

# Governance failure and the formation of Anti-State Organisations: The Impact of the Amnesty Policy on the Development of Nigeria's Niger-Delta, Nigeria

<https://doi.org/10.36369/2616-9045/2021/v10i2a4>

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## Abstract

The Amnesty policy was devised by the Nigerian government to take-off militants from attacking oil pipelines in Niger-Delta. This was with the view to promoting development in the region. While studies have examined the influence of the Amnesty policy on the empowerment of repentant militants, little is known about how governance failure in the implementation of the policy provokes the formation of anti-state organizations and its contributions to development in the region. This research addresses this gap by examining the role of the Nigerian government in the implementation of the amnesty policy, and identify, if any, failure in the implementation of the policy, provokes the resurgence of anti-state organizations in the region. The study used a qualitative research design and findings indicated that the formation of the Niger-Delta Avengers; an anti-state organisation, was due to the government's inaction to effectively implement the amnesty policy as expected. Furthermore, results showed that the Nigerian government was more interested in protecting its oil pipelines and wells than the development of the area. The paper concludes that the Amnesty policy is a conduit pipe for corruption by successive representatives of Nigerian government.

**Keywords:** Amnesty, Anti-state organisations, Formations, Policy, Militants



## Introduction

In several ways, Niger-Delta region is a victim of depraved attitude of the Nigerian state and the political elites, especially the governing elites from the region (Iyabobola 2015). The ongoing probe of the Niger Delta Development Commission has shown that elites in this region lack the character and integrity to reposition and improve the socio-economic conditions of the region (Imera 2020). Thus, the actions of the Nigerian state and its ruling elites, have contributed to the region's deepening socioeconomic and environmental degradation, prompting the resurgence of more dangerous anti-state groups. In an attempt to call government attention to their situation, these militant organizations have repeatedly attacked the country's oil facilities and oil employees in this region (Alphonsus and Mohammad 2015). In reality, every policy action the state takes or fails to take in the process of trying to safeguard its oil production interests appears to aggravate the region's situation (Iyabobola 2015). For example, policy initiatives like the NDDC, 13% derivation, award of security of oil pipelines to some militants; within the region have yielded little or no results; also, the Amnesty policy is blamed for being overly militant-centered (Ubhenin 2013). As a result, some disgruntled youths, who were not militants but idle, unemployed, and ignored, were provoked to join anti-state organizations that specialize in destroying Nigeria's collective resources (Iyabobola 2015). The Niger-Delta Avengers was an example of one of such organisations formed by some aggrieved youths, who claimed, it was purposively formed to attack oil installation in the region, in order to draw government attention to their deplorable conditions (Adrian and Ben 2016). The above demonstrates that the Nigerian state's or political elites' interests have always been focused on the revenues of, or the benefits that can be garnered from, crude oil, rather than the development of the people or the region where the oil is produced. This, in itself, is partly the cause of militancy in Niger-Delta region (Ajayi and Adesote, 2013).

Measures such as oil minerals producing areas development commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Commission, 13% derivatives, among others), have been initiated by successive governments to tackle militant activities in this region, yet there are still rising attacks on oil installations and expatriates (Kio-Lawson and Dekor 2014). These attacks have had severe effects on human insecurity and socio-economic development of the region (Ako 2011). It reduces Nigeria's daily oil production in and consequently led to poor income generation (Beloveth 2013; Iyabobola 2015; Adrian and Ben 2016). This region, has remained a theatre of war, despite all measures to get rid of activities of anti-state organisations. It is replete with attacks on oil pipelines, oil expatriates, and community people (Ako 2011; Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016). It is imperative to note that if lasting solution is not provided to tackle the recurrent trends of militant attacks in the region, it could further impoverish and prevent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region and to the Nigerian economy. Against the backdrop of this ugly scenario this article, seeks to examine the role and the character of the Nigerian state in the implementation of the amnesty policy, in a bid to identify, if any, better ways of enforcing the policy to meet



its expected ends. The policy was formulated to end militancy in Niger-Delta and by extension in Nigeria. The essence of this lies in the belief that research in this direction, could help expose inherent problems in the implementation of the amnesty policy and proffer solutions to the problems.

While several studies have looked into the impact, utility, and effects of the amnesty policy on oil production, food security, internal security, infrastructure, sustainable development, peace, militancy, and insurgency (Ikelegbe, 2010; Beloveth, 2015; Igbekoyi 2012; Aghalino, 2012), little is known about how the Nigerian state's character has specifically stimulated the reappearance of more dangerous a criminal element. Understanding that the Nigerian government rushed to develop the amnesty policy to safeguard its oil assets (pipelines, institutions, oil wells, and gas turbines, among others) from attack, Ako (2011) would oversee the policy's execution to ensure that its goals are met (Adrian and Ben 2016). Thus, the research aims to answer the following questions: How has the attitude of Nigerian State towards the implementation of Amnesty policy stimulated reappearance of more dangerous formation of anti-state organisations in Niger Delta? Why has the amnesty policy failed in putting to an end attack on state's properties (pipelines, institutions gas turbines, oil wells etc.) in spite of juicy reward of ex-militants in the region? How can the policy be used to engender socio-economic, environmental and sustainable development including the expected peace in the region? Specifically, the paper's objectives are to:

- i. examine factors contributing to governance failure in the implementation of the Amnesty policy
- ii. determine the effect of governance failure in the implementation of Amnesty policy on the formation of dangerous anti-state organisations in Niger-Delta, Nigeria, and
- iii. identify how amnesty policy can be improved to forestall development and peace in the region.

## **Conceptual Reviews: Governance, Amnesty Policy, and Anti-State Organisations**

Governance is akin to effective administration of the country than to its politics. It is about the execution of government functions to meet the expectations of the people in terms of service delivery to them (Agunyai, 2018). While politicking is about gaining control of power to rule or govern a country, governance is the actual ruling and administration of the country. Thus, governance, can be defined as the ability of government to administer the state or country through the enforcement of rules and regulations as well as providing services to the people (Fukuyama, 2013). It is any proposal that is connected to improving government functions or activities, government measures, and improving the performance of the economy and the society as a whole (Petr, 2007). This definition shows that one of the measuring indicators of governance is the performance of the economy and the



society. This is correct in the sense that government whether democratic or not, strives to work to uplift their economy and society, because these are sacred yardsticks of governance. Governance is more focused on the outcomes of government actions and execution of its roles. It is more of administration and steering of the state through policies and provision of services, within the state. Historically, governance has been closely associated with government activities including the direct care, control, and command through the top-down hierarchy system, but today, due to globalization and technological advancement, it has changed (Petr, 2007). It has changed to include effective coordination of government activities through partnership and dialogue. Government and governance are not the same, even though both have been used interchangeably to connote the same thing. Government is an organization, body, or institution that operationalizes the basic principles of governance. It is a set of organization (ministry, commission, cabinet, legislature, government offices, state administration), or government actors, society's players or representatives of government, which defines forms, models, or regimes of governing. Governance is the level of interactions, among traditions, processes, structures, component units of government that determine how decisions are taken, power are enforced, and how the citizens have a voice in their affairs (Petr, 2007).

Governance is largely about relationships, accountability, and power. It shows the extent to which the citizens can hold the government accountable and the extent of relationships between government and the people through enforcement of law, provision of services, and inclusion of the citizens in decision making processes (Agunyai and Olawoyin, 2019). This goes to show that it is more of processes, interactions, coordination and relationships that involves both the public and private sectors (Yu, 2018). It involves the private sector, when the state transfers its exclusive powers to civil society organisations, voluntary organizations or groups. For example, governance, is the basis through which civil society organizations hold the state or government accountable for its duties. Governance could be bad or failure and good. Governance failure is the inability of the state or government to effectively coordinate, interacts, carry-along the people, provide transparent steering or administration of the country. Governance failure is more akin to mal-administration, lack of transparency, breakdown of the rule of law, poor maintenance of law and order, disconnection between policy outcomes and expected ends or actual achievements, lack of accountability and responsiveness among others. The absence of these attributes portrays governance failure or crisis (Afolabi and Agunyai, 2017).

Amnesty policy is a government programme, designed to rehabilitate repentant militants, who have surrendered their weapons to the Nigerian state or government (Alli 2013). In 2009, the Nigerian government implemented the Amnesty programme (or policy) to address incessant militant crisis, a predominant social problem in Niger-Delta, nay Nigeria. For Apah (2014), the Nigerian state implemented the Amnesty policy to stop attacks on oil infrastructure, take-off militants from restiveness, and engaging them in empowerment programmes (Ajibola 2015). For Benjamin (2016), it is a strategy designed to guarantee



access to oil wells, increase oil revenues, and reduce the human cost of the militant attacks. It was not intended to bring any long-term solution to the violence. This is the government's programme designed to exonerate and pardon from being punished for offences committed against the state or government. Specifically, it is a governmental intervention programme that seeks to pardon groups that have continually damaged state's properties like oil installations, engaged in criminal activities like bombing of oil wells, pipelines, kidnapping, etc. It can also be seen as government action or call that aims at forgiving criminals or militants who specialises in massive destruction of state's own pipelines, wealth or resources massacre and assassination (Aghedo 2015). The call for these criminals or militants to repent and receive forgiveness or pardon for offences committed against the state is usually within certain period. Ekumaoko (2013), sees the amnesty policy as pardon granted to militants who have been attacking oil infrastructures, by the Nigerian government, over claims that their region is neglected, underdeveloped, and the revenue from resources from their region is not used to develop their region.

Similarly, Alli (2013) sees the programme as a general pardon of offence by government and a deliberate overlooking of offenses against government by militants. Amnesty is granted within the confine of the law and within a period of time. It is not forever opened; it must be within specific period. It is the mutual agreement between the government and militants, involving repentance, surrendering of weapons or cease of attacks on oil infrastructures by militants and granting of pardon and rehabilitation by the government. It is more of a two-way process involving the government and repentant militants. It enhances an interregnum of peace, cessation of hostility and peace building (Ekumaoko, 2013). It was adopted by the Nigerian government in 2009, to boost its oil production and stop incessant attacks on the Nigerian oil architecture and to forestall peace in the region.

Anti-state organisations on the other hand, are group of people who are against the state. This group of people manifest their hatred towards the state through destruction of state's properties, treasure and common wealth. Their ideology and that of the state contradicts in several ways. For instance, militants' activities that aim at breaking pipelines, bombing of oil wells, government institutions, kidnapping of people, massacre and assassinations of government representatives including car bombings and attacks on government and military buildings using military equipment can be termed as anti-state organisation. For instance, examples of anti-state organisation in Niger-Delta area include Niger-Delta Avengers, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other militants' or groups. The anti-state organisations on the other hand, are any group of persons or organisation that repeatedly attack properties of the state or the pool of resources belonging to the generality of the people in any part of the country. The anti-state organisations in this context represent groups like the Niger-Delta Avengers, MEND, EGBESU boys, militants etc. While Amnesty policy brought some modifications, debates on the actual intent of Nigerian state over its implementation have continued to rage. To some, the policy portends an increase in the country's capacity of oil production, safe oil



pipelines and installations and successful disarmament as well as stabilizing the security conditions of the region. For instance, the Amnesty policy stimulated a rise in Nigeria's oil production from about 1 million at the peak of the Niger Delta crisis between 2006 and 2009 to 2.1 million barrels daily (Kalio, Godfrey-kalio and Okafor, 2013).

## **Tracing Structural-Functionalism and Frustration-Aggression Theories in Governance Failure, Amnesty Policy and Anti-State Organizations in Niger-Delta, Nigeria**

The history of militancy and the formation of anti-state organization in Niger-Delta, Nigeria can be explained from perspectives of frustration suffered by group of people as a result of structural-functional failures in terms of the inability of the various component units, that make up an entire system to enforce their primary functions, this is likened to what Onuoha (2015), classified as constitutional and political issues. For example, organs of government are component units in a system that (the legislature, the executive, judiciary, government ministries, commissions, and agencies, state government, local government, and others), are expected to perform their functions as expected (such as social service delivery, good governance, security, conducive environment for job creation among others) to the people, or else, it could provoke aggressive actions that can destabilize the whole system (Oyefusi, 2014). The frustration-aggressive theory holds the view that it takes a frustrated person to display an aggressive action (Dollard et al., 1939). The frustration here in the Niger-Delta case, includes high handedness of the Nigerian government, negligence of the plight and deplorable conditions of the people in this region, militarization and arbitrary arrests, environmental degradation, unemployment, poverty, inequality between these resources endowed region and other region without resources, among others triggered militancy in the region (Osaghae et al., 2007). All of these actions are capable of provoking an aggressive action from the suffering group. This is akin to the problem of militancy and resurgence of anti-state organizations in Niger-Delta, Nigeria (Idowu, 2012). For example, some of the attacks on oil pipelines and threats against the Nigerian state by militants in this region are provoked by frustrations such as (the gross mal-administration of the Amnesty policy in forms of the delay or refusal to pay for rehabilitation programme fees of militants, abandonment or the inability to fulfil promise made to militants, especially, regarding their rehabilitation and proper reintegration, poverty and underdevelopment in the region, corruption, mismanagement of resources from the region by the government, conspiracy between community leaders and government officials to undermine the welfare of the people, and poor implementation of the Amnesty policy, among others) (Akinola, 2011). For instance, the plan or delay by the Nigerian government under President Buhari administration to



promptly pay and take care of the concerns of repentant militants in Niger-Delta region was enough frustration that led to the aggressiveness and the formation of the Niger-Delta Avengers, an anti-state organization that terrorize the region and carried out major attacks on Nigeria's oil pipelines and security agencies (Aaron, 2015; Madubuko, 2014)

Similarly, several other attacks and protests against the Nigerian government were borne out of frustration over the politics of revenue allocation and mismanagement of oil wealth in the region (Esikot and Akpan, 2013; Aworawo, 2013). This region contributes more to the national wealth of Nigeria, but receives very little in terms of development. The youths in this region, seeing that development is not commensurate with resources and huge amount of revenue accruing to the Nigerian government from oil exploration in their region, got agitated and deployed aggressive action to attract the intervention of the government to address their deplorable conditions. The aggressive action of militants, even though, has been criticized, it has been highly instrumental to few developmental initiatives in the region. For example, the Amnesty policy was a product of long years struggles and aggressive actions by militants in the region. The persistent failure of government to perform its functions or fulfil some of its promise to the people, was what provoked the formation of anti-state organizations in the region. At the wake of this administration, there were militant attacks on oil pipelines by the Niger-Delta Avengers, who were fed up with the delay and alleged plan to discontinue the Amnesty policy by the government.

However, this theory as popularized by Dollard et al (1939) was criticized on grounds that apart from aggressive behavior, frustration also provokes feelings of depression, Seligman (1975), increases prejudice, and affects development (Grossarth et al., 1989). Contrary to the view of Dollard, Morlan (1949), argued that aggressive acts rarely occur in isolation, but have future consequences. A critical look at the submissions of these theorists showed that the formation of anti-state organizations in Niger-Delta, Nigeria is the consequence of aggressive actions from frustrated people who only see the enormous wealth from their region but does not feel the impact of such wealth on their lives and community. The gross mismanagement of funds allocated for the implementation of the Amnesty policy, the delay in the payment of training or empowerment fees, the quit notices and ejection of beneficiaries of the policy from rehabilitation programme, and the selective preferential treatment of some beneficiaries at the expense of others provoked not only an aggressive action, but depression (lots of the beneficiaries were sad, hopeless, and low-spirit), prejudice (selective or bias in the implementation of the policy) and further contributed to the underdevelopment of the region (for example, the resurgence of attacks on oil pipelines, was a setback to earnings from the crude oil (Adeosun et al., 2016).



Structural functionalism is a theory that holds the view that in all political systems, there are structures, units, and organs that perform certain functions to enhance the smooth running of the complex whole (country) (Roberta, 2019). It argues that failure to perform these functions would upset the political system and may likely push beneficiaries of such functions into revolt against institutions or structures in charge of such functions when services are not forthcoming as expected. It will be deceptive to expect cooperation and stability in a political system, where institutions fail to perform their statutory duties (Willett, 2001). This theory aptly applies to the formation of anti-state organization and militant attacks on oil pipelines in Niger-Delta region, Nigeria in several ways. First, the failure of governments (federal, state, and local) to judiciously manage the oil wealth from the region to improve deplorable conditions of people in the area has persistently provoked militant attacks on oil pipelines in the region. Secondly, poor implementation of the Amnesty policy is another factor that has triggered the resurgence of militants and their threats against the Nigerian state and its oil wells. The theory argues that the inability of the component units to perform their functions would lead to dysfunctions and instability in the whole system. Thus, the recurrent bombing of pipelines, kidnapping of oil expatriates, armed robbery, oil theft, attacks on security forces, and many others are dysfunctions and instability arising from the failure of government institutions (such as Niger Delta Development Commission, Ministry of Niger Delta) to perform their functions as expected. Dysfunctions are detrimental to peace and socio-economic development of the whole system. Evidence shows that while militants attacks and threats against the Nigerian state seem to be one of the most effective means of getting the attention of the Nigerian government to address deplorable conditions in the region, the negative effect these attacks seem to outweigh their gains.

## Methodology

Being a qualitative research design, which transcends disciplinary boundaries and thus draws on a variety of concepts and methodological tools, the study employs a qualitative method. The qualitative method utilizes an in-depth interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) to collect primary data. The IDI presents the study with vital information on the effect of failure of government in the implementation of the policy on peace and socio-economic development in Niger-Delta. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of four categories of respondents from officials/supervisors in charge of the Amnesty policy, beneficiaries of the policy, community leaders, and academic experts in public policy analysis. The criteria for inclusion are beneficiaries or involvement in the administration of the policy, and years of experience in policy analysis. Interview schedule constitutes the research instrument for IDIs and FGDs. Beneficiaries were considered for the interview because of their adequate knowledge of how the policy was implemented.





Supervisors, who were appointed government officials in charge of implementation and administration of the policy were selected based on the informed knowledge about government efforts to alleviate poverty and transformed the region, the choice of community leaders was made based on their knowledge on the effect of the policy on community development. The need to have a balanced information on the policy outcomes from experts in the academics motivated the choice of public policy analysts. Secondary data that probe into existing crisis and government interventions through various policies including the Amnesty policy are sourced through desktop reviews of empirical works on the subject. The data collected from interviews form the basis for achieving the objectives of the paper. The paper aims to present, analyse and discuss the data collected from the field. As previously stated in the objective, data for this study were collected from three states out of the nine states in Niger-Delta. In each state, 1 FGDs consisting of beneficiaries of the policy was conducted. Each FGDs, consists of 3 males and 3 females' beneficiaries. Similarly, 3 IDIs are selected, 1 participant from the amnesty office, 1 community leader and 1 policy analyst were selected in each state. In all 9 participants for the IDI and 18 beneficiaries for the FGDs were selected and interviewed. The content analysis was employed in the process of data analysis.

## Findings

### Mapping factors influencing government failure in the implementation of the Amnesty policy and its implications

- *Government Failure in the implementation of the policy*

Evidence from the analysis and application of structural-functionalism and frustration-aggression theories to this subject above shows that the failure of units and structures in a system to perform their functions, sometimes infuriate and provoke actions that destabilize the system. Nigeria is a system, which consists of component units, structures, and social institutions saddled with responsibilities, if adequately performed, could stabilize the Nigerian system, but if not, could degenerate the entity called Nigeria. Government and its agents are parts of component units that ensure the stability of the system through effective performance of their functions. Organs or agents of government includes the legislature, the executive, judiciary, ministries, commissions, agencies, departments, and others that represent government in the enforcement of its functions. In the case of the Niger-Delta, the Amnesty policy and its enforcement is within the purview of government commissions, agencies, and ministries. The implementation of the policy was marred with the failure to incorporate mechanisms or strategies for the evaluation of the policy performance and effectiveness (Pugel, 2009). Similarly, one other failure of the policy was that there was no definition of policy priority of the Nigerian government towards addressing the structural challenges in the Niger-Delta region (Okonofua, 2016). In other words, the policy, which was fabricated to end violence on oil



assets, does not consider the root causes of the problem that led to the violence. This is a huge failure on the part of the Nigerian government who was only interested in its oil assets than the development of the area. The government is not sincere with the implementation of the policy, it suffers from misplaced priority, which was to end attacks on oil assets of Nigeria and not the cause of attacks (FGDs, Delta State, 30 January, 2021). Another factor that defined the failure on the part of Nigerian government is the lack of demobilization of militants, this was taken as disarmament. The Nigerian government hurriedly believed that once the militants surrender their arms, that alone will cut them off from affiliations with their units, organizations or groups (Okonofua, 2016). The inability of government to de-mobilized militants from their prior militant groups and organizations makes them prone to resurgence of their militant organization in the region. The submission of arms by militants to the Nigerian government, without de-mobilizing them from having connection with their previous networks makes rehabilitation and re-integration into the society difficult (Ajibola, 2015; Ubhenin (2013) and Ajibola (2015). The exaggeration of the success of the Amnesty policy, even before implementation is another cause of government failure. Although, the policy achieved some success in terms of disarmament, however it was revealed that militants surrendered only a fraction of their weapons, while they still benefit from the programme, this in the long run severely affected the de-mobilization aspect of the policy (Okonofua, 2016). The routing of payment of stipends, re-integration allowances through some notable militias is one other area government has failed in the implementation of the policy (Okonofua, 2013).

This significantly undermines the peace and development of the region, as majority of the militants still maintain relations with their former anti-state organizations. Other factors that contributed to government failure include bureaucratic bottlenecks, delay tactics of the Buhari administration (For instance, it took the current President, several months to appoint cabinet members and ministers), corruption, diversion and mismanagement of funds meant for rehabilitation of beneficiaries, selective implementation of the policy to favour some beneficiaries (militants) over others. The use of ex-militants to safeguard pipelines, without demobilizing was a colossal failure on the part of government in the implementation of the Amnesty policy in the region (IDI, male lecturer, 50 years, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 30 January, 2021). It makes them more prone to their former organisations, and could still be involved in providing information to other militants, especially, when the Nigerian government is not forthcoming with its promises to them. The failure of government to include inputs from communities within the region setbacks the achievement and outcomes of the policy in terms of performance and effectiveness. The inclusion of inputs from the society would have drawn the attention of the government to the root causes of militants uprising and attacks on oil assets and infrastructures (Ajibola, 2015; Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012)

- *Implications of Government's failure in the Implementation of the Amnesty Policy*



The effects and consequences of failing to implement policy, especially the one that has no defined mechanism or strategy for the assessment of the policy, are enormous and devastating. One of the implications of this hurriedly packaged programme is that it resulted into resurgence of an anti-state organization called the Niger-Delta Avengers. This was an aggression or action from militants, especially, those, who were on the programme, but were not de-mobilized, following alleged delay or perception that the Buhari administration may want to discontinue the Amnesty policy. These militants felt betrayed and was apprehensive of the fact that a change in government, especially from President Jonathan, who was from the region to Buhari from the north, the Nigerian government may discontinue the rehabilitation and re-integration programme. The suspicion of militants was based on the body language of Buhari's style of leadership that has been characterized by delay. This delay, which later manifested in the failure of government to promptly pay for training and rehabilitation allowances and stipends to militants succinctly explained the cause of resurgence of militancy in the region at the inception of this regime.

It led to bombing of oil wells and infrastructures, kidnapping of oil expatriates, attacks on Nigerian security agencies, some of whom are from that region (IDI, female lecturer, 59 years, Federal University Otuoke Bayelsa, 27 January, 2021). Bombing of oil assets does not just affect only the Nigerian assets, but human beings living in communities hosting such natural resources. It affects their source of income, land, environment, and properties. Many lives have been wasted due to bombing aimed at oil infrastructures, but unfortunately hit playing children in their compound or on streets (IDI, male officer, 40years, community leader, Delta State, 10 February 2021). This implication was succinctly buttressed in Adeosun et al (2016), that despite the policy, there are rising cases of kidnapping, violence, and organized crimes by some militants, due to government's failure to de-mobilize them. This distorts the peace and development of the region, which the government set as one of the policy's goals (Okonofua, 2016).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the attitude of the government or Nigerian state was about protecting its oil interest and not improving the poor socio-economic conditions of people in the region. The state was more interested in putting an end to problems affecting her oil production capacity than finding solutions to problems propelling militants to attack its oil assets and infrastructure. This assertion corroborates that of Ubhenin (2013) and Ajibola (2015) who had earlier averred that because amnesty policy is ex-militants centred it has stimulated more uprising of militants' activities from jobless youths who were desperate in getting the attention of government through bargaining or negotiation and be included in the programme. Another implication of government's failure, especially, in the use of ex-militants to man and secure oil pipelines and routing payment of stipends and allowances through them, is the inordinate



enrichment of these militants, although, government thought that, if it can get the cooperation of the notorious ones, there will be peace and end to attacks on oil infrastructures (Ajibola, 2015; Okonofua, 2011). This has a deeper implication as it exacerbates the resurgence of more dangerous groups and organizations that cannot be control by government's recruited ex-militants (FGDs, Beyelsa State, February 18, 2021).

The lavish life-style of ex-militants in the society, especially with the empowerment coming from the Nigerian government influenced jobless youths in the region to become members of anti-state organizations that caused violence and attack oil infrastructures. Thus, the manning of oil pipelines by ex-militants, was only able to restore peace temporarily, the implication of that decision by government outweighs its benefits. It led to corruption between ex-militants and government officials in charge of logistics and administration of the policy (Okonofua, 2011; 2013). It exacerbated extortions, substitution of names of documented beneficiaries with non-beneficiaries, delay in payment of allowances and stipends, witch-hunting among militants, who used money meant for beneficiaries to maintain and nurture militant organizations. In the long, the Amnesty policy further created more dangerous problems, divisions, inequality, rising attacks on the Nigerian state and oil pipelines. The region was largely underdeveloped and devoid of peace as envisaged at the inauguration of the policy in the region IDI, female lecturer, 42 years, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, 10 February, 2021). From all the analyses of respondents and scholarly evidence about the character of Nigerian government, amnesty policy and reappearance of anti-state organisation, it can be rightly construed that the failure of the government in the way it goes about the implementation of the policy has caused more damaged than good to the Niger-Delta region. This is because the policy only addresses the symptoms of Niger-Delta problems but does not cure or heal the problems.

- *Amnesty Policy, Peace, and Development in Niger-Delta*

The essence of this objective is to examine, if any, the amnesty programme engenders development and peace in the region. It intends to provide opportunity for respondents to speak in concrete terms on how the policy has fared in terms of restoring peace and contributing to development in the region. While opinions differ on how the policy has engender development and peace, all respondents agreed that if the policy had focused on addressing infrastructural and developmental deficiencies of the region, as well as creation of jobs relative peace and development would have been restored in the region. This view corroborates submissions of the following IDI:

“As one of the supervisors of the amnesty policy, we know that the policy did not in any way address the root problems that provoked series of planned attacks on oil infrastructures. In fact, the exclusion of non-militant but jobless youths are the main cause of resurgence attacks and formation of dangerous militant groups. Therefore, for the



policy to engender peace and development, it must target rehabilitation of communities, cleaning of the environment, infrastructure, social security and inclusion of vulnerable people (women, children and youths) (IDI, female supervisor, 36 years, Amnesty office, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, 30 January, 2021).

It is clear that despite the Amnesty policy, peace and development are still very elusive in the region. This is partly because the government failed to include people from the society who bears the brunt of militant attacks and at the receiving end of deplorable conditions in the region. The inclusion of the people could have made a significant difference as more reliable information on social and economic problems inherent in the region would have been factored into the policy objectives. This is consistent with findings that the expected peace and development that the Nigerian government promised by unveiling the amnesty policy was not achieved as there are rising cases of offensive threats, attacks, and clashes between the security forces and anti-state organizations in the region (Okonofua, 2011; Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012; Aworawo, 2013). In a concise but related view, an IDI states that:

“Amnesty policy was only able to accomplish the pardoning of some militants and submission of fraction of ammunitions in the region. The much-desired peace and development hyped by the Nigerian government and its elites are not achieved. Till date, gunmen and other militants’ havocs are on the increase in the region. The region is not totally free from activities of anti-state organizations. The deplorable conditions that the government claimed to improve through the policy has not been achieved. In fact, the situation, as regards development is worse as the region is ravaged with problem of abandoned and uncompleted infrastructural projects. (IDI, male, 41 years, Amnesty office, Bayelsa, 27 January, 2021).

The foregoing corroborates the view of Ekumaoko (2013) who opines that even though the huge funds spent on rehabilitation and re-integration of ex-militants does not in any way stopped them from threatening attacks on the Nigerian state and oil assets. It contributed very little or nothing, to the peace and development of the region (Okonofua, 2011)

### **Discussion of Findings**

Results from empirical reviews, responses and submissions of respondents during interview session, showed that character of Nigerian state and government towards implementation of the policy was only protect its interests and not that of the people. For majority of respondents, believed that the failure of the government to clearly defined the measuring strategy and mechanisms of the policy, the non-inclusion of the people in communities in the decision-making process or plan of the amnesty policy, bureaucratic delays, corruption, mal-administration, the hyping of the success of the policy, even before implementation,



and others are contributory factors to poor implementation of the amnesty policy (Adrian and Ben 2016)

This has severe implications for continual attacks on oil assets by the Niger-Delta Avengers, an anti-state organization formed after the commencement of the amnesty policy. The failure of government in its attempt to effectively manage the policy to be an all-inclusive programme, where all ex-militants have equal opportunity and rights, provokes the resurgence of anti-state organisations in the region (Adeosun et. al., 2015; Ajibola, 2015; Okonofua, 2016). For example, the routing of stipends and re-integration allowances through some ex-militants, and offering some ex-militants the job of policing oil infrastructures are enough to cause feelings of jealousy, greed, hate, which in turn, could triggered intra or inter groups violence among ex-militants. Similarly, the government failure to de-mobilized surrendered militants has severe implication for peaceful re-integration of ex-militants into the society (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016; Adrian and Ben 2016; Ajibola 2015; Iyabobola 2015).

On how the policy has fared in the region, evidence from both respondents and empirical reviews showed that despite the prospect of the policy, peace and development in terms of ameliorating deplorable socio-economic conditions of people are hardly accomplished (Akor 2011; Ekumaoko 2013; Aghedo 2015; Ubhenin, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

The Amnesty policy was designed by the Nigerian government to curb recurrent attacks and violence in the Niger-Delta region, with the hope that, if militant attacks and violence are stopped, there can be peaceful atmosphere, where development can thrive. However, reverse has been the case, as the policy has further triggered the formation of the Niger-Delta Avengers. This group was formed after the implementation of the policy, due to perceived failure of the government to adequately implement the policy as expected. One of such failures was the body language and disposition of the current ruling government towards the implementation of the policy, which was manifested in the delay in the payment of rehabilitation training programme fees for ex-militants, ejection notices by institutions, where ex-militants are being rehabilitate and many other factors. This attitude provoked more dangerous attacks and violence in the region. This was possible because the Nigeria government took disarmament as the same as de-mobilization. Thus, the failure of the government to de-mobilized ex-militants, still makes them maintain their former links and affiliations with their former groups, hence, their easy access to weapons to carry out violence, despite being covered by the policy. This negates and undermines the policy's expected ends (peace and development). Till date, the region is still largely unpeaceful and underdeveloped.



To address this problem and improve policy implementation, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need for reliable data that comprehensively captures the socio-economic problems of the people. Further, active involvement of the people in data gathering and decision-making processes of viable and people-oriented policy is required. This is a departure from former policies that are handed over or imposed on the people without their input. The active involvement of people in policy initiatives decisions will enhance the success of the policy, this is because, the people have more accurate knowledge of problems causing violence and incessant attacks on oil assets in the region. For example, if policy inputs are provided by the people or society, then, the policy expected goals will be more focused on the peace and development of the society rather than the enrichment of selected few. The Nigerian government should redirect the focus of the amnesty policy to address socio-economic challenges in the region.

### Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the assistance of anonymous fellows in facilitating some of the interviews.

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