

Reintegration Of Niger Delta Ex- Militants Into Their Communities: The Impacts And The Challenges, 2009-2019

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Abstract: The Niger Delta armed conflicts shifted focus from the violence that engulfed the region to the challenges of Post Amnesty era. The Amnesty package granted by the federal government of Nigeria to all persons involved in militant activities in 2009 became a window for easy transition for Niger Delta militants to acquire civilian status. The reintegration aspect of the amnesty was an effort towards curtailing the risk associated with ex -militants as community spoilers and special risk factors. The component was essential in order to bring peace and development to the area by transforming ex militants to meaningful and productive citizens. The study examines the reintegration component and analyzes the achievements and challenges. Finding indicate that the Niger Delta reintegration exercise targeted ex-militants only. Others victims of the armed conflicts were not captured in the DDR programme. The study conclude by advocating for the establishment of Post-Inclusive Re-Integration Agency (PIRA) for ex-militant and other victims of the conflicts, ensure continuous assessment, monitoring and evaluation of ex-militants and victims. These would lead to greater peace, stability, progress and massive development in the region. The study relied basically on secondary sources of data.

Keywords: Nigeria, Niger Delta, Ex-militants, Amnesty, DDR, Transition, Reintegration.

Introduction: The Niger Delta is known for its unique history of contributions to the Nigerian state from pre-colonial times till date. The richly endowed region is the geographical heart of crude oil exploitation where Nigeria earns 99.7 and 90 percent of its export and annual income respectively (Ogege, 2011: 245-258). In spite of the benefits of the oil and gas economy to the Nigerian state, the oil-rich Niger Delta communities wallow in abject poverty and underdevelopment. Extant extraction and exploitation of oil by various multinational oil companies (MNOCs) since the discovery in Oloibiri have caused an adverse

environmental impacts on the soil, forest and waterways of the Niger Delta communities, through oil spills and gas flares perpetrated by the multinational oil companies (Oluwaniyi, 2011: 34-46).

Continued environmental degradation, loss of means of livelihood, unemployment, poverty, loss of lives and general underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region have led to organized militant insurgency resulting in sabotage of oil pipelines, bunkering, kidnapping and open confrontation with government forces. The federal government however granted presidential pardon to the militants in 2009 in order to restore

peace, development and stability to the Niger Delta communities through participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration package.

Ex-combatants who participated in the amnesty programme constitute a considerable risk group that is capable of undermining security and development gains in a post conflict environment. Reintegration component is particularly chosen for analyzes because it is the most critical stage of any DDR programme since it is targeted at completing the peace building process to prevent a relapse into hostilities especially in communities where ex-combatants have reintegrated. In such situations, employment and income generation are often the principal concerns of both ordinary citizens and ex-combatants alike, and are among the key determining factors as to whether those who have been living by the gun are willing to disarm and reintegrate into civilian society.

The return of ex-combatants to civilian status requires special attention, targeted assistance and planned programmes of action to enable them transit and reintegrate adequately into civilian communities (UN, 2010: 48-50). Scholars have speculated that disarmament and demobilization exercise alone cannot bring about the needed peace, stability and development after armed conflicts, but reintegration component is an extensive long term development efforts that is essential to avoiding a relapse into future armed conflicts (Watson, 2009: 18-20). The study seeks to examine reintegration as a concept types, forms, impacts and challenge and its application process for Niger Delta ex-militants.

Reintegration as a Concept

Reintegration is the third component in DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration).DDR aims to recover weapons, break down armed groups and help ex-combatants. Reintegration therefore can be defined as a way in which fighters change their identity from combatants to civilian and alter their behaviour by abolishing the use of violent means and increasing activities that are approved by the mainstream communities. This involves helping ex-combatants move away from the roles and positions that defined them during the armed conflict towards identifying them as citizens and members of local communities. It is essentially a social, political and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level (UN, 2010: 150).

The reintegration of ex-combatants is especially challenging and is considered to be one of the most difficult phase of DDR. This component addresses the

economic political and social transformation of both the ex-combatants and the overall communities they are joining.

Reintegration as a concept derives its origin from the concept of peace building, first introduced by the United Nations former secretary general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his proposals for reforms in the United Nations (UN, 2010: 162). In his report, otherwise called "Agenda for Peace", Boutros Ghali advocated for comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures that will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people in a post conflict environment (UN, 1992: 180).

The secretary general identified eight key pillars for the successful application of DDR concept anywhere in the world. The eight key pillars are:

- i. Disarming ex-combatants
- ii. Restoring peace
- iii. Destruction of weapons
- iv. Repatriation of refugees
- v. Advisory and training support for security personnel
- vi. Human protection
- vii. Strengthening of government institutions and
- viii. Promotion of public participation. (Agenda for Peace, 1992: 183)

Scholars have agreed that the eight key pillars enunciated by Ghali are the engine room that drives any successful post armed conflicts resolution and peacekeeping initiative globally. With the acceptance of the proposals, United Nations (UN) embraced the DDR concept as an essential ingredients in it's multidimensional peacebuilding role globally (UNO, 1992:178).

African countries therefore draw from the UN peace building mechanisms to resolve her myriad of armed conflicts. Watson, reason that without the creation of fresh socio-economic opportunities for the ex-combatants, frustrated and unemployed ex-militants would be involved ultimately in activities that is bound to bring back insurgency of insecurity (Watson, 2009: 18-20). Therefore, ending conflicts must be done in ways that encourages sustainable security and development (Watson, 2009: 12).

Forms of Reintegration

A major challenge to improving human security and establishing sustainable peace in regions emerging from armed conflict is how to reintegrate ex-combatants, many of whom are used to making a living

through violence and bring them back into civilian society (Watson, 2009:18).

After ex-combatants have been demobilized and disarmed, their effectiveness and sustainable reintegration into civilian life is very essential to preventing a new escalation of the armed conflict. In the short term, ex-combatants who do not find peaceful ways of making a living are likely to return to armed conflict. In the longer term, disaffected war veterans can play an important role in destabilizing the social order and polarizing the political order, thus becoming easy targets of reactionary and extremist movements or gangs. In order for all this not to happen, an effective reintegration exercise must be undertaken.

Reintegration is usually associated within the context of political, economic and social reunification of ex-combatants, their families and primary support network into civilian society. Ofonofua, identified three forms of reintegration; economic, social, and political reintegration (Ofonofua, 2011:22).

Economic Reintegration

Recognizing that ex-combatants have differing economic need and opportunities, they are not a homogeneous group and this means that the type of support, training and skills that they will need to secure employment will vary greatly. Care must be taken to establish the priorities and needs of different groups and ensure that appropriate, targeted support is given. For instance, a large proportion of Niger Delta ex-combatants were young men who had little life experience apart from fighting, and often have little chance of returning to their communities, particularly if they are from rural communities whereas job opportunities are more likely to be available in cities. They may also fear the reception they might encounter in their communities of return (Watson, 2020: 7-9).

Also, women involved in fighting or associated with fighting forces face different economic challenges. There is need to train them in traditional skills to sustain them in their different communities. Children are another key group who pose a difficult case in reintegration exercise, especially if they were recruited as children but are now over 18 years and therefore not eligible for targeted assistance packages given as part of child DDR (Watson, 2020:8). In economic reintegration, ex-combatants, their families and primary support network are accepted and allowed by local communities to develop their skills and livelihood as members of the communities, and stakeholders in the economic enterprises of the community.

Social Reintegration

Social reintegration is the process through which ex-combatants after they are demobilized and disarmed, rejoin and are accepted by civilian social groups such as families, development-unions, men groups, women groups, social clubs, village unions, village football teams and mainstream communities and have the ability to participate in local events and decision making process of their communities to the same extent enjoyed by other members and stakeholders of the communities. They can vote and be voted for and enjoys equal rights and privileges like any other indigene in the community. Social reintegration lays the groundwork for successful political reintegration of ex-combatants. Conversely, successful inclusive political processes facilitate social cohesion (Watson, 2009:10).

Key Aspects of Social Reintegration

Restoring social bonds

This involves reestablishing connections between individuals and their communities. It may include providing psychological support, facilitating dialogue, and offering education and job opportunities.

Reducing stigma

Individuals or groups previously involved in violence or considered "outsiders" often face social stigma. Reintegration efforts must aim to diminish this stigma, fostering an environment where ex-combatant can rebuild their identities and sense of belonging.

Economic inclusion

Successful reintegration often involves providing economic opportunities such as vocational training, access to employment, or microfinance programmes. Without economic reintegration, social reintegration is less likely to succeed (Watson, 2009: 7).

Political Reintegration

Political reintegration refers to the process by which ex-combatants are integrated back into the political system of their communities. This process aims at creating a sense of political inclusion to ensure that ex-combatants have a stake in the political system of the communities. This is especially important for preventing the return of armed conflict. Political reintegration is about formal recognition, participation and empowerment of ex-combatants within the political system of the community. It is necessary for long term peace and stability of the community (Watson, 2009: 21).

Key Aspects of Political Reintegration

Amnesty and Justice

Political reintegration often involves transitional justice mechanisms such as amnesty programmes, truth

commissions, or trials to hold individuals accountable while allowing for their political re-engagement.

Political Participation

Ensuring that former insurgents, rebels, or excluded groups have access to the political system (such as through the right to vote, run for office, or participate in political parties) is a key aspect of political reintegration. This is especially important for preventing the recurrence of armed conflict.

Institutional Reforms

Political reintegration may require reforms in institutions such as the military, police, and judiciary to allow for broader participation and address grievances that led to previous political exclusion or rebellion. Social and political reintegration are vital for the long-term peace and stability of post-conflict societies. Successful reintegration requires coordinated efforts across social, economic, and political spheres and is often supported by transitional justice mechanisms, reconciliation programmes, and inclusive governance reforms.

Types of Reintegration

Individual Reintegration

Individual reintegration offers benefits to ex-combatants after demobilization and rehabilitation (Moshood, 2013: 46). It focuses on the rehabilitation, reinsertion, vocational trainings and formal education to acquire quality education up to tertiary levels in local and foreign universities for ex-combatants. The vocational trainings involve a wide range of vocations that would potentially empower ex-combatants upon their reintegration into civilian societies. These may include piloting, carpentry, furniture making, welding, boat building, marine operations, automobile technology, agricultural operations, oil and gas technical operations, electrical and mechanical engineering and other relevant skills (Hakeem, 2013: 48).

Community Reintegration

Community reintegration is the acceptance of ex-combatant, his/her family and the ability to participate in local events and decision making to the same extent as other community members. The role of communities in facilitating resettlement and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian and community life is very important to any sustainable and effective reintegration programme (Moshood, 2013: 47). The host communities are regarded as part of reintegration programme and should be empowered to participate in the design, planning and execution of reintegration exercise (Jonah, 2008:38). In the Niger Delta reintegration exercise, poor community reintegration

makes for reluctance of ex-combatants to return to home communities.

The lack of good community reintegration programme is a big factor in the relocation of ex-combatants to urban areas with less likely concern for social stigmatization rather than return to home communities. The successful reintegration of ex-combatants presupposes a community that is socially, politically and economically reintegrated, ready and available to receive them. These processes are necessary to change the negative perceptions, mistrust, and ill feelings that communities held against ex-militants, and to resolve problems of deep community fragmentation. Since armed conflicts have destabilized the pre-war community, it is essential that community -based reintegration is strengthen and consolidated in order to assist in returning ex-combatants to pre-war communities that have been restored and ideally improved (Mark, 2004: 506).

Implementing the Niger Delta Reintegration Programme

Reintegration is a concerted efforts in assisting ex-combatants, victims of violence and communities affected by violent conflicts to return to normal productive lives. It involves empowering ex-combatants and embracing victims through devoted attention to the socio-economic development of their communities. In keeping up with the key components of reintegration exercise which essentially entails supports given to ex-combatants to resettle through the help of various programmes.

In the Niger Delta region, individual reintegration of ex-combatants followed a sequence of payment of reinsertion allowance, training and employment opportunities. It is important to note that the reintegration of the Niger Delta ex-combatants was anchored by two important agencies; the Presidential Amnesty Office and the Oil and Gas International Foundation (OGIF).

Payment of Reinsertion Allowance

Individual acceptance of amnesty and subsequent disarmament qualified ex-combatants for payment of reinsertion allowance. The United Nations define reinsertion assistance as "assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization, but prior to the long-term process of reintegration, as a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families, which may include transitional safety allowance, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short term education, training and employment tools. The duration of reinsertion assistance is usually specified but varies in different contexts (UNO, 2005).

In the Niger Delta experience, reintegration allowance consisted of a monthly stipend of 65,000 and rent allowance of 150,000 (Oluwariyi, 2018: 87-91). Some ex-combatants, invested their stipend in basic and luxury needs for themselves and their families, including establishing good businesses of their own, while ex-warlords became sudden billionaires due to extra insection awards in the form of lucrative contracts in the oil industry and other sectors of the economy (Oluwariyi, 2012: 46-54). Consequently, ex-militant leaders like Tompolo and Alhaji Asari Dokubo gained political powers and influence in the communities to which they returned (Ushie, 2013: 36-40). This measure contributed immensely to the immediate stemming of armed violence in the area and the return of the oil and gas sector to its boom-era conditions.

Quality Training

One good way to access the reintegration process of the DDR is to look at the quality training designed for ex-combatants. In the Niger Delta case, the reintegration process was characterized by high quality educational and vocational skills training programmes that have the capacity to empower the demobilized combatants after their training.

The reintegration process provided the platform for training ex-combatants in literacy, numeracy and entrepreneurship (Venessa, 2013: 18). The training was aimed at giving the beneficiaries sustainable livelihood and aid in socio-economic recovery efforts. Also, the training was necessary to the re-establishment of values and norms that regulate and give meaning to family and community life while paving the way for ex-combatants to develop a new sense of identity that is not linked to the war (120, 1997:14). It is important to establish that reintegration programme in terms of formal and informal education training offered to Niger Delta ex-combatants were acquired in high profile and expensive universities and best training centres in France, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, South Africa, Canada, Malaysia, Cyprus, Turkey, Russia and a host of others in different parts of the world (Amnesty News, 2012:18).

Those who needed to further their education, were sent to universities and colleges around the world to study various courses including Law, Political Science, Business Communication, International Relations, Management, Mass Administration, Accountancy, Information and Communications Technology Medicine, Engineering, Applied Sciences, Radio Electronics, Building and Construction Technology (Osah, 2014: 1-7).

While others who opted for vocational and skills

training were sent to Schlumberger Technologies based in France (for drilling engineering), Lufthansa Aviation Academy based in Germany (for advanced pilot training), CAE Oxford Aviation Academy in the United Kingdom (for advanced pilot training), Schneider Electric in France (for electrical engineering), Institute of French Petroleum in France (for petroleum industry technicians), Airstar Flight School in Italy (for pilot training), Comair in South Africa (for pilot training), Flight Simulation Company in Netherlands (for pilot training), African Union Aviation Academy in South Africa (for pilot training), Adcorp Technical Training in South Africa (mining industry technicians), Furntech Furniture in South Africa (for furniture making) and in other parts of the globe (Hakeem, 2015: 49).

Employment

The high quality training acquired by the beneficiaries of the Niger Delta reintegration exercise provided good employment opportunities for ex-militants. Employment opportunities were the most difficult aspect of individual reintegration in the Niger Delta. However, some trained ex-combatants were fortunate to gain sustainable employment in the organizations where they were trained, while others have engaged in various businesses. Profits earned from those businesses along with Amnesty stipends created the means for housing and survival for those ex-militants and their families (Oluwaniyi, 2018: 87-89). Those who were not fortunate to be employed depended on casual jobs provided by the oil and gas industry which involves repairing pipelines, constructing band walls around gas pipes, dredging waterways and oil related works. Some ex-combatants found employment as security guards in oil servicing companies and in other sector of the economy.

Impacts of Niger Delta Reintegration Programmed

The effects of the reintegration phase created impacts in the lives of ex-combatants. In 2012, ex-militants were offered jobs by training centres at home and abroad after completing skills acquisitions. For instance, about 89 ex-combatants were offered employment opportunities in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and United Arab Emirate (UAE), after completing their training in maritime activities, welding and fabrication (Oscar, 2010: 58-71). In a region with high youth unemployment, the creation of jobs/employment opportunities for previously frustrated youth was highly commended (Ubheniri, 2006: 70-83). Upon completion of one's vocational trainings, the Amnesty Implementation Committee promised that beneficiaries would not be given cash, but tools and equipment needed to start up their own businesses around the Niger Delta or any place they

chose within Nigeria. These businesses were to be monitored and evaluated for at least 12 months using log books and monthly reports to access progress (Osah, 2014: 1-7).

It is important to note that the overall objective of any peace building efforts in the Niger Delta region were essentially launched to tackle unrest, militancy and insecurity problems in the region. The amnesty programme via reintegration aspect particularly targeted the return of ex-combatants to their communities as civilians in order to stabilize security situation in the Niger Delta region. Ajaero however noted that for those who actually know the cost of armed violence and the quality of arms and ammunitions in the Niger Delta region, the decision of the ex-combatants to embrace peace was one of the best thing that happened in the country in 2009 (Ajaero, 2010:21). He further stated that a state of war had been averted by their decision to lay down arms and was a great act of patriotism.

Also, the reintegration process provided a unique opportunities to rebuild the capacities of the youth as well as reintegrate agitating youths of the Niger Delta into the mainstream Nigeria as a confidence building strategy. Kuku asserted that the reintegration component saved lives and prevented Nigeria from political and economic grief (Kuku, 2009: 48). Besides, the security situation in the region had stabilized which gave opportunity for fixing decayed infrastructures in the area.

The reintegration of the ex-militants helped to entrenched peace and safety in the creeks and swamps which enabled local fishermen, palm wine tappers, and farmers to return to their occupations for individual and family sustainable livelihood. The process helped in reducing the menace of kidnapping, hostage-taking, criminalities and destruction of oil pipelines and oil facilities in the Niger Delta region. These consequently affected the nation's quota of oil production which helped Nigeria to meet it's contractual obligations and resumed its position in OPEC ranking.

Amnesty deal via reintegration aspect helped in violent crimes reduction as most persons who were involved in anti-social activities were integrated into the programme thereby making violence unattractive. Thus, the achievements, especially the security stabilization generated, brought considerable goodwill for Nigeria among international partners and friends. The impact of reintegration programme rebranded and gave the country a positive image among the comity of nations (Kuku, 2009: 15)..

The Challenges of the Niger Delta Reintegration Programme

The reintegration programme had a number of challenges which explain the huge number of criticisms of the programme. The following are some of the challenges observed while studying the Niger Delta reintegration exercise.

Training Lapses

A major difficulty in the training of ex-combatants was the delay or even failure to send some long rehabilitated ex-combatants for training programme, despite the critical importance of training to the region's security. Some core ex-combatants were excluded from accessing training programmes, while unwarranted access to training resources was given to friends and families of Amnesty programme officials. The situation was worse for ex-militant women whose obligations to take care of their home impinged on their participation. These challenges suggest that excluded groups have limited options for survival and that the consequences of neglecting them are detrimental to sustained peace.

Corruption

Corruption is a major problem in all facets of the Nigerian society. Corruption has long been known to be a major driver of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. Studies relate the culture of corruption to the massive oil wealth and popular discontent in the Niger Delta region. Oil wealth spurs corruption, creating a vicious cycle of corruption, patronage, and violence. Most corrupt activities were perpetrated by the Amnesty Programme officials, ex-warlords, and implementing partners, including contractors and consultants who focus on their own enrichment, rather than on successfully benefitting the ex-combatants (Ikelegbe, 2005: 15).

The result of corruption is seen in the diversion of millions of foreign currencies to the coffers of consultants and contractors, which reduced the funds available to take care of the remaining ex-militants or even the existing ones. While the reintegration programme was meant for ex-militants, as much as 80 percent of the budget was given in payment to contractors and consultants, leaving just 20 percent for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants.

Lack of Employment Opportunity

One of the criteria for sustainable peace in post war environments is the empowerment of ex-combatants through the provision of income and employment opportunities. Research suggest that when ex-combatants fail to find some sort of employment or income -generating activities, the process of their return to civilian life is often disrupted, and these constitute a high risks of ex-combatants relapsing into

criminal or aggressive behavior. In the Niger Delta region, the inability of those who had received training especially abroad to acquire gainful employment undermined the success of the reintegration process (Watson, 2009: 7-8).

Apart from the fact that inability to gain employment after training pushes ex-combatants to forget their acquired technical skills, it also suggest that training may have been a waste of time and resources. These problems increased the frustrations of the ex-combatants and push them back to the creeks (Nilson, 2010: 62-65).

Lack of Concrete Community Reintegration

The failure to reconcile ex-combatants with their communities have not helped the reintegration process, neither has it aided the process of community development. Since reconciliation help to restore social networks that were lost during armed conflicts, failure to fully implement it in the Niger Delta communities has fostered pain and bitterness in victim's minds. Ex-combatants who return to such communities without any form of reconciliation are the object of exacerbated ill-feelings from community members who are still haunted by memories of the armed violence. These negative memories challenge their co-existence, particularly when the community sees those who perpetrated crimes, being compensated heavily by the state (Ikelegbe, 2005: 3).

The aftermath of these policy contributed to ex-combatants disrespectful attitudes towards community laws and authorities in the Niger Delta communities. The conditions of communities within the period covered by the study were tragic when weighed against the level of socio-economic reintegration support given to ex-militants. Reintegrated ex-combatants without commensurate community development raised huge concerns, as ex-combatants without socio-economic amenities to fall back on in their communities in terms of job generation and provision of basic needs of life posed a serious pitfall in the process. This situation generated concerns for community members who persistently wallow in dire poverty (Ikelegbe, 2005: 5).

Poorly Organized Economic Assistance

Economic assistance to ex-combatants as they reintegrate into their pre-war communities have always been a major cause of concern. Despite the huge budget spent on the reintegration process generally, peace is still unsustainable in the Niger Delta region, due to the poor organization of economic assistance to the target ex-militants: The handling of reinsection allowance is a critical link in the success of the reintegration process (Julia, 2008: 31). In the Niger

Delta case, ex-warlords took over the payments of stipends to their foot soldiers and disbursed funds in an unfair manner, undermined the efforts of the ex-militants who surrendered weapons, signed an agreement with the federal government, and registered for demobilization and reintegration. Though the government approved a monthly stipend of N65,000 to ex-militants, warlords paid only between N20,000, and N40,000 to most ex-militants (Onapajo, 2015: 47-49).

In extreme cases, some registered ex-militants names were deleted from the list of registered militants and replaced with new ones who had never fought in the creeks. At the beginning, all ex-militants stipends were paid to their ex-warlords accounts, but after several petitions and protests from the ex-militants, the government decided to pay the ex-militants directly. That system however, was hijacked by the warlords who believed they had the power to dispense, reduce or seize allowances at will. The role of the ex-militants was indeed significant in determining the total benefits as payments varied based on the feelings of and loyalty to their warlords. These situation reduced the prospects for sustained peace due to some ex-militants disenchantment with the ex-warlord's attitudes (Moshood, 2013: 46).

Politicization of the Programme

Politicization of government's management of the reintegration process is another clear challenge which bedeviled the programme. The huge budget allocation for the programme attracted suspicion within competing ethnic groups, regions and political actors in the country. Some groups perceived the programme as a project used to specially empower youths of the Niger Delta and a conduit to enrich elites of the area from the national oil wealth while neglecting other ethnic groups and regions of the country. There were demands for the extension of empowerment programmes to other parts of the country. It is for this reason that some elites in the northern Nigeria called for the introduction of another DDR programme for the Boko Haram insurgents in the north eastern part of the country (Moshood, 2013: 46).

Lack of Community Consultation

The reintegration programmes did not incorporate in its package credible and comprehensible consultation with a wide range of shareholders. It refused to use the bottom-up approach which would have addressed the main issue and have a wider range of ownership. First, the opinion of the inhabitants who suffered the brunt of the armed conflicts and community dislocation were ignored. Secondly, the ex-militants who were the foot soldiers were not also involved in planning, rather the

government collaborated with their commanders who were only interested in their personal expansion of wealth and power. The commanders were also accused of multiplying the number of their followers in order to get a bigger share of the amnesty fund.

Lack of Inclusive Reintegration

The reintegration component exclusively targeted only male ex-militants without consideration for the victims of militancy and hostage-taking in the region. Mothers who lost children, children who had lost fathers, families that have lost homes and persons. People who were displaced by the armed conflict were not included in the reintegration package, presumably as a result of their lack of the means of violence (Babatunde, 2013: 48).

Inclusive reintegration programme normally provide benefits and assistance packages for disabled combatants, dependent children of ex-combatants, female ex-combatants, child soldiers, women partners of ex-combatants, vulnerable persons, internally displaced persons, war affected civilians, ex-combatant communities, amnestied political prisoners, and elderly persons connected to armed groups.

It is also important to note that there are youths in the Niger Delta that did not join the militant groups to cause havoc against the state. These are young, hardworking men and women, some of them were university graduates. This group of people feels disenfranchised, as they were totally sidelined in the process. This sends a worrying message that for youths to benefit from trainings that would further develop their potentials as Niger Delta indigenes, they must raise arms against the state (Moshood, 2013: 42).

Conclusion

Reintegration is a long-term process, but under the right circumstances has the capacity to transform post conflict societies. However the failure of the federal government to engage in all aspects of reintegration has created pitfalls in its implementation. The thrust of the paper was to analyze the reintegration process of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme, progress made and the challenges experienced in the execution of the programme. Critical assessment indicates that the programme yielded noticeable positive outcomes. The outcomes are a reasonable guarantee that the programme was instrumental to the relative peace and stability in the Niger Delta.

The reintegration exercise focused mainly on ex-militants without involving members of the community. It is important to note that neglect of unemployed youths or those that suffered damages in the course of armed conflict might lead to resentment

among the communities. Furthermore, the reintegration exercise should have been communal in nature, meeting the needs of the communities as well as that of the ex-militants.

In addition, the Niger Delta reintegration programme had low women participation. Women and men assume different role in the combat and should not be seen from socio-cultural angle only. The reintegration process was not inclusive to accommodate women needs which are sometime different from men's need. It is also important to engage the stigmas and community cultures that retain women and girl's successful reintegration. Unsuccessful reintegration of women may result in them having to resort to sex work or other activities that might constitute security risk in future.

At the root of the Niger Delta armed conflict were widespread poverty, underdevelopment, insecurity, neglects, low enterprise development outside oil and gas sector, poor electricity and pipe borne water distribution due to the terrain, poor quality of educational and health facilities, and severe environmental degradation. The reintegration process was not holistic in dealing with all agitations through the construction of social amenities such as good roads, schools, hospitals, housing, electricity, water, well distributed economic growth, improvement in security and transparent governance which were the causes of the armed conflicts.

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