

## Amnesty Programme and Management of Niger-Delta Crises in Nigeria, 2009 – 2019

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### ABSTRACT

This paper include to examine whether military presence escalated the crisis in Niger Delta; determine whether the Niger Delta crisis increase the poverty level of the region and examine the amnesty program has helped in addressing the Niger Delta Crises. Three research questions and three hypotheses were posited to guide the study. The literature review was done under conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical reviews. The research used ex post facto research method for the study. The findings among others includes that: (i) the presence of military has contributed to the crises situation in the Niger Delta region; (ii) the crises has negatively affected the economy of the Niger-Delta region; (iii) amnesty program has helped in addressing some of the Niger Delt crises through training of the youths and empowerment but the programme has not sufficently eradicate crises in the region. Base on, the work recommends among others that; (i) the federal government should be responsive to the people of Niger Delta agitation. The governments should ensure equitable inclusiveness of the Niger Delta region in the core political positions and in the Federal Government's infrastructure delopment projects; (ii) the federal government should consider the of alternative dispute resolution rather than the use of military; (iii) the amnesty programme should be reconstructed and effectively managed towards ensuring a standing structure for peaceful coexistence. Peace structures should be made paramount, so that the poverty and illiteracy of the community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Geographically, the location of Niger Delta region of Nigeria is situated at the South-South geo-political zone. This region is known for its high level of crude oil reserve and production which is the heart of Nigeria economy. Ever since 1956 discoveries of oil in commercial quantity in Oloibiri which is currently situated in Bayelsa State, crude oil and its products have been the major sources of income for Nigerian government. Apart from the supposed benefit of this natural endowment, the South-South region has been noted for its growing conflict situation. The Niger-Delta regions comprises of six states from the South South zone namely Akwa Ibom, Delta , Bayelsa, Edo, Cross River, River. Ondo State from the South West zone, Imo and Abia state from the South East are also classified among the Niger Delta region. The oil rich region of the Niger Delta is inhabited by “numerous ethnic nationalities that are very heterogeneous, with over 40 ethnic groups who speak more than 250 mutually diverse languages and dialects” “Ethnic charges are intense but the people are bound together by a sense of grievance about the situation of their environment and a long battle for self determination and resource control” (Osaghae, 2011:23). The origin of the Niger Delta conflicts could be traced starting from the pre-colonial period (although not fully intensified), the region has confronted series of conflicting issues or violent attacks. “The conflicts have had their roots initially in the protest against injustice, and in recent years, they have been known to be in the quest for resource control” (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2016:12).

The violence situation grievously hit the oil sector and the oil industries in the Niger Delta region. Piracy and kidnapping were the order of the day. This lead to the Yar’adua/Jonathan administration’s creation of amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria to help in buttering these challenges. In 2009, success was recorded on the part of the presidential amnesty program which was accompanied with support and training of ex-militants in the Niger-Delta region. “Amnesty is conventionally used to express freedom and the time when prisoners can go free” (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). Therefore, the deal for amnesty for militants in Niger Delta was aimed towards elimination or reduction of violence in the oil-rich region. In this direction “President Umaru Yar’Adua administration offered an unconditional pardon and cash payments to rebels who agree to lay down their arms and assemble at screening centres over the next 60 days”. “the government is targeting up to 10,000 militants whose attacks in the six Niger Delta states have cost the country a third of its oil production”. This leads many militants grabbing the amnesty programme pointing out that they are equally tired of fighting and hoped to stop (Timiebi as cited in Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The amnesty program was created by the Yar’Adua administration in Nigeria to bring normality to the Niger Delta region for constructive conflict resolution and negotiations, “and to resolve the violence in the region and lay a solid proposal for the necessary disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the militants, largely due to lack of attention to the peculiar type of conflict in

the Niger Delta and the issues that gave rise to them". The inadequacy of the program to resolve the conflict is evident when one has a cursory look at the level of the ongoing confrontation between local communities in the Niger Delta region and the resident foreign oil companies. Also it can be seen in the conflict situation that existed between "the Niger Delta indigenes who take themselves as minorities being marginalized and oppressed and the majorities in the other parts of the country who do not produce oil, but reap the advantages of the revenue allocation" (Chigozie, 2013:12), the seeming success of amnesty program set by Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration in 2009 was alleged to be riddled with cases of corruption, plans to bombing attacks, and kidnappings in the region. This made amnesty more ineffective than it is possibly observed. For the past year, there has been increasing emergent of militant groups with different names. Some of the militant groups formed over the years includes: the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM), the Niger Delta Red Squad (NDRS), the Join Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF) and the Adakaboro Avengers (ABA).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. Did the military presence escalate the crisis in Niger Delta region?
2. Did Niger Delta Crisis increase the poverty level of the region and Nigeria at large?
3. In what way has amnesty program helped in addressing the Niger Delta Crisis?

The Niger Delta is located in the southern parts of Nigeria. The Niger Delta region was named after the River Niger which substantially surrounds the region. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2019), "River Niger is the third longest river in Africa after Nile and river Congo which stretches all the way from the Fouta Djallon Mountains and empties into the Gulf of Guinea via Africa's largest delta, the Niger Delta". The Niger Delta is "a large expanse delta swamps covering about 36,000 square km which stretches for about 320 kilometers along the coast of Gulf of Guinea and is bordered on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and the east by Cameroun". The landform of the region is characterized with river meander belts, oxbow lakes, intricate network of channels and levees which make the area a beauty to behold mostly when viewed from the air. The people of Niger Delta are friendly and they are mostly subsistence farmers, hunters, fishers and craftsmen. The Niger Delta people are easy going and welcome strangers with open arms.

The Niger Delta region which was initially refers to as "Oil River" during the British administration in Nigeria, because of the level of palm oil exportation from this region, was originally part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The main Niger Delta area are greatly inhabited by present day River state, Delta state and Bayelsa States. From 2000, the Nigerian government redefined the Niger-delta region to include the Abia, Cross River State, Akwa-Ibom, Edo, Imo and Ondo (Badmus, 2010; Idowu, 2012; Ministry of Niger Delta, 2015). The above should be separated and not to be confused with the south-

south zone; a geo-political zone which consists of Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta, and Rivers states. As presently defined, “the Niger Delta extends over an approximate area of 112,110 square kilometers which is equivalent to about 12% of Nigeria's surface area, with a population of over 31 million people, according to the Nigeria Population Commission, and is the most densely populated region in Nigeria” (NPC, 2015). The Niger Delta is diverse in every respect. The Niger Delta region contained more than 40 ethnic groups who has diverse language and cultural practices. The vegetation is “a tapestry of mangrove and coastal forest, fresh water swamp and tropical rainforests, derived savannah and montane, providing habitat where a plethora of diverse flora and fauna can thrive” also, “the climate varies from the hot equatorial forest type in the southern lowlands to the humid tropical in the northern highlands and the cool montane type in the Obudu plateau area of Cross River State” (Chigozie, 2013:65). The region, just like other part of Nigeria has two seasons which are the wet season which lasts from March to October and the dry season which last from October to March.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The violence situation grievously hit the oil sector and the oil industries in the Niger Delta region. Piracy and kidnapping were the order of the day. This lead to the Yar’adua/Jonathan administration’s creation of amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria to help in buttering these challenges. In 2009, success was recorded on the part of the presidential amnesty program which was accompanied with support and training of ex-militants in the Niger-Delta region. “Amnesty is conventionally used to express freedom and the time when prisoners can go free” (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). Therefore, the deal for amnesty for militants in Niger Delta was aimed towards elimination or reduction of violence in the oil-rich region. In this direction “President Umaru Yar'Adua administration offered an unconditional pardon and cash payments to rebels who agree to lay down their arms and assemble at screening centres over the next 60 days”. “the government is targeting up to 10,000 militants whose attacks in the six Niger Delta states have cost the country a third of its oil production”. This leads many militants grabbing the amnesty programme pointing out that they are equally tired of fighting and hoped to stop (Timiebi as cited in Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017).

### **The Origin and Nature of Niger Delta Conflict**

Scholars have put much effort into reviewing the origin and nature of Niger Delta conflicts. For instance, “the conflict in the Niger Delta region on a context of resistance politics which dates back to the period of the slave trade in the 16th century when productive youths were transported to the European plantations to work for the slave masters and develop their economies”. by the mid 1900, the Niger delta city status became the leading African exporter of palm oil following the stoppage of slave trade as this further entrenched European involvement in and not only upon African polities but economic nerves reign. The European buyers fixed the price of the product and did not allow indigenous producer to engage in direct exportation of theirs products,

also, the attempt by the Efik of Calabar in 1857 to ship palm oil directly to Europe by chartered ship thus by-passing the English middle-men and raising profit by 100% was blocked by the British Naval support. The Ijaw nation organised themselves and agitated on the ill treatment meted against them by the colonial administrators in 1950s. "This was so persuasive the Sir Henry Willink of the Colonial office in London came to head a commission appointed to inquire into the years of the minorities and the means of allaying them in 1958" (The Willink commission Report, 1958). "The situation persisted, filled oil was struck in Olofin in 1956 while commercial exportation began in 1958" (Anifowose, 2011:12).

The hope of the people for reprieve in the 1960's and 1970's met with a prick wall as the fiscal arrangements which existed during the First Republic based in 50 percent derivation formula way abolished by the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon". General Gowon had argued that he needed more money to execute the Nigerian civil war against the secessionist, Biafra Republic. However, at the end of the war in 1970, the fiscal arrangement was not revealed instead many obnoxious policies and legislature were enacted to alienate the people of the region from the management of the oil resources. The situation "culminated into violent attempts to forcibly assert regional autonomy for the Niger Delta region and by February 23, 1966, Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro, an ethnic minority Ijaw militant leader and his 59 man Niger Delta volunteer force (NDVF) engaged the Nigerian state in a Twelve Day Revolution in attempt to secede and establish a Niger Delta Republic with an eleven point declaration of independence" (Boro, 1982:13). Boro (1982:22) thought that "the resource from the region would be utilized for the well being of the people with their destiny in their own hands" Akinwale, 2010).

Years after "the hanging of the minority rights activist and environmentalist, conditions in the oilfields remained appalling. This coupled with the memory of the struggles of Isaac Boro in the 1960s, raised to a new level of intensity with the activities of ethnic minority resistance movements" From the late 1990s however, "there has been a very substantial escalation of violence across the Niger delta oil fields and a variety of Militia groups consequently got equipped with small and light weapons to fight the Government forces and the Multinational Corporations". (Shell Report, 2016).

### **Marginalisation/Resource Control Clamour**

The Niger Delta has remained greatly damaged and underdeveloped even the region has remain the heart of the Nigeria net income. Instead, "the region was defined by restiveness, militancy, high youth unemployment, absence of basic infrastructure, environmental pollution, abject poverty, and sociopolitical instability" (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Anele & Omoro, 2012; Obi, 2010, Paki & Ebienu, 2011). The region is a textbook case of resource curse (Paki & Ebienu 2011). Okuyade (2011: 23) noted that "people from the region have seen contemporary cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Kano developed and flourished while Port Harcourt, Owerri, and Warri stagnated and deteriorated". The alarming neglecting attitude and failure by previous governments to contain

the problems of the Niger Delta question has greatly led to environmental degradation, untold hardships for Niger Deltans and negative publicity for the Nigerian nation (Okuyade, 2011). Ubhenin (2013:12) said that “without peace, there can be no development and without justice, there could be no peace, which implies that justice is the only foundation on which sustainable development can be built on in the Niger Delta”. Records has shown that prior to the independence of Nigeria, the Nigeria Delta has been crying on the poverty situation of the region. (Aaron, 2015; Fawole & Ukeje, 2005; Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012; Okumu & Ikelegbe, 2010; Ukeje & Adebani, 2007).

### **The Niger Delta Militancy: Cost to Sector, Region, and Country**

Any scale of crises, wars and violent conflict situations always ends in unintended impacts which could be referred to as collateral damages in military parlance. The negative effect on the environment, the residents or passersby, the political, social and economic structure are mostly “unforeseen and hence not fully taken into consideration at the planning stages of the conflict” (Johnson, 2016:22). The Niger Delta militancy was no exception to this rule. The Niger Delta crises has local, national and international impact. “Some of these impacts persist till today and have evolved from problems to be solved to polarities to be managed” (Johnson, 2016). The key unintended consequence of the militancy remains the environmental pollution of the Niger Delta ecosystem and environment.

The UNEP Report (2013) estimated that “it would take at least 30 years to both clean up and restore the Niger Delta, at a cost of more than US\$2 billion and it can be safely concluded that the biggest loser from the Niger Delta militancy is the Niger Delta environment, the rural communities who will continue to bear the brunt of the environmental pollution and social costs”. The negative effect of Niger Delta environmental pollution has not been able to be quantified as a result of the increasing level of militancy in the area still add more pollution to the already existed polluted environment. It is expected that “the present generation of Niger Deltans may not be able to pay off the huge cost of cleaning up and possibly restoring the environment to its pre-militancy grandeur”. By creating the environment that motivated and sustained the militancy, “the Nigerian political leadership compromised the ability of future generations of Niger Deltans to enjoy the benefits of a safe and clean environment”.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2021) defined “extortion as ransom illegally demanded to influence business decisions or to obtain commercial advantage”. The act of kidnapping, extortion or any organized criminal crime was little or unheard of in Nigeria before the Niger Delta militancy (Ngwama, 2014; Okoli & Agada, 2014). Ngwama (2014) stated that “the first recorded act of kidnapping for ransom took place in 2006”. Ngwama (2014) and Adibe (2010) argued that “the combination of an ill equipped, poorly trained, highly unmotivated, inefficient and corrupt Police Force, collusion between kidnapers and politicians, and the prevailing belief system in police circles that a kidnap case is solved once the victim is released (after the victim

escape or after ransom is paid) have contributed in making the Niger Delta and surrounding states the kidnapper's playground" (Ngwama, 2014:133). He contended that "little or nothing is done to apprehend kidnappers or bring them to justice, thereby emboldening them to operate with impunity and this scourge led to the pervading sense of insecurity in the region and causing emotional and psychological trauma on all residents" (Nwogwugwu, Olatunji & Egwuonwu, 2015).

The level of insecurity and fear has negatively contributed to the psychological and emotional trauma for all in the region. More residents and citizens cannot go about their normal duties without fear, freely. "Companies that remain due to the nature of their operations have been forced by necessity to introduce draconian security measure that further limits personal freedom and further increases the cost of doing business in the region, and there is a significant reduction in economic activities with attendant loss of employment opportunities has also led to a fall in government revenue". Also the increased relocation of companies and business operation from the area led to a depression on the real estate sector of the region. The militancy introduced kidnapping to the region. "Kidnapping is responsible for the pervading sense of insecurity across the Niger Delta, and notably, high profile kidnappings in the region have been well documented in literature" (Ajiboye & Duru, 2016; Canada, n.d; Ezeibe & Eze, 2012; Ngwama, 2014; Usman, 2015). The major negative effect of the kidnapping for ransom is the imposition of fear to the residents, escalation of unemployment, stifling of economic activities driving many in the region into poverty. Park and Ebienfa (2011) stated that:

*The stated aim of the militancy was to stop or significantly reduce oil and gas production from the region. The rationale was that without degrading the oil production capacity, the government will not come to the negotiating table to discuss the Niger Delta challenge. Coordinated attack on strategic oil and gas producing and processing infrastructure in the region brought the upstream petroleum sector to its knees. At the peak of the militancy, more than 85% of SPDC's daily production capacity was shut. The company saw its crude oil production decline from one million barrels to one hundred and fifty thousand barrels per day. Nigeria's daily crude oil output declined from about 2.7 million barrels per day to 1 million barrel per day. Illegal oil bunkering activities further reduced the output by an average of 200000 barrels daily with devastating consequences for the environment (Paki & Ebienfa, 2011).*

### **The Niger Delta Amnesty**

The launching of the amnesty policy was aimed to serve as a last-ditch peace-building initiative with intent to arresting and subduing the escalating violence in the Niger Delta (Aghedo, 2012; Etemike, 2012; Egwemi, 2010; Nwagboso, 2012; Ubhenin, 2013). "If well implemented, this peace-building strategy will prevent the escalation and recurrence of armed conflicts" (Aghedo, 2012; Hassan, 2009).

The aim of the amnesty was to eradicate the conditions that helped in formulation of militancy in the region. (Ikelegbe, 2010). It follows therefore that

“the success or failure of the amnesty program will be a function of the extent to which it leads to the cessation of the militancy and address the root causes of the militancy, among other things, the amnesty initiative was recognition by government that there is no military solution to the Niger Delta militancy, that the use of force alone cannot deliver lasting peace and security to the region”. The amnesty programme was formulated posing the threat of high cost of the militancy on the Nigerian environment, economy and national reputation. Finally, “the amnesty is more importantly an admission, by the government, of the failure of past resolution strategies” (Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012; Thei, 3013). Also, the formulation and signing of the amnesty proclamation by the President Yar Adua administration resulted in “complete cessation of violence in the region”. (Agbiboa, 2014; Aghedo, 2012; Egwemi, 2010; Nwagboso, 2012; Ogege, 2011; Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012). “A state of uneasy peace prevailed across the region as actors waited to see the government’s next move” (Moruku, 2012). The Asari Dokubo and his group loyalists (NDPVF), rejected out rightly the amnesty offer and they argued that “demanding, campaigning and advocating for social and environmental justice for the Niger Delta people, using the only viable means available to them, does not amount to the commission of a crime against the federal government” (Moruku, 2012). The group further argued that “amnesty is null and void since its member have neither been tried no found guilty of any crime by any court of law in the country”. The loyalist position causes uncertainty about the survival and sustainability of the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region. Nevertheless, as time goes on, Asari and his group subsequently came on board and agreed with the federal government. The newly introduced amnesty programme accomplished the disarmament and demobilization targets very early. “Militants became ex-militants upon surrendering their weapons and registering at the disarmament centres” (Nwagboso, 2012; Ogege, 2011; Ojeleye, 2011; Oluwaniyi, 2011). Siollun, (2008: 23) noted that “the ex-militants were then sent to vocational institutions locally and internationally to acquire skills that will help fast track their integration into civil society, while the surrendered weapons were secured by relevant government agencies to ensure they never get into the wrong hands or used again to commit acts of violence”.

The reintegration process serves as the last and an ongoing phase of the DDR model (Aghedo, 2012; Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012). “The sustenance of short and medium term post-militancy peace and security depended very much on the successful implementation of the reintegration component of the DDR model, also the reintegration component of the amnesty policy is ensuring that ex-militants are rehabilitated and provided with alternate skills and means of livelihood that makes relapse into militancy unappealing”. Oluduro & Oluduro, (2012) noted that “recognizing that ex-militants are a security risk if their need, interests, concerns, and expectations are not taken care of, the government structured the amnesty program to forestall resurgence of militancy”. With this, some multimillion pipeline and waterways surveillance contracts were awarded to ex-militant leaders (Ibekwe, 2015; Nwabughio, 2015; Onukwugh & Okhomina, 2015). This is amounted to getting “the dog to guard a piece of

juicy bone, a scenario that created dilemma for all stakeholders that empowered the ex-militant leaders and created a sort of hostage situation". The ex-militant warlords can easily resort to violence if the massive economic resource they now control is threatened in any way. Some commentators argue that "the special treatment given to the ex-militants was a wrong precedent. They contended that it sent the unintended message to the public that violence pays" (Aghedo, 2014; Aghedo & Osumah, 2014; Eke, 2014; El-Rufai, 2012).

### **Eco-Violence Theory**

This theory is classified to as environmental conflict theory that, explains how violent conflict can be triggered by scarcity of resources as a result of exploitation of natural resources of a particular society without reciprocation or compensation. The eco-violence theory was propounded by Homer-Dixon (1999) while trying to describe "the causal relationship between natural resource endowment and the outbreak of violent conflict" (Mildner et al, 2011:23). To him, "decrease in the quantity and quality of renewable resources act singly or in different combination to bring about increase in scarcity for definite population groups of vegetation, farmland, water, forests, etc, and this scarcity of ecological resources can lessen economic productivity, both for the larger regional and natural economies". Mildner et al. (2011) however, postulates that "the effected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands while decreases in wealth because of deprivation may lead to civil strife or violent conflict".

According to Ajaero et al. (2015), the cardinal argument of this eco-violence theory is that "declining availability of renewable natural resources, which results in competition over scarce resources engender violent conflict". Similarly, Annan (2006), states in the view of the above that "environmental degradation in forms such as desertification, resource depletion and demographic pressure exacerbates tensions and instability".

Eco-violence theory "effectively demonstrates that the causal relationships between the environment and societal unrest are considerably more complex than is widely presumed" (Kahl, 2006:121). All course that has to do with the environment the environment and scarcity in a society are recommended to use this theory. Eco-violence theory gives "a much better picture of how environmental concerns can produce frequently unmanageable civil wars and regional warfare".

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are posited to guide the research study:

1. Excessive military presence escalated the crisis in Niger Delta.
2. Niger Delta crisis increased the poverty level of the region and Nigeria at large.
3. Amnesty program have helped in addressing the Niger Delta Crisis.

### **Niger Delta Crisis and Nigerian Military Forces**

Politically, "Niger Delta consists of nine states out of thirty six states available in the country. This region occupies a surface area equivalent to 112,110 Sq.kms, which constitutes around 12% of Nigeria's territory. The main areas with high rate of crude oil are Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom. In 1956, "oil was discovered in this region and it became the mainstay of the national economy in 1970s. Traditionally, "farming, fishing and other agricultural works were basic means of survival for inhabitants of the region, but the discovery of oil resulted to severe environmental damage, which should normally draw the attention of Nigerian government".

Another contributing factor to this conflict is the method of allocating revenue. Base on UNDP report (2016), "there has been declination in the percentage of allocating oil revenue to the oil producing states such as 50 percent declined in 1970 to 20 percent between 1975 and 1979, and down to only 3 percent between 1992 and 1999". And during civilian government, "between the period of 1999 and 2011, the percentage was 13 percent. This politics of revenue allocation increases the rate of anger of Niger Delta's people agitating that Nigerian economy is surviving base on the natural resources available on their territory but they are receiving less from the benefits of these resources". They could not make a living from agriculture anymore due to the implication of oil exploration on their environment. "To make situation worse, the physical and social infrastructures are highly poor and underdeveloped.

Secondly, the reluctance of oil companies to admit responsibility and neglect the payment of compensations for causing environmental damages as well as refusing to employ people from these communities. The preferable measure taken by Nigerian government to respond to this crisis has been the deployment of military forces as a violent response to quell people's protest. The first success of these forces was the massacre of leaders of the first ethnic militia group known as MOSOP in Ogoni land, which led to the rise of another violent group known as Ijaw (the region's largest ethnic group) demanding for the same rights from federal government and this scenario has continued in this pattern.

### **Impact/Effects of Nigerian Military Operations in Niger Delta Crisis**

In order to analyze the role of Nigerian military forces in this conflict, there is a need to briefly examine different ways at which the Nigerian government has responded it. Before 1990, only insincerity and fake promises were responses of Federal government toward the development of Niger Delta and since this period, there were records of different adopted approaches. Firstly, industrial policies were formulated to ensure that oil companies engage in corporate social responsibilities such as; pollution control, helping Education Trust Fund (ETF) financially, creating a room for negotiation between oil companies and host communities and practice of quota system in staffing. Secondly, there was developmental commission at which different bodies were set to engage in developing the region such as Niger Delta Development Authority (NDDA), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Niger Delta development Board (NDDDB) and Oil Minerals Producing Area

Development Commission (OMPADEC). Another approach that can be considered as the third one has been the use of military forces. This is the main focus of this paper whereby a further attempt shall be made to analyze its implications in the region. This has to do with the use of Joint Military Task Force (JTF) to suppress militants' actions such as destruction of public (oil) facilities and taking of hostages. The final approach is amnesty whereby the Federal government granted amnesty to militant groups in order to surrender their ammunitions in 2009.

There were minimum level of success and achievements recorded from these adopted methods. For example, the industrial policy ensured the five major oil companies; Agip, Chevron-Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, Shell and Total to invest in corporate social responsibilities by providing schools, construction of jetties, water supply and many other developmental projects. Developmental approach also had some achievements for instance in 2006, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) started around 122 projects and commissioned 67 and 55 were almost completed. However, these approaches faced with different challenges that unable them to curtail many problems of the region. The long lasting and still prevailing approach is the use of military force in securing the region. In order to suppress the violent crisis, the Nigerian government militarized Niger Delta with the creation of a Joint Task Force (JTF) in August 2003 and as a result of this, Operation Restore Hope was launched in the same year. The JTF was formed with the composition of the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, Nigeria Police and State Security Service aiming at achieving a long-term peace settlement in the region. The primary tasks assigned to JTF were to arrest militant groups, to ensure a secure environment for social and economic activities of citizens and oil industries as well as restoring law and order in the society (JTF 2009).

### *Environment Security*

Every military operation is a threat to the environment. The natural environment in the region got worse not only because of oil exploration by oil companies but also as a result of military attacks during their different operations. "Operation Restore Hope" by JTFs for example used a coordinated land, water and aerial bombardment, bombing and many other military types of ammunition that eventually contributed to destruction of environment. Environmental degradation is one of the basic causes of this crisis and when the military operation had worsened the environment then it is questionable if peace or security would ever take place in this region and in Nigeria as a whole.

### *Economic Security*

Military operations in the region resulted to vandalization of many infrastructural facilities as it has been mentioned before. The destruction of pipeline and many oil facilities directly affect Nigerian economy considering the fact that crude oil is the back bone behind its economy. In addition, the deployment of soldiers for different missions necessitates the need for high level of finance to purchase ammunitions, their welfare and payment of their

salaries. This leads to the allocation of huge budget from the state pocket to finance these military operations. This crisis started as a result of poor economic condition and high rate of unemployed youth in the region. The security response of both government and oil companies also requires huge amount of money. In February 2016, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) attacked oil facilities owned by international oil companies (IOCs). In the same period, the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) owned by Nigerian state reportedly, spent N4.023 billion to repair 293 pipeline breaks (Ukeje C 2016, p.1). Military operations have increased the rate of insurgent attacks that are causing different havocs to Nigerian economic. In addition, throughout these various attacks of Nigerian armed forces under JTFs different operations, Shell Oil Company is said to have provided tens of millions of dollars to the JTF, the amount money that could go a long way in helping the Nigerian Economy.

### **Poverty Level in Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria**

The level of poverty in the Niger Delta region by statistics, are not the highest in Nigeria, nevertheless, poverty is not the only index that marks the level of disaffection amongst its inhabitants. The results of the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2015 which was the only year in which such analysis was conducted in Niger Delta region, shows that the region ranked higher than the national average. However, the spatial distribution of scores was uneven. The local governments that are heavily populated urban typically had high HDI scores while lot of local government areas that has oil facilities rated very low, especially in Bayelsa and Rivers States. General, close to three-quarters of Niger Delta local government areas were ranked lower than the national average.

### **Oil Spills and Challenges of Development in Niger Delta**

According to a June 2010 estimate, "up to 546 million gallons of oil or nearly the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez spill every year have poured into the ecosystems of the Niger Delta over 50 years of production. A total of 6,817 oil spills was recorded between 1976 and 2001 while only 70% of oil were recovered (UNDP 2006). "The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) noted another 2,405 spills between 2006 and mid-2010, with an increasing trend year-on-year: 252 in 2006, 598 in 2007, 927 in 2008 and 628 in 2009, but rising again in 2010. Consequently, these spillage negatively affects the vegetation, agricultural produce and public health of the Niger Deltans (EIA 2003). Oil spillage occurs for deferent reasons, and oil spillage control, mitigation and remediation have met a lot of challenges. The Nigerian government environmental regulations agencies are often poorly maintained. Some of the old oil pipelines are prone to corrosion and they have not been adequately replaced base on the company's standard to replace pipelines after every 15years of usage. According to Onukwugha et al (2014), "perverse economic incentives encourage communities to enlarge the size of spills or to bar pre-cleanup inspections in the hope of winning remediation contracts or large compensation payments". (UNEP 2011; LaPin 2011).

### **Impact of Amnesty Programme in Niger-Delta**

Some scholars have attributed success to the amnesty programme which was initiated by President Musa Ya'Adua Administration. They posited that the amnesty programme has positively impacted on the lives of the militants and the people of the Niger Delta. It is a known fact that "with the proclamation of the amnesty there seems to be relative peace and security have since returned to the region and the Federal Government has therefore met with the aim of restoring peace and safety as the nation's economy has return to normal".

Consequently, "at the height of the conflict in 2009, Nigeria crude production dropped from 2.2 million to 700,000 barrel per day and as a result of the post amnesty period, crude oil production increased from 1.9 to 2.4 million bpd in 2013 while in 2014 it also increased to 2.6 million and in 2015 it further rose to 2.7 million bpd" (Amaize, 2016:22). Also, with the "declaration and implementation of the amnesty package, ex-agitators who embraced the amnesty offer had since been disarmed, demobilized and are either undergoing training or have been trained in their respective training centre, and presently, it is evident that the Federal Government has so far enlisted 30,000 ex-fighters in the amnesty programme" (Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo & Okhomiya, 2014:21).

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Method of Data Collection**

In order to provide answers to the research questions. This study engages "documentary method" as the method of data collection used in this research study. This comprises of data or information relating to the research questions that were earlier documented.

#### **Method of Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, qualitative analysis is applied.. By utilizing quantitative approach, deduction argument was applied to articulate the quantum of data reviewed.

### **RESULTS**

The study found that the Operation HAKURI II which was the first major JMTF military operation established in 1999 aimed to counter operations of Niger Delta militants in Odi community. This operation resulted to a massive destruction of lives and property after two days of unstopped bombardment of Odi community. After operation Hakuri II, "Operation Pulo Shield" was also established in 2004 assigned with responsibilities of countering insurgency, illegal oil bunkering, piracy, kidnapping and taking of hostages. This operation was meant to cover nine states of the Niger Delta region (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers states). Following this operation, Operation Andoni and Operation Restore Hope were also created in different parts of the region using military tactics to secure the region (Itiri N.U 2015, p.53). This shows that historically, military forces have always been adopted toward resolving this crisis and their available successful records are those showing different human rights abuses, vandalization of infrastructures

and how militants have become more aggressive and adamant in their operations. Available sources made it known that, with the adoption of different military tactics and deployment of many military operations to the region, it has only deteriorated situation of things without any successful positive record.

Also, the finding outlined that military operations in Niger Delta has been accused of extrajudicial execution of innocent civilians, illegal imposition of curfew, rape, molestation and sexual harassment of women, torture, forced labour and large scale displacement. All these have increased the crises situation in the region. The study concurs with Onuoha (2014) who observed that excessive military presence and brutality are capable of imposing a new dimension of crises in any given area. Ojo (2010) also pointed out the military performed extrajudicial execution of innocent civilians which triggers more frustration and aggressiveness of the civilians, which may in turn cause guerilla warfare. Also, Ibemeh (2020) found out in his study that military must time escalate crises rather than quenching it, though the crises may come up in another dimension outside the original crises that brings in the military.

The second major finding which answered the question on whether Niger Delta Crisis increase the poverty level of the region and Nigeria at large, shows that the crises has negatively affected the economy of the Niger-Delta region. Crisis situation in Niger Delta has increased the poverty level of the region. This finding is in line with the reports of Human Development Index (2015) and the United Nations (2019). The studies pointed out that although the Niger Delta ranked higher than the national average on Human Development Index, however, the spatial distribution of scores was uneven. "Heavily populated urban LGAs typically had high HDI scores, while many LGAs with oil facilities rated very low, especially in Rivers and Bayelsa States and about three-quarters of Niger Delta LGAs ranked lower than the national average, confirming an uneven distribution in the quality of life". These findings are supported by another study showing that "one out of every four households in five key Niger Delta states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, and Rivers) belonged to the lowest welfare quintile, the core poor." These two studies indicate high levels of inequality within the region itself.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings above, it is concluded that military presence added to the conflict situation in Niger-Delta, and as such, other alternative dispute resolution method, just like the amnesty initiatives, should be adequately used in instead of military. The study further concludes that even though the amnesty programme has contributed towards a more peace situation in Niger-Delta, yet, it has not effectively yield to a fulfilled result as crises in Niger-Delta has not be sufficiently dealt with.

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. The federal government should give listening ears to the Niger Delta agitation and address its root cause . The government should ensure equitable inclusiveness of the Niger-Delta region in the core political

positions and in the Federal Government's infrastructure development projects.

2. The federal government should be always consider the use of alternative dispute resolution rather than the excessive use of military
3. The government should equally create a massive unemployment for the youths in the area and create social amenities for the companies and the people in the Niger Delta region.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research still has limitations so further research needs to be done on the topic "Amnesty Programme and Management of Niger-Delta Crises in Nigeria, 2009 - 2019."

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