

## **In Search of Lasting Calmness: How Sustainable is the Federal Government's Amnesty Program as a Peace Strategy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria?**

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### **Abstract**

The exploitation of natural resources and the associated marginalization of indigenous occupants of areas with such endowments continue to act as major driving forces for conflicts around the world, especially in Africa. In Nigeria's Niger Delta Region, the major triggers of resource-based violent conflicts have been the subject matter of many academics and policy analysts. With the introduction of several peace strategies especially the Federal Government of Nigeria's Amnesty Program notwithstanding, pockets of violent activities have generated questions as to the sustainability of the program. This study examines the sustainability of the Federal Government's Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta Region. The main objective is to provide empirical evaluation of the program in the light of its strategy to deliver peace to the region, not only in the short-term but also in the long-term. Consequently, relying on the philosophy of the relative deprivation theory, descriptive and Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical tools, the study has revealed that amnesty does not address the issues that have underpinned the genesis of violent agitations in the pre-amnesty era. As a result, this amnesty as a peace strategy is not sustainable. Hence, the inability to address issues such as adverse human development, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation and poverty among others strongly undermines the Amnesty program as a viable peace strategy. Given these findings, the study suggests a broad-based, multi-stakeholder approach that draws on private sector resources and competence in order to sustain the gains of the amnesty program if it is to bring about lasting peace in the region.

*Keywords:* violent agitation, federal government of Nigeria, amnesty program, sustainable peace strategy, Niger Delta Region.

### **Background**

The exploitation of natural resources and the associated marginalization of indigenous occupants of areas with such endowments continue to act as incentives for conflicts around the world, especially in Africa. Revenues from the exploitation of natural resources are not only used for sustaining armies but also for personal enrichment and building political support. As a result, they have become obstacles to peace as leaders of armed groups involved in exploitation are unwilling to give up control over these resources. Even when conflict gives way to a fragile peace,

as has occurred with the Federal Government Amnesty Program in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region, control over natural resources and their revenues often stay in the hands of a small elite group and are not used for broader development of the country (Kidani, 2015).

In the annual report of the International Center for Peace Initiatives (ICPI, 2009) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, among the key economic factors identified as fuelling conflict was the illegal exploitation of natural resources especially by International Oil Corporations (IOCs). Similarly, the World Bank Continental Report for Africa also points out that natural resources, especially black gold, continues to be one of the contributory causes of conflict and of its recurrence. The report moved on to cite examples in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Nigeria's Niger Delta Region as places where natural resources have provided major funding for the perpetuation of wars, civil unrest and other forms of violent conflict (World Bank, 2010).

From the point of view of the resource curse thesis and the rentier state hypothesis, it is easy to see that societies endowed with huge natural resources are often bedeviled by pressing social, economic and political instability. This is because rentier states depend largely on natural resource endowments for their revenue. The Nigerian State, for instance, has been described as a rentier one (Ross, 2001) that is over-dependent on rents accruing from oil and gas. Therefore, resource revenues are essential politically. However, being a rentier state or one that is dependent on natural resource exploitation for its revenue does not sufficiently explain the conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta Region. Natural resource conflict in the region has been viewed as a product of a long history of economic exploitation and marginalization of the people by the Nigeria State and IOCs.

The explanations as to the causes of resource conflicts in the Niger Delta have been well captured by eminent social scientists in the country (Ikelegbe, 2005; Ibeanu, 2008; Obi, 2009) and in most instances, issues questioning the foundation and existence of the Nigerian state have been posed. Some of these issues rest on Nigeria's federalism, revenue redistribution and oil resource control. However, there are those who maintain that the continuous exploitation of the natural resources found in the Niger Delta Region provides the necessary foundation for prolonged shrinking of traditional livelihood systems thereby creating conditions for deprivation as well as frustration and aggression. While the causes and dynamics of resource conflicts in the Niger Delta have been well documented, it is important to note that there is insufficient empirical literature on peace-building strategies in the region.

Apparently, given the prevalence of conflict over resource control in the region, which mostly involves youth militia groups and the cycle of destruction imposed by this struggle on the state's economy and infrastructure, the Nigeria State has launched several programs and institutions to initiate peace in the region. Amongst these are the Niger Delta Development Commissions (NDDC), Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, 13% derivation, and the recent Federal Government Amnesty Project which have given unconditional pardon and rehabilitation to the militants who are willing to surrender their arms and embrace peace. However, despite the introduction of the Federal Government's Amnesty Program about six years ago, there is still

evidence of violence and militia activities in the region suggesting some critical shortcomings with regard to the sustainability of amnesty as a peace strategy in the Niger Delta Region. This study is a critical contribution to knowledge as it hopes to fill the gap in existing literature on strategies for peace in the Niger Delta Region by providing insights into the sustainability of the Presidential Amnesty Program.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the study is to evaluate the Federal Government of Nigeria's Amnesty Program to determine its sustainability as a peace strategy in the Niger Delta Region, and through this evaluation:

- Determine whether the Presidential Amnesty Project actually addresses the key issues that have led to conflict in the Niger Delta Region; and
- Determine the sustainability of the peace-building framework of the Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta.

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. The more the Niger Delta people are marginalized from the gains derived from the exploitation of their natural resources, the more there will be agitation for resource control.
2. The more the Amnesty Program does not address the key issues leading to pre-amnesty agitations, the more its sustainability as a peace strategy will be undermined.

### **Literature Review: Historicizing Resource Conflict and Amnesty in the Niger Delta**

Governance of oil wealth has always been related to the management of the resources of the Nigerian State. Resource-rich nations like Nigeria, and especially in the developing world, have always had the central government taking over the management of resource wealth. Poor management of resources as noted by Onigbinde (2008) has been responsible for the Niger Delta debacle. Thus, insurgency became inevitable which set the region on the international map of conflict hotspots with Ikelegbe (2005) correctly referring to it as an "economy of conflict."

Scholars have focused on oil production, the poor state of development in the Niger Delta, and the resultant militancy for some time now. The literature blames this on federalism and the politics of revenue sharing in Nigeria (Ibaba, 2005), environmental injustices and human rights violations (Adeyemi, 2010), the failure of corporate social responsibility on the part of multinational oil companies as well as accountability and transparency failures in governance (Ikelegbe, 2008), hegemonic politics (Ogujiuba & Adeniyi, 2005), and weak sustainable development initiatives (Raimi, Onaolapo, Ige & Alfred, 2015; Raimi, 2015). It is these prevailing realities in the Niger Delta that has given birth to an environment of perpetual agitations, youth restiveness, insurgency and general insecurity.

From the dialectics of violent oil agitations in the Niger Delta, two major arguments appear discernable. One, that violent oil agitation is a result of the Nigerian government's application of force in quelling non-violent agitation/protests of Niger Deltans against the state of gross

underdevelopment of the area that has arisen from neglect by both Federal Government and Multinational oil companies operating in the area. We must reiterate the fact that the tremendous amount of oil revenue derived from the Niger Delta costs the people their farm lands, fishing the rivers, and a host of other health hazards (like acid rain) due to the enormous environmental degradation caused by oil production activities related to the petrol businesses. References are usually made to government violent actions such as the incarceration and execution of Ken Saro-wiwa and eight other activists in 1995, the Aleibiri Demonstration Crisis of 1997, the Kaiama Declaration Crisis of 1998, the Opia/Ikiyan Invasion of 1999, the Odi Invasion of 1999, the arrest and detention of Asari Dokubo, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, and Henry Okah, among others (Azaiki, 2007). The second side of the argument asserts that militancy in the Niger Delta Region in the form of hostage taking, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, hijacking and so on, is a result of frustration due to a lack of education, poverty, unemployment and idleness of the youth.

Reactions to these problems of neglect, marginalization and environmental degradation started even before Nigeria's independence in 1960. According to Oloya and Ugbeyavwighren (2009), the struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta dates back to the Precolonial Era when the Royal Niger Company (RNC) tried to deprive the people of their legitimate trade and industry. As a result, when the then British merchants were challenged by King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny in 1854, he was deposed and exiled to Fernando Po. In the same vein, King Jaja of Opobo was deposed and exiled to the West Indies when he opposed the British merchants' direct dealings with his subjects to forestall their exploitation. Similarly, for moving to prevent British exploitation of his subjects, Prince Nana of Itsekiri was deported to Accra in 1894. In about 1897, the Oba of Benin, who also challenged British authority, was dethroned and exiled to Calabar where he died in 1913. When the Royal Niger Company stopped the people of Nembe (Akassa) from trading their palm oil and other palm produce, there was mass protest, which resulted in the attack on the Royal Niger Company depot in Akassa in 1895.

In addition, Isaac Adaka Boro's declaration of the Niger Delta Republic on February 23, 1966 was engendered by oppression by the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. Mr. Boro, who headed an organization known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), decided to take a revolutionary path that would burgeon a long history of insurgency in the Niger Delta Region. The group eventually set up a military training camp at Taylor Creek, former Eastern Region but in present day Bayelsa State, with about 150 men. The aim of the insurgents was to force the Nigerian government to create a separate country for the Niger Delta. The charged-up force attacked a police station at Yenagoa, raided the armory and kidnapped some officers including the police officer in command of the station. They also blew up oil pipelines, engaged the police in a gunfight, and declared the Niger Delta an independent republic. Boro and his men failed in the rebellion, and the three men were put on trial for treason at the Port Harcourt Assizes. In the end, Boro was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. However, he was eventually granted amnesty by the then head of state, General Yakubu Gowon. It then became the first amnesty granted militants in the Niger Delta. It is worthy to note that his agitation for resource control was a genuine campaign for greater Niger Delta autonomy.

The persistence of marginalization and adverse human development reality in the region post-Boro, created the conditions for an equally new dimension to the Niger Delta struggle. In this regard, as the Nigerian Government unleashed its state terror through its violent repression, the social movement became more violent in its approach as the number of militant groups increased making it very difficult to explore and exploit oil in the region (Tuodolo, 2008). Faced with the reality of such a drastic drop in oil production and its implications on a country whose economy is heavily dependent on oil, President Yar'Adua took a non-violent path in resolving the crisis in the region as a bid to patch the bleeding economy. Thus, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2009, he announced the 60-day amnesty policy. Announcing the policy, the president said, "I hereby grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offenses associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta" (Akinola, 2011, p. 66).

With the launch of the Amnesty Project, thousands of rounds of ammunition, machine guns and grenade launchers were handed over to the Federal Government by repentant militants. Many of these militants submitted themselves to the ideals of the Amnesty Project though major militant groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which viewed the policy with suspicion, promised cease fire but not disarmament of the group because according to them, the policy had no room for dialogue and it did not address the root issues that gave birth to the struggle (Ogege, 2011). However, the Amnesty project brought relative peace to the long-troubled region for the first time. The issue however is whether the Amnesty Program of the government has addressed the root cause of the conflicts, and whether it is sustainable in terms of maintaining peace in the region. Following the 'success' of the Amnesty Program, the post-amnesty phase saw the Federal Government releasing the sum of 50 billion naira to the Presidential Committee on Amnesty (PAC) to begin implementing the post-amnesty programs for the repentant militants (Akpan & Ering, 2010).

### **Theoretical Framework: Relative Deprivation and the Niger Delta Region**

A body of literature has emerged that provides empirical relevance concerning the theory referred as Relative Deprivation drawing inspiration from the work of scholars who support the initial tenets of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. The fundamental assumption of the theory rests on the the experience of being deprived of something to which one thinks they are entitled (Walker & Smith, 2002). Relative deprivation is therefore a theoretical position in the social sciences that describes the feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. Relative deprivation refers to the discontent people feel when they compare their positions to those of others similarly situated, and find that they have less than they deserve. It is a condition that is measured by comparing one group's situation to the situations of those who are more advantaged. Similarly, Gurr (1968) defined relative deprivation as the perception of discrepancy between valued expectations and valued capabilities. He went further to conceptualize value expectations as the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled, and the value capabilities as the goods they think they are capable of getting and keeping. Deriving his logic from Gurr, Eriksen (1993) noted that relative deprivation reflects

a perception by people that the circumstances of their lives are not providing benefits to which they are justly entitled.

The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is richly endowed with abundant petroleum found in almost all the creeks and oceans in the area. This has enabled the Federal Government to generate over 90% of its revenue from petroleum exploration, exploitation and marketing by foreign oil companies. The strong contention has been that the government does not use part of the revenue generated to provide the oil-bearing communities necessary infrastructure and other social needs. For the indigenous people, resources mean primarily land for agriculture, water for fishing, forests for harvesting, and air for breathing, as well as physical and spiritual bio-data. They explained that resource control is the term used to describe decision-making power over a people's source of livelihood. In the case of the Niger Delta, these sources of survival have been taken away violently, undemocratically, and unjustly. For them, resource control denotes the need to regain ownership, control, use and management of resources primarily for the benefit of the communities and people on whose land the resources originate, and secondarily for the good governance and development of the entire country.

### **Methodology**

The design adopted for this research is the descriptive method. The study was carried out in two states of the Niger Delta, namely Bayelsa and Rivers. Two sampling techniques were adopted, namely the purposive and simple random sampling methods. A sampling frame of the repentant militants in the two states was developed by assigning a number to each of them. A sample was drawn from the frame one at a time using the ballot method without replacement to avoid bias. A sample of 400 respondents (200 from each state) was drawn from the two states. The key instrument, or tool, used for this study was a self-designed questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, while the second part elicited information on the sustainability of the Federal Government Amnesty Program as a peace strategy. Two types of data analysis techniques were adopted. The simple percentage/descriptive method was used to analyze the socio-demographic data, while the Chi-Square statistical tool was used to analyze and test the research hypotheses. The analysis of data is based on 320 completed questionnaires.

### **Results**

As stated above, the socio-demographic information and research questions were analyzed using the simple percentage/descriptive technique. As a result, the information is presented in simple frequency tables as well as charts. On the other hand, the hypotheses test uses the Chi-Square statistical technique.

Table 1  
Socio-Demographic information of Respondents

Variables	Answer Alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 19 Years	23	7
	20-29	99	31
	30-39	188	59
	40 years and above	10	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>
Sex	Male	301	94
	Female	19	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>
Education	No Formal Education	100	31
	Primary Education	80	25
	Secondary Education	72	23
	Tertiary Education	17	5
	Vocational Training	51	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The personal information of respondents as highlighted in Table 1 shows a concentration of respondents (99/31%) in the 20-39-year age bracket and most of these (188/59%) in the 30-39-year age brackets. This shows that more able-bodied youth were key players in the militant behaviors that characterized the pre-amnesty struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta Region. Also, a significant number of the respondents (301/94%) were males. Similarly, many of the respondents (100/31%) have no formal education. Although, a few of them have primary (80/25%) and secondary (72/23%) education. The high number of respondents without formal education or a minimal educational background, such as a primary school education, indicates the level of illiteracy among able-bodied youth in the region.

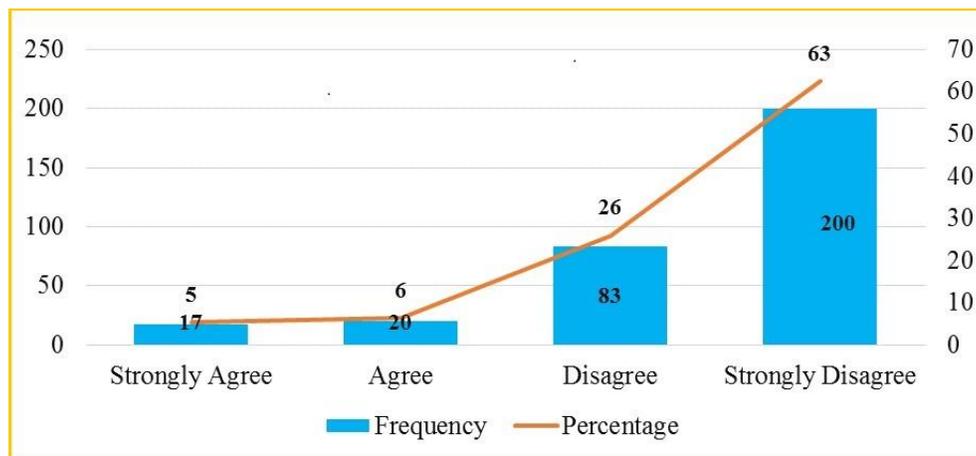


Figure 1. The amnesty programme addresses the core issues that led to violent agitations in the Niger Delta. Source: Field Survey, 2015

Figure 1 shows the respondents' opinions on whether the Federal Government's Amnesty Program addresses the core issues that led to the violent agitation in the Niger Delta Region. 17 (5%) of the respondents in the survey strongly agree to this, 20 (6%) of them agree, 83 (26%) of them disagree, while 200 (63%) of them strongly disagree. This goes a long way to show that the basic drivers of conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta, notably low human development reality such as youth unemployment and poverty, environmental degradation, and a sense of marginalization among others, have not been holistically dealt with under the amnesty program. While some other apologetic scholars can argue that amnesty is not a development program but a peace-building strategy, it is safe to submit here that the conditions for peace have not been clearly addressed under the framework of amnesty. This result strongly indicates a challenging future for the Amnesty Program since the root causes of the Niger Delta agitation were not properly addressed under the Amnesty Program.

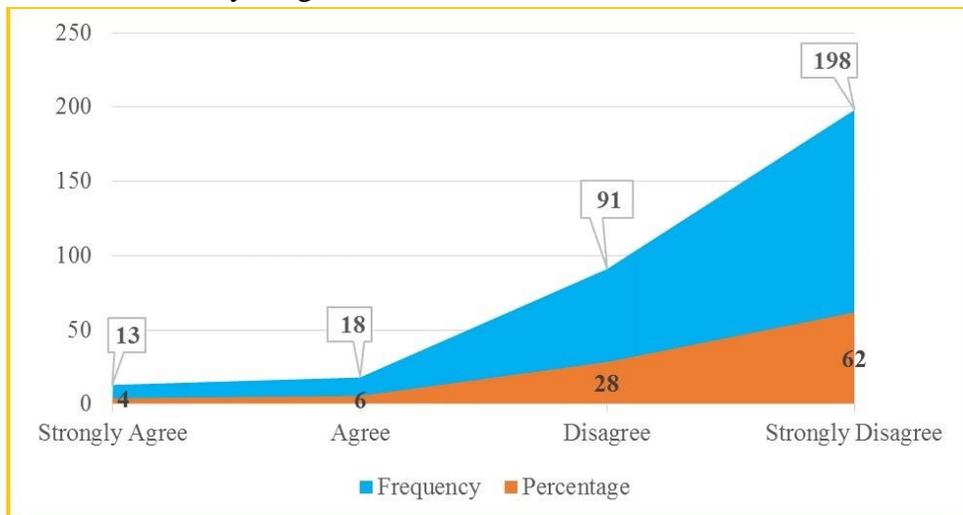


Figure 2. The Amnesty as a peace-building strategy is likely to be sustainable.  
Source: Field Survey, 2015

Figure 2 highlights data on whether the Amnesty Program as a peace-building strategy is likely to be sustainable. The data shows that 13 (4%) of the respondents strongly agree, 18 (6%) of them agree, 91 (28%) of them disagree, while 198 (62%) of the respondents strongly disagree. It is important to note that this result rests on the salient fact that a strategy that does not deal with the cause of a problem would certainly be unsustainable given that even when there are short term promises for peace, there is every tendency that a reversal of gains could happen as a result of not sufficiently addressing the root cause of the problem. Scholars have reported several challenges to the amnesty program over time when sustainable peace is taken into consideration. For instance, Unabia (2011) argues that the program is fragile in providing cash incentives to armed youth as a model for peace-building. Similarly, Ogege (2011) contends that the sectional concentration of the program to ex-militants alone without taking into account the general wellbeing of the entire Niger Delta Region with regard to resource depletion and underdevelopment is fatalistic for the program. This last submission by Ogege (2011) provides analytical support for our findings in Figure 2.

### Test of Hypotheses

*H<sub>1</sub>: The more the Niger Delta people are marginalized from the gains derived from exploitation of their natural resources, the more there will be agitation for resource control.*

Table 2  
Chi-square Computation for Research Hypothesis 1

O	E	O-e	(o-e) <sup>2</sup>	(o-e/e) <sup>2</sup>
58	69.52	-11.52	132.71	1.91
75	63.47	11.53	132.94	2.09
37	31.36	5.64	31.81	1.01
23	28.64	-5.64	31.81	1.11
20	14.11	5.89	34.69	2.46
7	12.89	-5.89	34.69	2.69

$$*2 \quad \chi^2 = 11.28$$

\*Degree of freedom =2; Chi-Square Table value =5.99; Chi-Square Calculated Value=11.28

Source: Field Survey, 2015

**Decision Rule:** Accept the null hypothesis if the calculated value is less than the table value and reject the hypothesis if the calculated value is greater than the table value. Consequently, since the calculated value of  $\chi^2$  is 11.28 and table value is 5.99, the hypothesis which states that the more the Niger Delta people are marginalized from the gains derived from exploitation of their natural resources, the more there will be agitation for resource control is upheld. This result leads to the submission that there is a significant relationship between perceived marginalization by the people and violent agitation in the region. This findings corroborate that of Ogege (2011) who concluded that age-long agitation in a region is related to the struggle for resource control.

*H<sub>2</sub>: The more the amnesty program does not address the key issues leading to pre-amnesty agitations, the more its sustainability as a peace strategy will be undermined.*

Table 3  
Chi-square Computation for Research Hypothesis 2

Observed	Expected	O-e	(o-e) <sup>2</sup>	(o-e/e) <sup>2</sup>
45	55.93	-10.93	119.46	2.14
62	51.07	10.93	119.46	2.34
50	44.43	5.57	31.02	0.70
35	40.57	-5.57	31.02	0.76
20	14.64	5.36	28.73	1.96
8	13.36	-5.36	28.73	2.15

$$*2 \quad \chi^2 = 10.05$$

\*Degree of freedom =2; Chi-Square Table value =5.99; Chi-Square Calculated Value=11.28

Source: Field Survey, 2015

**Decision Rule:** Accept the null hypothesis if the calculated value is less than the table value and reject the hypothesis if the calculated value is greater than the table value. Since the calculated value of  $\chi^2$  is 10.05 and table value is 5.99, the hypothesis which states that the more the amnesty program does not address the key issues leading to pre-amnesty agitation, the more its sustainability as a peace strategy will be undermined is upheld. This result leads to the affirmation that there is a relationship between the inability to address the root causes of violent agitation and the lack of sustainability of the amnesty program in the Niger Delta. This finding supports those of previous researchers such as Tuodolo (2008), Akinola (2011), and Ogege (2011) who all point to the weak sustainability character of the amnesty program as a peace building strategy in the region.

Table 4  
*Breakdown of Youth Training Under the Amnesty Program 2009-2015*

<i>S/n</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number Trained</i>
<i>Completed</i>		
1	Agriculture	169
2	Automobile Mechanic	331
3	Welding & Fabrication	4,095
4	Entrepreneurship	2028
5	Carpentry, Plumbing & Pipefitting	287
6	Electrical Installation/Maintenance	442
7	ICT	249
8	Crane/Heavy Duty Operations	1269
9	Health Safety and Environment	80
10	Music/Fashion/Entertainment/Catering	838
11	Oil & Gas/Maritime	1768
12	Aviation	127
13	Others	310
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11993</b>
<i>Ongoing</i>		
14	Skill Acquisition & Formal Education	4,698
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,698</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,691</b>

Source: Compiled by Author from THISDAY Live, 23 May, 2015

<http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/how-has-the-presidential-amnesty-programme-fared-/210014/>

Although several of the Niger Delta ex-militants have received commendable capacity building and skills acquisition as well as formal education under the second phase of the Amnesty Program of Rehabilitation, it is particularly worrisome to point out that there is no strategic plan to engage this number of youth in meaningful commercial or economic activities. Table 4 presents data on the number of youth trained under the Amnesty Program between 2009 and 2015.

From Table 4, it is easy to see that, 11,993 youth have been trained in various areas of skill and formal education with about 4,698 youth still undergoing similar training in elite universities across the world. However, there is the obvious challenge of how to integrate the youth into meaningful economic life given the vulnerable labor market in the country. This immediately calls to question the sustainability of the Amnesty Program in terms of the integration phase which is supposed to create the enabling environment for jobs for youth so that they do not fall back in the cracks again.

### **Discussion**

The first objective of this study focused on determining whether the Presidential Amnesty Program actually addresses the key issues leading to youth militancy in the Niger Delta Region. The data generated in this regard was presented in Figure 1. Findings suggest that the Amnesty Program as a peace building strategy has not addressed the cause of the conflict in the study area but rather has focused on the effect. In other words, the problems that triggered widespread discontent and aggression in the region have still been left unattended. This approach is not a holistic one in this sense since 89% of the respondents see it as not fundamentally addressing the core reasons for the emergence of armed conflict. The dominant opinion is that the Federal Government is more interested in unhindered access to the oil and gas resources rather than to resolving the root causes of the Niger Delta crises. This supports the argument posed by Whyte (2009) that “this so-called amnesty is the latest in a series of ‘Greek gifts’ awarded to the people of the Niger Delta to enable smooth access to the oil in our communities.”

The second objective focused on determining if the amnesty program is likely to be sustainable. Data regarding this objective was presented in Figure 2, and the associated hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square statistical tool as reflected in Table 3. The theoretical position of the relative deprivation philosophy is quite helpful analytically here. This is because, as findings suggest, 88% of respondents see the program as unsustainable since the issue of deprivation and marginalization remain unresolved under the Federal Government Amnesty Project. Following the submission that amnesty does not address the core problems that have led to the upsurge of militancy and all forms of violence in the Niger Delta, it is easy to see that the program is simply a strategy to maintain a hold on the economic gains in the region while pretending to foster or engender sustainable peace. In this regard, there is every pointer to the fact that we will witness a reversal of gains associated with amnesty in such a manner that more violence will erupt as other youth get frustrated and aggressive. This finding supports that of Akinola (2011) who agreed with the fact that amnesty might be short-lived as a result of the fact that it misses the real cause of the Niger Delta crisis. It is believed that, although the amnesty initiative is purported to have brought relative peace in the region, pockets of insurgencies continue to happen with the same old outcomes of kidnapping, and vandalization of oil pipelines and other installations in addition to other illicit economic activities that amount to sabotage. In regard to the outcome of the amnesty program in terms of conflict management in the Niger Delta Region, there are divided perspectives.

However, quite a number of the respondents gravitate towards the opinion that the amnesty program is a half-baked approach and cannot lead to sustainable peace in the region.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study investigated the relationship between the Nigerian Government's Amnesty Program and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta Region. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that as beautiful as the amnesty gesture seems, it is infested with internal contradictions that have negative implications for sustainable peace-building in the region. The approach of mitigating conflict through the use of cash incentives and skills training for only repentant militants further creates the necessary condition for more violence by encouraging other peaceful youth to see violence as a means to an end. In addition, it is also the conclusion of this study that the Niger Delta agitation was anchored on the issues of marginalization, environmental despoliation, infrastructural decay, and poverty amidst others. As long as these conditions still persist, there can never be sustainable peace in the Niger Delta Region.

Addressing the negative human development realities in the Niger Delta Region will bring about genuine and sustainable peace. Therefore, based on the findings and conclusion arrived at in this study, the following recommendations are made to ensure sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

1. *Institutional Restructuring of Amnesty:* There should be within the amnesty structure a broad-based institutional arrangement with an operational strategy for the implementation of widespread projects and programs such as employment generation, food security, road development, poverty reduction, environmental management, security of life and property, electoral reform and democratization, and conflict detection, prevention and resolution. These can be achieved by incorporating the programs into the amnesty program to cover the whole of the region and not only repentant militants.
2. *Deemphasizing Cash Incentives:* There is also the need to deemphasize cash incentive as a way of deterring youth from violence. The current framework only serves to reinforce the economy of violence in the region. Instead of cash incentives, economic empowerment training, which is already going on in the form of vocational skill acquisition, should be broadened and reinforced with a focus to get such youth employed in public and private companies.
3. *Public Private Partnerships:* Lastly, the current post amnesty gains should be sustained through new partnerships between the government and MNOCs operating in the region. This can be done by enacting laws that compel oil corporations to employ trained ex-militants in order to ensure that they do not fall back into violence.

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