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The Presidential Amnesty Programme and Human Capital Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This paper examined the impact of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme (NDAP) on human capital development in the Niger Delta. The programme is operationalized through the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) Model .The Reintegration phase of the model lays emphasis on the education and training of the repentant militants. The paper argues that developing the knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) of the youths of the region is key to the success of the programme and sine qua non for development of the Niger Delta. Findings from the study showed that many of the ex-combatants were not only given education and vocational training in several fields, but were also engaged by companies in Nigeria and abroad. The paper recommends, among others, that government should also integrate non-violent youths in the region into the educational and vocational training basket, so as not to create a wind of 'violence economy'.
Keywords: Amnesty Programme, Human Capital Development, Militancy, Niger Delta

INTRODUCTION

The violence and mayhem perpetrated by the Niger Delta militants present great security concern for not only the region, but the multinational oil companies and the Nigeria state as well. This prompted the government of President Musa Yar'Adua to grant Amnesty to the repentant militants. The implementation of the Amnesty Programme involved three phases: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). According to the plan, militants were to be paid monthly stipends, given vocational trainings etc., after they have surrendered their weapons of destruction and promised never to go back to their life of crime.

The objective of the Programme was to contribute to the "security stabilization" in the Niger Delta through the DDR Programme, as a pre-condition for medium and long term development of the region (Kuku,2010). The Reintegration phase of the DDR model of implementation lays emphasis on the education and training of the repentant militants.

This paper examined the impact of the programme on the human capital development of the Niger Delta. To successfully deliver on this task, the paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two, dwells on the Amnesty Programme, while section three discusses the concept of human capital development, In section four, the paper tries to show how the programme contributed to the stock of the human capital in the region. Section five is for the conclusion and recommendation.

The Presidential Amnesty Programme

Amnesty, generally speaking is a type of 'Pardon' granted to political offenders which has the effect of obviating the need for Prosecution and Punishment (Allison, 2013). By exercising this power, the state automatically discontinues the prosecution of any person standing trial. This is in line with sections 175(1) (c) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) (1999 Constitution of the FRN). The amnesty, according to its promoters, has the promise of encouraging the combatants to voluntarily surrender their arms and reconcile with society. This has the effect of de-militarizing the region and reducing crime and criminality (Allison, 2013).

The idea of the Amnesty Programme was one of the recommendations of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND), chaired by Mr. Ledum Mite, set up by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2009. Worried by the perennial violence and mayhem perpetrated by the militants in the Niger Delta Region, which has presented grave security challenge to the oil companies, the Nigerian state and the international community, the President Yar'Adua's administration proposed a Niger Delta Summit to be headed by Prof. Ibrahim Gambari, former Nigeria Ambassador to the United Nations.

However, following an outcry from notable and respected voices from the Niger Delta and across the country, the President rescinded his decision and instead constituted a Presidential Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND), chaired by Barr. Ledum Mite. One of the recommendations of the Mite committee was: Grant Federal Government Amnesty to all Niger Delta militants willing and ready to participate in a programme of disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) .Following the adoption of the committee's report, the Federal Government began with the implementation of the Amnesty programme. As recommended by the Mite-led committee, the Amnesty Programme is in three phases: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). It is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame that took place in the local communities of the Region with high incidence of militant activities. It was from 6th August to 4th October 2009, within which period militants were to surrender their arms to government for monthly stipends, in addition to vocational training (Ujah, 2010).

The Concept of Human Capital Development

It may perhaps be appropriate to start off by describing what human capital means. Human capital could be defined as the knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities possessed by people (Aluko.2012) It is also defined as the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic wellbeing (OECD,2001:18). Schultz (1993) views it as an important factor in improving employees' productivity, in order to sustain a firm's competitive advantage.

All the processes that increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values and social assets all lead to the building of human capital. Stieglitz and Broadway (1994) define human capital as the stock of accumulated skills and experience that make the worker more productive. It is a critical element in organizations as it helps improve productivity (Rastogi, 2000).

From the forgoing, human capital can be viewed as:

i. An embodiment of human intellect, skills and competences involved in the production of goods and services.
ii. The knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) of the individual employees of an organization that contribute to the bottom line of that organisation.
iii. Human capability and productivity brought about through knowledge and skills acquired from education, training and experience, and facilitate by an enabling environment.

The process or method of building the knowledge, skills, abilities and competences of the individual members of any society is what human capital development is all about. It can also mean anything that contributes to the improvement of human productivity, stimulate resourcefulness and enhance human dignity. (Aluko in www.reseamligatepublicationaccessed29thJuly2018) In human capital development four cardinal

aspects are essential. First is education. It is through education that the 'whole person' is developed. Education is the supplier of the trained manpower, and is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of other development goals.

Second is the health of the people: A people who are not healthy cannot contribute to national development. Thus, it is a key variable in human capital development. Third is social service: For the proper development of the human capital, social services such as good roads, power, recreational center, water, etc. are necessary. Finally is the issue of good governance: Government must be accountable to the people. The ruling elite must cater for the welfare needs of the people. Without these, the human capital development cannot take place.

Human resources is the single most important factor in the development of any nation. It is the human resources, rather than its physical and material resources that ultimately determine the pace and quality of development of any nation. This perhaps informed Harbison to state:

> Human resources constitute the ultimate bases for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else (Harbison, 1973:3).

The statement above underscores the importance of human capital development, and the educational sector is key to achieving it.

The Khartoum Declaration of 1988 further underlines the importance of human capital development, when it stated thus:

> ... the human dimension is the sine qua non of economic recovery… no SAP or economic recovery programme should be formulated or can be Implemented without having at its heart social and human priorities. There can be no real structural adjustment or economic recovery in the absence of the human imperative (Adedeji et al, 1990:390).

The Amnesty programme and Human Capital Development in the Niger Delta

The major objective of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme (NDAP) is to contribute to security stabilization in the Niger Delta through disarmament, demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) (Ushie, 2013).

The first phase is disarmament and it entails the process of collection, verification, documentation control (storage) and disposal (disabling and destruction) of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons of ex-combatants (UNDP, 2006:8).

Table 1: The Structure of the 2009 Niger Delta Amnesty Programmes

S/N		Number of person Involved	Timeline
1	Accepted Amnesty Total	20,192 6,166 3,642 Total 30,000	October 4,2009 Second Phase Third Phase 2012
2	Demobilization Transformational Training	15,434	June 2010-May 2011
3	Reintegration: Formal Education Vocational Training Centre Skills acquisition	6,067 transformed ex-militants being processed for reintegration. 2,500 in higher institutions. 13,000 in local and foreign training centres	2014
4	Facilitating employment	113 employed in maritime, welding fabrication. Others in some agencies at home and abroad	2013-2014
5	Economic empowerment	Pilot scheme of start up funds for specialized businesses for trained ex militants	2014 – 2017

Source: Jacob, 2018.

Table 1 outlined various phases in the implementation of the amnesty programme between 2009 to 2017. The 2009 to 2012 phases, presented the process of disarmament and demobilization. It began with the identification of combatants who were given the opportunity to accept and surrender their weapons. The second phase of this approach is demobilization. This stage is the formal and controlled discharge of militants from armed groups. This has to do with the organized isolation of the ex-combatants in designated camps. This involves critical screening of ex-militants to ensure they have completely dissociated from their former groups and lives. During this process reinsertion packages are given to the disarmed militants.

Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance offered to help cover the basic immediate-needs of the ex-combatants and their families. During this period, in addition to the monthly stipends, accommodation, short term education and training are equally given. Training for the Niger Delta ex-militants were done in six (6) designation centres in the region. Two in Aluu, Rivers State; two in Agbarho, Delta State and another two in Obubra Akwa Ibom State.

The third phase is the Reintegration. This is the most critical aspect of the DDR, as it involves the re-admission of the ex-combatants into the civil society. The forgiven Niger Delta ex-militants are currently in the reintegration stage, which also involves the development of their human capital in order to make them be able to contribute to national development. Consequently most of them are being given formal education and vocational training in skills acquisition and entrepreneurial development.

According to the presidential Amnesty office (PAO), 7556, former militants were sent to 33 locations across Nigeria for skill acquisition trainings. Many others were also sent abroad, to countries like South Africa, Russia, Israel, United State, Poland, India, Cyprus, United Arab Emirate (UAE), Trinidad and Tobago and the Phillipines to be trained in various skills , as the table below shows (Ushie, 2013).

Table 2: Summary of skills and vocational Training for Amnesty Programme Beneficiaries

Artisanship	Environmental and Sanitation Management
Oil & gas	Small-scale manufacturing
Agriculture	Creative arts and theatre
Transportation	Educational services
Information Technology (IT)	Building and Construction
Maritime	Professional disciplines
Culture, Tourism and Hospitality	

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria – PAO Niger Delta Amnesty Programme available at http://www.nigerdeltaamnesty.org/index.php?option=com_content&view-article&id-79&itemid-57. Accessed on 26th August, 2016.

Upon completion of their trainings several of the ex-militants (89) were offered jobs in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and UAE (Ushie, 2013).

Akinwale (2010) stated that human capital refers to an aggregate of people's skills and knowledge in the society. It depends on the quality of education and constitutes the bedrocks of development. Human capital development was apparently an attempt to address the crisis of under-development in the Niger Delta region. The Amnesty Programme embarked on series of training programs, a survey of the career aspiration of the ex-militants shows a wide preference for about ten sectors ranging from Oil and Gas, Maritime Services, Fabrication and Welding technology, Exploration and Production, and Processing Engineering, among others. The projected duration of training ranges from 2-18 months and after their completion of training, the ex-militants could choose between wage employment and self –employment. They could also decide to return to school to further their education and be trained up to the university level. A former coordinator of the presidential Amnesty Programme Brig. Gen. Paul Boroh (rtd), stated that the programme has transformed over five million lives in the Niger Delta region.(PULSE News 12.09.2016). Boroh (2016) disclosed that the amnesty office has also designed a 12 months programme to train and establish cluster farms to reintegrate 10,000 ex-agitators captured in the programme. He added that the 30,000 ex-agitators, who gave up their arms, were to benefits from the programme. He said that the amnesty office has keyed into the Green Alternative of Federal Government through strategic partnership with Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Anchor Borrowers Programme.

The Amnesty Programme beneficiaries are as at 2015 were in 36 Local training centers in 12 states of the federation; while the ex-agitators placed in offshore educational and skill acquisition centers are in the United States of America, Italy, Russia, South Africa, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Israel, Sri Lanka, India, Benin Republic, Cyprus, Poland, Ghana, Belarus, United Arab Emirates, The Philippines as well as Trinidad and Tobago. And that more of the trainees are due to be deployed to skill acquisition facilities in Greece, Germany and Canada. The overall reintegration agenda of the Federal Government is to groom these ex-agitators to become key players in the emerging economies of the states in the Niger Delta. According to Odunsi (2016), the amnesty Programme has secured admission and given scholarship to 5,232 beneficiaries in Local and offshore institutions. The breakdown of the figure showed that 3,082 admissions in local institutions, while 2,150 are abroad. 272 of the figure have so far graduated. While Kuku (2015) affirmed that following the completion of their non-violence training and career classification in the camp, the Amnesty office has successfully placed a total of 10,395 former

combatants in skills acquisition/training centers as well as in formal education within the country and offshore similarly 12,000 transformed ex-agitators are currently being processed preparatory to their deployment to reintegration centers to pursue their formal education or vocational training.

Table 3: Ex-Militants Trained in Vocational Skills

S/N	Skills	Number
1	Agriculture	239
2	Automobile	207
3	Welding & Fabrication	2,204
4	Entrepreneurship	2,2798
5	Carpentry and Plumbing	298
6	Oil Drilling & Marine	916
7	Electrical Installation	89
8	ICT	273
9	Crave & heavy duty machine	1,030
10	Boat building	299
11	Pipe fitting	250
12	Entertainment	60
13	Others	618
	Total	**9,192**

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Table 3 shows different vocational training given to ex-combatants as part of the re-integration programmes of the Niger Delta amnesty programme. This number excluded professionals. The percentage distribution of the 9281 beneficiaries as shown in figure 4.1 indicate that whereas 2.6% of them were trained in agriculture, 2.2% were trained in automobile technology, 23.7% were trained in welding and fabrication, 30% entrepreneurship training, carpentry and plumbing 3.2% and 9.9% were trained on oil drilling and marine. More so, while 0.96% of the beneficiaries were trained on electrical installations, 2.9% were trained on ICT, 11.1% were trained on crane and heavy duty machines operation, 3.2% were trained on boat building, 2.7% were trained on pipe fitting, 0.6% were trained on entertainment related activities and 6.7% were trained on other forms of vocational skills.

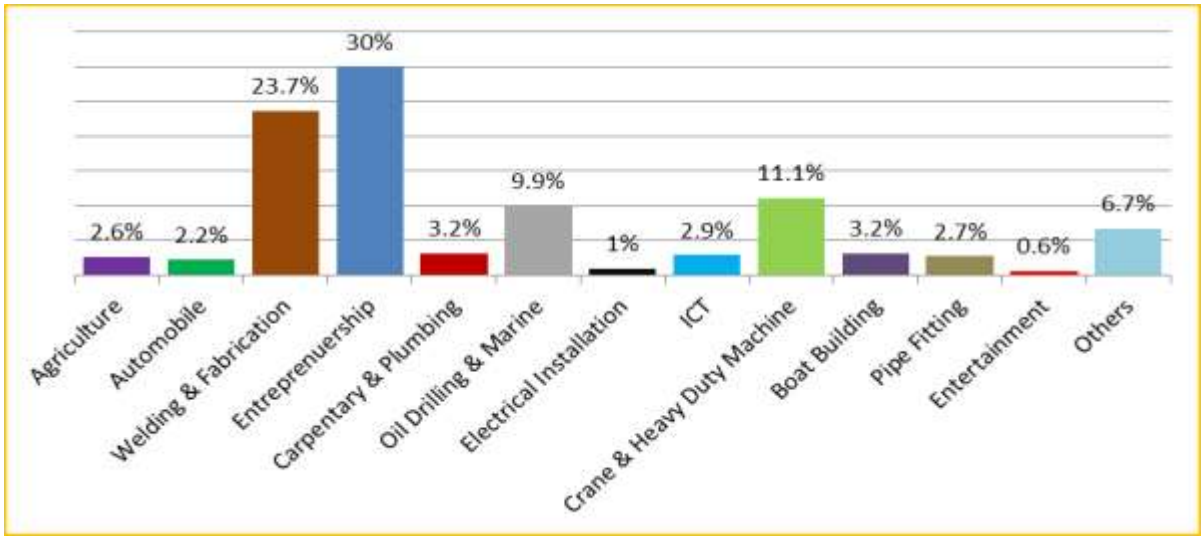

Figure 4.1: Percentage Distribution of Vocational Skills Training for Ex-Militants
Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Furthermore, in a field survey conducted by one of the authors, it was observed that over 70 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the amnesty programme has enhanced the productive capacity of the ex-militants, increased literacy level in the region, increased entrepreneurial capacity of youths and also enhanced the knowledge and skills of the youths in the region (Jacob, 2018). Boroh (2016) further revealed that the programme has transformed over five million lives in the Niger Delta region. In terms of educational training, Boroh (2017) highlighted that in the 2015/2016 Academic year, the presidential amnesty office deployed 1,294 delegates in various universities in the country, recording 681 graduates with 14 of them graduating first class, and 84 second class upper. In fact, the Benson Idahosa University retained as lecturers, four of the students who had first class. He added that the performance of Amnesty students abroad was even more stunning, that a total of 454 graduated mainly from British Universities with 20 graduating first class and 41, second class upper.

Furthermore, the Amnesty office from 2015 to 2016 deployed 1,603 delegates in training centers in the country, 1,230 of them graduated. A total of 196 delegates are currently in training. In the same period the Amnesty office empowered 1,453 delegates with various starter-packs to start their own business. Also, Onuaha (2016) ascertained that seven years after the commencement of the presidential Amnesty programme, many of those who benefitted from the university education scheme have graduated in many disciplines. Indeed, a parade of some of the graduates on July 29, 2016, at the Nigerian High Commission in London, showed that many good things could actually come from the Niger Delta. For a region, this has been known and noted for bombing of pipelines, kidnapping of expatriates, and so on.

CONCLUSION

The Amnesty programme is a clear departure from other previous efforts at managing conflict in the Niger Delta region. Successive governments have placed primacy on the use of military power in containing the insecurity in the area, which have not brought about the desired peace and security in the area. It has rather radicalized the restive youths and thus worsened the state of insecurity.

The Amnesty programme with its emphasis on the use of soft power holds the promise for peace and security in the region. Its effort at developing the human capital of the youths in the area is quite commendable. Studies have shown that a major element of the restiveness and militancy in the Niger Delta is the alienation of a large chunk of the youth population from the oil economy which is caused by lack of the relevant skills of the youths to fit into the oil economy of the region. Therefore, the education and training made possible by the Amnesty Programme will go a long way towards resolving the crisis in the zone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Be that as it may, this paper recommends that the government should intensify efforts to make sure that the trained youths are put to productive use. Training them and not engaging then has made the essence of the programme otiose. Furthermore, government and the multi-national oil companies should widen their nets to bring in more youths into the educational and training scheme of the programme. The training should not be limited to only ex-militants. The peaceful youths of the area should also benefit from the programme. Failure to do this could be counterproductive, as it could force the non-militant youths to involve in violent activities, thereby resulting to a 'commodification' of violence.

More than that, given the limited number of available jobs, the emphasis should be on entrepreneurial training and upon completion, credit facilities should be advanced to the beneficiaries to start their own businesses.

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