues in the area is another significant problem. The Nigerian government and foreign donors have started various attempts to deal with these problems, but development has been uneven and slowly (Alagboso & Nwankwo, 2019). All things considered, it is obvious that the amnesty programme has not been adequate to address the intricate and entrenched environmental issues in the Niger Delta region. Although while the programme has had some positive effects, it was not explicitly created to combat environmental degradation, and the region still faces many complicated problems. Although the Amnesty Programme has made some progress in reducing violence and fostering economic growth in the area, it is not a panacea for the Niger Delta's many pressing issues.

Economic Development: The Niger Delta region was meant to benefit economically from the Amnesty Programme. Even while significant progress has been made, more work remains. The programme has drawn flak for putting too much emphasis on quick fixes rather than long-term sustainable growth. For instance, the government gave cash rewards to former militants without necessarily developing companies or occupations that would offer a long-term remedy for poverty and unemployment.

Corruption: One of the biggest problems in the Nigeria (Ejumudo and Ikenga, 2015) and the Niger Delta, in particular continues to be corruption. The Amnesty Programme has been under fire for serving as a tool for political favoritism and corruption, with some beneficiaries being non-intended ex-militants. Some beneficiaries have not received the training or instruction they were promised, and there have been accusations of money being diverted.

Environmental Degradation: The issue of environmental deterioration in the Niger Delta region has not been sufficiently addressed by the Amnesty Programme. The region's population's health and way of life are still impacted by environmental problems such as gas flare-ups, oil spills, and environmental degradation. The Amnesty Project offered some monetary compensation for environmental harm, but it did not deal with the root causes of the issues. In

conclusion, the Amnesty Programme has had some successes in reducing violence, providing education and training, and creating economic opportunities in the Niger Delta region.

For many years, the problem of bunkering, which entails the unlawful theft and selling of crude oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta, has been a major obstacle. Despite the fact that an amnesty programme was launched in 2009 to address the security issues in the area, such as oil bunkering. There have been some encouraging developments in the fight against oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region since the start of the amnesty programme. For instance, to stop illegal oil activities and boost security in the region, the government established the Joint Task Force (JTF). The government has also intensified its efforts to control the sale of crude oil by taking tough measures against illegal refineries and their operations (Eze, 2021).

In addition, the amnesty programme has given many former militants who had been involved in oil bunkering access to employment possibilities and training. They have been able to develop skills through the programme that will help them find legal employment. As a result, fewer people are engaged in oil bunkering activities, since many have opted for legal means of obtaining a living instead of engaging in these criminal activities. Oil bunkering nonetheless continues to be a serious issue in the Niger Delta despite these measures. There are still reports of clandestine refineries and oil theft in the region (Asuni & Ukah, 2020). Since the amnesty programme was not created to address the underlying causes of the problem, some opponents contend that it has not been effective in resolving the problem of oil bunkering. Instead, it was primarily concerned with arming terrorists and giving them alternate sources of income. In conclusion, the amnesty programme has made a dent in the problem of oil bunkering in the Niger Delta. The programme has provided education, training, and employment opportunities to ex-militants, which has contributed to a reduction in the number of people involved in illegal oil activities. However, there is still much work to be done in addressing the root causes of the problem and fully eradicating oil bunkering in the region.

6. Discussion of Findings

The Amnesty Programme in Nigeria was established in 2009 to promote peace and development in the Niger Delta region, which has suffered from years of environmental degradation, poverty, and conflict. The programme aimed to disarm militants who had been fighting against the Nigerian government and provide them with job training, education, and other forms of support to help them reintegrate into society. However, corruption has plagued

the programme, and this has undermined its effectiveness in promoting development in the region. Here are some specific cases and examples of how corruption has impacted negatively on the success of the amnesty programme: **Embezzlement of funds:** There have been many instances of money intended for the amnesty programme being embezzled. For instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) accused Paul Boroh, a former coordinator of the Amnesty Project, of defrauding the programme of N2.3 billion (\$6 million) through fraud and embezzlement in 2018. This kind of corruption causes the misappropriation of funds that may have been used to benefit former militants through support groups, job possibilities, and training. **Politicization of the programme:** Politicians have manipulated the amnesty programme to reward their allies and followers. As a result, those who are not qualified are included in the programme while those who are qualified are excluded. This indicates that the initiative is being used as a tool by politicians to hold onto power rather than serving its intended aim of assisting and training ex-militants. Stipends are expected to be paid to former militants who have completed training under the amnesty programme to enable them launch their own enterprises. Yet, there have been instances where these stipends have not been paid, leaving the ex-militants disappointed and short on cash to launch their enterprises. This is typically brought on by the misappropriation of money intended for stipends.

Failure to monitor progress is another factor identified as militating against the amnesty programme. The amnesty programme was launched to encourage regional development in the Niger Delta. Unfortunately, there has been a failure to keep track of how well the programme's trained ex-militants are doing. This makes it challenging to assess whether the programme is successful in fostering regional development. Corruption is to blame for this failure, as some officials may stand to gain from the absence of oversight. **Mismanagement of resources:** Resources intended for the support and training of former militants have been misused. For instance, there have been instances where training materials were auctioned off or used for private purposes. This type of corruption is detrimental to the programme, as it means that the ex-militants are not receiving the training and support they need to reintegrate into society.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the amnesty programme in fostering development in the Niger Delta region has been negatively impacted by corruption. It has resulted in money being diverted, the programme becoming politicized, stipends not being paid, no progress being tracked, and poor resource management. These problems have prevented the programme from

advancing the region's peace and development aims. So, in order to ensure that the programme's goals are met, the government must take action to eradicate corruption in it.

7. Conclusion

In order to address the decades-long violence in the area, which was marked by terrorist activities, kidnapping, and oil theft, the Amnesty Programme was launched in the Nigerian Niger Delta in 2009. By giving former militants job training, education, and financial support, the programme aimed to address the conflict's primary causes, which were mostly economic. It is obvious that the Amnesty Programme has had a considerable impact on the development of the Niger Delta region 13 years after it was established. The following are a few of the programme's major results: The approach has significantly reduced the level of violence and unrest in the Niger Delta. As a result, there is now a favourable atmosphere for growth and economic activity. More specifically, the Amnesty Programme has given financial aid in the form of scholarships and other forms to ex-militants, allowing them to access schools and develop skills that are pertinent to the requirements of the area. Roads, bridges, and healthcare facilities are just a few examples of the crucial infrastructure that the programme has helped build in the Niger Delta region. Thousands of former militants now have job options thanks to the programme, which has helped the area's poverty rate decline. By the payment of stipends and the decrease in oil production disruptions, the scheme has also helped the Nigerian government earn more money.

In general, it is clear that the Amnesty Programme has benefited the growth of the Niger Delta region. To address the conflict's root causes and assure the region's sustainable development, however, there is still more to be done. Addressing problems like environmental degradation, corruption, and political marginalization falls under this category.

Recommendations

Nigeria's Niger Delta region has long been marred by violence and underdevelopment. The Amnesty Programme, which aims to rehabilitate ex-militants and foster development in the area, is one programme that has been put in place to solve these problems. The following point-by-point suggestions might be taken into account to make sure that this initiative is successful in fostering growth in the Niger Delta Region:

Ensure Transparency: The Amnesty Programme should be open and honest in all of its transactions, including the methods used to choose recipients, how funding and resources are allocated, and how different development projects are carried out. Transparency can inspire active participation from the local communities and help to increase trust and confidence in the programme.

Prioritize Education and Skills Acquisition: Beneficiaries of the Amnesty Programme should place priority on their education and skill development. They will acquire the knowledge and abilities needed to establish independent living conditions. To give recipients access to high-quality education and training opportunities, the programme can collaborate with regional educational institutions and career training facilities.

Focus on Agriculture and Entrepreneurship: Large tracts of arable land and other resources are abundant in the Niger Delta region and can be used for agriculture. The Amnesty Programme can help participants establish profitable agribusinesses by providing them with land, seeds, fertilizers, and other essential inputs. By giving beneficiaries access to start-up financing and business development services, the programme can help promote entrepreneurship.

Partner with Local Communities: Local communities should work with the Amnesty Programme to determine their unique development needs and objectives. As a result, community ownership and sustainability will be encouraged and development programmes will be customized to the unique needs of the local communities.

Promote Peace and Security: The Niger Delta Region has a history of violent conflicts and unrests, which has hindered development. The Amnesty Programme should work to promote peace and security in the region, by engaging ex-militants, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders to promote a culture of peace and dialogue.

Monitor and Evaluate Progress: The Amnesty Programme should regularly monitor and evaluate its progress in promoting development in the Niger Delta Region. This will help to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities for improvement, and will enable the programme to adjust its strategies as necessary.

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