

AMNESTY PROGRAMME AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BAYELSA AND RIVERS STATES

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Abstract

This study assessed the effects of amnesty programme on the socio-economic and community developmental of Bayelsa and Rivers States. Two specific objectives guided the study and one substantive hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the multiple regression analysis. The study adopted the mixed survey research design. The study participants included 793 adults aged between 18 years and above, who were selected through the multi-stage sampling procedure. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data while Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) were used to collect the qualitative data. The quantitative data collected were analyzed descriptively and the study hypothesis was equally tested using multiple regression analysis, while the qualitative data were analyzed using the manual method of content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that amnesty programme have not made the expected impact on the socio-economic and community development of Bayelsa and Rivers States. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the amnesty programme projects should be monitored by the agencies of the Federal Government, to ensure effective and efficient implementation as well as help to discourage diversion of funds.

Keywords: Amnesty, Amnesty Programme, Development, Federal Government, Socio-economic

Introduction

Although amnesty and amnesty programme are not novel concepts in grammar, but in real life situation in Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular, they are new entrants in the socio-political cum economic space of the nation (Ezeibe and Nnamani, 2010). Suffice to say that the concepts are offshoots of socio-economic and political circumstances. The incursion of militancy, terrorism and other violent crimes that seem to have come to stay in the nation are the reasons why the concepts of amnesty and amnesty programme seem to have taken the front

banner in the policy agenda of Nigeria irrespective of the abusiveness that has come along with their application in recent times.

The concept of amnesty and amnesty programme were introduced in the Nigerian socio-political system to cushion the effects of ravaging militancy, hostility, youth restiveness etc., which abound within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria during the administrative tenor of the late president of Nigeria – Yara’Adua. During that period, the myriad of frustrating militancy, oil bunkering, kidnapping and other violent crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria left the government of Nigeria in the most depressed state (Egwemi, 2010). The security apparatus of the government seemed handicapped on the most potent way of addressing the dangerous and ugly situation. These precarious situations resulted into what is known today as amnesty programme in Nigeria.

According to Gardener (2013), amnesty refers to meaning a pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons, usually for a political offence or the act of a sovereign officially forgiving a class of persons, who are subject to trial but have not yet been convicted. The sole aim of the programme was to stabilize, consolidate and maintain security in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria; as a pre-requisite for promoting economic development, as well as addressing hostilities and all forms of violent crisis in the region. Evidences within the ambit of extant literature suggest that resultant effect of Nigeria’s success in the implementation of the amnesty programme is that besides the massive mop-up of weapons from over 20,192 ex-agitators, crime and criminality, especially kidnapping and oil bunkering drastically reduced in the Niger Delta, and enthroned peace. Moreover, youths were empowered through techno-vocational training, employment, and offered higher education scholarship. Consequently, there was an impressive reduction in oil pipeline vandalism, entrenchment of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution in oil producing communities; increased foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Niger Delta, and a steady leap in Nigeria’s foreign reserves as a result of increased oil and gas production (Tobor and Odubo, 2017).

The above were evidently claimed within the pages of newspapers particularly within the periods of the programme initiation and implementation. The situation presently regarding the effects of the programme in the lives of the people of the Niger Delta region has remained obscure mainly due to the fact that there have not been concerted research efforts to investigate the post-

amnesty situation of the people of this region. Issues of obscurity about the programme surround around the question of how effectively the programme has been in the successful and long-term reintegration of former combatants into civilian life, as well as improving the socio-economic lives of common people within various communities. In effect, this study seeks to systematically interrogate these concerns in the post-amnesty era, particularly from the views of the local people, in order to proffer policies measures for sustained improvements.

Statement of the Problem

Amnesty programme is a peace building initiative of the Federal government of Nigeria, which is expected to cushion the effects of long-term hostility, arms taking, banditry, youth restiveness and other violent situations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. However, research evidences point to the view that despite the acclaimed successes of the programme in restoring peace to the region, a lot of inconsistencies have obscured the programme in recent time - leading to increased challenges in infrastructural development, heightened social unrest and unemployment amongst the trained ex-militants, which may inform the reason why there was a resurgence of the militant crisis in the region (Ebiede, 2017). This view was also shared earlier by Nnorom and Odigbo (2015) who argued that despite the promises of amnesty programme, incidences of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment still linger in the Niger Delta region.

It is feared that the people of the Niger Delta region may still be suffering from the same situations that warranted the initiation of amnesty programme and if the situation is not given a critical assessment, it may become difficult to understand how much impact the amnesty programme impacts on the lives of the local people within the region. Yet, the present federal government of Nigeria has often claimed through various media platforms, that efforts are being put in place to strengthen observed weaknesses of the amnesty programme for sustained socio-economic development in the Niger Delta region. Considering the view that such claims may be part of political propaganda, it is considered necessary in this study to approach the understanding of the actual situation through the views of the local people, who are expected to be the direct beneficiaries of the amnesty programme.

This approach is also considered necessary because, it is not quite known whether this programme actually met its intended purposes especially in the socioeconomic lives of the common people within the Niger Delta oil

communities. This is due to the fact that this area of knowledge has been relatively unexplored by scientific researches in recent time. It is therefore considered important in this study that a way of evaluating the sustainability and impact of the amnesty programme is by conducting systematic inquiries into the effects of the programme, so as to close this gap in knowledge, as well as proffer policy measures that could help to strengthen areas of relapse and sustain the purposes of the programme in the Niger Delta region.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the effects of the amnesty programme on socio-economic development of Bayelsa and Rivers states
2. To examine the effects of the amnesty programme on community development in Bayelsa and Rivers states.

Study Hypothesis

H₁: there is a significant relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and views regarding the effects of amnesty programme on socio-economic development of Bayelsa and Rivers States.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Amnesty and Amnesty Programme

Amnesty: The concept of amnesty is derived from the word *amnesia*, meaning a pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons, usually for a political offence or the act of a sovereign officially forgiving a class of persons, who are subject to trial but have not yet been convicted (Gardener, 2013). An amnesty may be extended when the authority decides that bringing citizens into compliance with a law is more important than punishing them for past offences. Aside from conceptual definition of amnesty, studies across the globe shows that amnesty can be granted based on what the nation or government tends to achieve. The United Nation Publication on amnesties sees it as exemption from criminal prosecution. Omadjohwoefe (2011) notes that amnesty requires the recipients to perform certain tasks such as providing information, admitting the truth about their actions, showing remorse or surrendering weapons as in the case of the militants in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The conditional amnesty could be individualized, so that the recipients can only benefit from an amnesty programme upon successful compliance with its conditions. Amnesty is categorized into individual amnesty, amnesty movement and mass amnesty. Individual amnesty has to do with a pardon that is extended to an offender (Azinge, 2013).

Peterside, Porter and Watts (2012) attested that the vision of the amnesty programme is to transform the youths from militancy to gainful employment, and the Niger Delta from a region defined by penury, abject poverty, hunger and starvation, marginalization, crime and deprivation to a region populated and designed with modern city features with economic prosperity, skilled and healthy man power, secured, peaceful, progressive and harmonious region. But according to Robert (2015) the holistic objective assessment of the present state of the Niger Delta region would point to the fact that despite the declaration and implementation of the amnesty programme, the region remains a keg of carbide that is waiting for explosion; if adequate attention is not given and permanent structures are not put on ground to forestall a reoccurrence of militancy, hostage taking and pipe line vandalism in that region, reoccurrence of the tragic experience will be inevitable. Amnesty programme as conceptualized may unbelievably serve different purpose to different people living in the same environment. To many, amnesty programme may serve a palliative purpose in all cases as it has been and can still be used as a means of political patronage or a conduit pipe to siphon government finance as in the case of amnesty for the Niger Delta militants where emergency Billionaires have been created (Nwankpa, 2014).

Though amnesty allows the government of a nation or state to forget criminal acts, usually before prosecution has occurred, it is not just given amnesty for the mere sake of given it but the whole idea of amnesty comes up when punishment or reprimand is perceived to cause further crises as in the case with Niger Delta militants. According to Bassy and Akpan (2012) for amnesty programme to achieve it's purpose, structural issues surrounding militancy in the Niger Delta should be addressed. For instance, in the case of Niger Delta militancy, amnesty is still in place but today the area is still witnessing a disastrous dimension of economic sabotage probably because "somebody somewhere" has been called upon to explain some issues bordering on misappropriation of funds and fraudulent activities by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Amnesty Programme: This refers to a stipulated strategies and means through which the practical implementation of amnesty is made possible. Amnesty Programme, can also be seen as a government programme or strategies put in place for the main purpose of empowering and reintegrating the pardoned back into a useful society life. These programmes may include educational and vocational skills training of ex-militants as alternatives to violence and militancy

in the region. In granting unconditional amnesty for the agitators, the late President Yar'Adua opened a window for a period of 60 days for the agitators to lay down their arms in exchange for amnesty as a step towards redressing the adverse security situation in the oil rich Niger Delta region which had almost brought the nation's economy to its knees. The measure was also aimed at stabilizing, consolidating and maintaining security in the region as a pre-requisite for promoting economic development ought to be the best way out of the age long challenge.

Development and Infrastructural Development: Development as a word has also been variously defined by different authors in relation to their discipline or profession. Giving a general perception of the word, Hornby (2000) defines development as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced. In doing this as it affect human social environment, it translates to improving on the structures and institutions originally in such environment to make them better and more modern. Todaro (1979) describes development as "a means to freely exercise one's economic, social, political and religious rights". According to Odor (2002), development in human society could be seen on the levels of individuals and that of the society. At the level of individual, it implies increased social skill and capacity to interact effectively and efficiently with one's own environment. In this context, development brings positive change in individual's material and non-material wellbeing. However, while personal development should be considered on the one hand, the state of the entire society as a whole should also be put into serious consideration. Odor (2002) asserts that development implies how individuals cooperatively cultivate the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship. On a general note, development is specifically regarded as a process of positive structural changes in the institutions and sectors of a society which may include economic, infrastructural, educational, health, politics and the overall awareness of human rights, its protection and education. With reference to development in relation to the policy on amnesty of the Federal Government, the concept may obviously attract divergent views. The reason remains that there is a general belief that the expectations of the people seem not to have been captured by the initiators and the implementing parties of the amnesty programme for the repentant Niger Delta militants.

Stating the obvious here, development as it affects the Niger Delta area and amnesty programme should mean more than just personal development of the repentant Niger Delta militants, it should be all embracing to include the

concerns of the common people in the area particularly their infrastructural development emancipation. This generally has to do with the provision of such facilities as Hospitals, Electricity, Road network, Markets, Housing, Pipe borne water etc. Orhioghene (2011) on his own part, stated that development experts and policy makers have engaged in many debates about the Niger Delta's human and infrastructural development dilemma, questioning why abundant human and natural resources have had little impact on poverty in the region. Why do conflict and youth restiveness persist despite years of development interventions.

In his reaction, Rostow in Onyesom (2005) was of the assumption that undeveloped countries have no history of development, since they are at the first stage of being a traditional society is a historical proposition. The fact still remains that no society remains were they are at the formative stage without advancement, no matter how slow and unsustainable (Onyesom, 2005).

Infrastructural development, also called infrastructure - driven development, combines key policy characteristics inherited from the Rooseveltian progressivist tradition and Neo-Keynesian economics in the United States , France's Gaullist and Neo- Colbertist centralized economic planning, Scandinavian social democracy as well as Singaporean and Chinese state capitalism: it holds that a substantial proportion of a nation's resources must be systematically directed towards long term assets such as transportation , energy and social infrastructure. While the benefits of infrastructure-based development can be debated, the analysis of US economic history shows that at least under some scenarios infrastructure-based investment contributes to economic growth, both nationally and locally, and can be profitable, as measured by higher rates of return (Onyesom, 2005).

Amnesty Programme and Socio-Economic Development

The Amnesty Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Infrastructural Development in Bayelsa and Rivers States no doubt has shown some level of relationship no matter how infinitesimal, scholars such as Amaize, (2016) and others are of the opinion that the amnesty package initiated by President Musa Ya'Adua Administration has brought some level of success that has impacted positively on the lives of the repentant militants in the Niger Delta. They also agreed on the following impact of the programme. It is a known fact that with the proclamation of the amnesty there seems to be relative peace and security in the region. Furthermore, the Federal Government has therefore met

with the aim of restoring peace and safety as the nation's economy has returned to near normal.

Additionally, with the declaration and implementation of the amnesty package, ex-agitators who embraced the amnesty offer had since been disarmed, demobilized and are either undergoing training or have been trained in their respective training centers. Presently, it is evident that the Federal Government has so far enlisted over 30,000 ex-militants in the amnesty programme (Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo & Okhomina, 2014). The amnesty programme of the Federal Government is originally intended to improve the human capital development of the Niger Delta and by extension Nigeria with its positive resultant effects on the infrastructural life of the people, which is at present can obviously said to be low. In a way, the programme has presented an opportunity to build capacity of youths as well as reintegrate agitating youths of the Niger Delta into the mainstream in Nigeria as a confidence-building strategy while gradually addressing the root causes that necessitated the conflict in the first place (Akinwale, 2010). If the programme had been well implemented as intended from the beginning, Amnesty programme of the Federal Government for the Niger Delta repentant militants could have much more impactful than what we are witnessing today. Though, according to Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo & Okhomina (2014), amnesty package has helped in the reduction of violent crime as most youths who were involved in anti-social activities have been integrated into the programme thereby making violence unattractive such crimes include; attacking oil installations, engaging in illegal oil bunkering and kidnapping of oil workers. It is however a fact that violence has now declined but not disappeared. To this end, there is no gain saying that amnesty has made significant impact on the socio-economic activities and lives of the people in bringing stability in the Niger Delta. As a result, the remarkable achievements and stability generated considerable goodwill for Nigeria among international partners and friends. Besides, amnesty package rebranded and gave Nigeria a positive image among the comity of Nations, though, infrastructurally the result is still poor (Ikelegbe and Onokerhoraye, 2016).

Methods

This study adopted the mixed research design. The study was conducted in Bayelsa and Rivers states. Both states are located within the Niger-Delta region in the South-South geo-political zone on Nigeria. Bayelsa state was created on October 1, 1996 out of the old Rivers state with Yenagoa as its capital city. It has

an area of 2682sq km and bounded on the west by Rivers state, on the east and south by the Atlantic Ocean and on the north by Delta state. Presently, Bayelsa state is comprised of 8 local government areas, which are predominated by handful of Isoko, Itsekiri and Irobos. Rivers state on the other hand was created in 1967 with the splitting of the Eastern Nigeria. It lies at latitude 4.45 north and longitude 6.50 east and covers an area of 10,432.3sq km. It is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by Imo and Abia states, on the east by Akwa Ibom state and on the west by Bayelsa and Delta states. Rivers state is presently made up of 23 local government areas - with Ikwerre as the predominant tribe and language in the state. Interestingly, the predominant occupations of people in these two states are fishing and farming activities. The choice of these two states was informed by the consideration that the two states are major concerned states with regards to the implementation of the Amnesty programme in Nigeria. The populations of these two states, based on the 2006 National population census in Nigeria are: 1,704,515 for Bayelsa state and 5,198,716 for Rivers state respectively - giving a total population of 6,903,231.

The target population of this study comprised of adult residents within the selected communities, aged 18 years and above. This age group was chosen based on the consideration of their level of maturity, knowledge and experience about the amnesty programme within the study areas. Based on the estimates of the 2006 National Population Census, the population ratio of these age groups within the two states is 57.3% of the total population. Thus, the target population for this study was put at 3,955,551. Using this population, a sample of 1,048 respondents were determined using the Fisher, Laing, Stoeckel and Townsend (1998) formula for calculating sample sizes. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the respondents for the study. This involved the application of different sampling techniques at different stages in the sampling process. Data were collected using the mix of quantitative and qualitative instruments. For the quantitative aspect, a researcher-developed structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the sampled respondents. The instrument consisted of two major sections: Section I contained items designed to obtain information on the personal data of the respondents, while Section II contained items designed to address the specific objectives of the study. The questionnaire was structured in a concise and simple English language to enable easy understanding and response to the given questions. The instrument was administered on a face-to-face basis to the selected respondents, by the researchers and two paid research assistants who helped in the distribution and

collection of the filled questionnaire copies; as well as interpreting the content of the questionnaire to those who were not very literate. Out of the 1,048 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 793 copies (representing 75.7% of the distributed questionnaire copies) were usable and were used for the data analysis. Equally, the qualitative data were collected using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII). Data generated through these instruments were used to complement the quantitative data. The quantitative data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and data were analysed using descriptively. Meanwhile, the multiple regression tools was used to predict the relationship between selected respondents' socio-demographic variables and their views regarding the effects of amnesty programme on socio-economic, as well as community development in Bayelsa and Rivers States. The qualitative data gathered were analyzed using the manual content analysis and findings used to complement the quantitative data.

Findings

Data analysis was performed based on the distribution of respondents by age, sex, religious affiliation, and marital status, type of marriage, annual income, occupation, educational attainment, and place of residence. Data analysis shows that respondents within Bayelsa State constituted 50.7% of the samples, while those within Rivers State constituted 49.2% of the samples. Data analysis also shows that 44.4% of the respondents were drawn from rural areas, while more than half proportions (55.5%) of the respondents were drawn from the urban areas. A majority (78.4%) of the sampled respondents fell within the age bracket 18-38 years; while the least proportion (.5%) of the sampled age groups was those who aged between 60 years and above. Meanwhile, the mean age of the respondents was 29.7 years and the standard deviation of 10.2.

Data analysis also shows that males constituted 54.4% of the samples, while the females constituted 44.6% and 1.0% were those without response. The occupational distribution of the respondents shows that the professionals constituted 8.1% of the samples, the civil servants constituted the greater proportion (38.8%) of the samples, those who were self-employed were made up 12.6% of the samples. The apprentice, business/trading, artisan and farmers were few - constituting 1.1%, 4.0%, .5% and 2.1% of the samples respectively. Other unmentioned occupations constituted 29.9%, while those without responds were 2.8%. With regards to the marital status of the respondents, 37.8%

were married and living together, while 2.5% were married but not living together. Also, 42.2% were not married, 1.1% was separated and .8% was divorced. The widowed were .4%, while others were 13.1% and those who did not respond were 2.0%. The large number of the respondents who were not married takes the highest place on marital status; this is because a lot of youth were in the urban cities of study area. Similarly, those widowed were very few because there were a lot of young families among the respondents and divorce was low probably because they still have regard for value system on marriage, which abhors such practice.

Based on religious affiliation, the analysis shows that more than three-quarter (93.8%) of the respondents were Christians. A very lower proportion of the respondents belonged to other religious groups including: Islam (2.1%), traditional religion (1.3%), and unspecified (2.8%). With respect to the actual income earned per year, a majority (49.3%) of the respondents earned lower income. They include the students, apprentices, some artisans and the unemployed. More than two-third of these respondents that earn little, or no income were from both urban and rural areas of Bayelsa and Rivers states. Moreover, only 13.6% earned #1,001,000 and above per year. This shows that the income status of many individuals within the area of study was low. In terms of highest formal educational attainment, those who had attained up to the tertiary level of education constituted 52.6% of the respondents. Other categories of educational attainment/ certification were secondary school certificate (20.9%), certificate equivalent (4.9%), and first school leaving certificate (3.7%). Only 5.5% of the respondents were without any form of formal education, while 2.4% were unspecified.

Perceived Effects of Amnesty Programme on Socio-Economic Development of Bayelsa and Rivers States

Table 1:

Respondents' Views on major Development Effort of the Amnesty Programme in Bayelsa and Rivers States

<i>Options</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Construction of roads	249	31.4
Provision of electricity	94	11.9
Establishment of industries	85	10.7
Building of schools	68	8.6
Building of acquisition centers	145	18.3
Provision of Hospitals	3	.4
Others	98	12.4
No response	51	6.4
Total	793	100.0

Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows that 31.4% was of the opinion that construction of roads has been the major development effort of the amnesty programme, 18.3% maintained that building of acquisition centers was a visible development effort of the amnesty programme, while 11.9% opted for provision of electricity. Others include establishment of industries (10.7%), building of schools (8.6%), and provision of hospitals (.4%) while 12.4% was unspecified. The above result contends that construction of roads is the major development effort of the amnesty programme. The KII and FGD results corroborated with the above result. With respect to the respondent's understanding of the major development effort of the amnesty programme, an FGD participant at Yenaka in Yenagoa said that: "government has set up places where the youth should learn skills, but many of them refuse to go and learn" (Male, 53 years, A Trader). Another FGD participant at Yenaka in Yenagoa remarks that: "government has done some roads in our different communities, but they have not done enough. Before now you cannot enter some villages, even some towns but they have given them roads through amnesty programme" (Female, 43 years, A Teacher). On the contrary, one of the KII participants at Sii

in Khana, said that, *“I have not seen any tangible development from amnesty programme”* (Male, 31 years, Ex-militant). Another KII participant at Palm-Lane in Port Harcourt said these in his own words - *“the government since the beginning of the amnesty programme in 2009, the government has renovated many schools, built acquisition centers and has given roads to some communities”* (Male, 73 years, Community Chief).

To further interrogate respondents’ views about the effects of amnesty programme on the socio-economic development of Bayelsa and Rivers states, the respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale, how true or false they considered each of the statements presented to them.

Table 2:
 Respondents’ ratings on the effects of Amnesty Programme on the Socio-Economic Development of Bayelsa and Rivers State

Statements	Very True	Somehow True	Undecided	False	Very False	Total
Amnesty programme have drastically discouraged hostage taking	199(25.1%)	257(32.4%)	82 (10.3%)	134(16.9%)	121(15.3%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have improved the farming activities in various communities	210(26.5%)	235(29.6%)	104(13.1%)	131(16.5%)	113(14.2%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have discouraged militancy and youth restiveness	96(12.1%)	122(15.4%)	84(10.6%)	217(27.4%)	274(34.6%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have improved education of youths in the zone	201(25.3%)	180(22.7%)	175(22.1%)	141(17.8%)	96(12.1%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have brought absolute peace in various communities	128(16.1%)	210(26.5%)	117(14.8%)	176(22.2%)	162(20.4%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have reduced pipe line vandalization and bunkering activities	90(11.3%)	105(13.2%)	123(15.5%)	201(25.3%)	274(34.6%)	793(100.0%)

Amnesty programme have greatly improved social amenities in various communities (electricity, pipe borne water, schools, hospitals, etc)	83(10.5%)	130(16.4%)	75(9.5%)	288(36.3%)	217(27.4%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have discouraged criminal activities	98(12.4%)	117(14.8%)	147(18.5%)	243(30.6%)	188(23.7%)	793(100.0%)
Amnesty programme have improved youth employment	140(17.7%)	217(27.4%)	122(15.4%)	171(21.6%)	143(18.0%)	793(100.0%)

Field Survey, 2019

The responses obtained in each of the statements were analyzed. However all the items were summed up in order to effectively analyze the cumulative responses regarding the effects of amnesty programme on the socio-economic development of the Bayelsa and Rivers State. The analysis is presented in figure 1.

Fig. 1: General Ratings of the Respondents regarding the Effect of Amnesty Programme on Socio-Economic Development of Bayelsa and Rivers States.

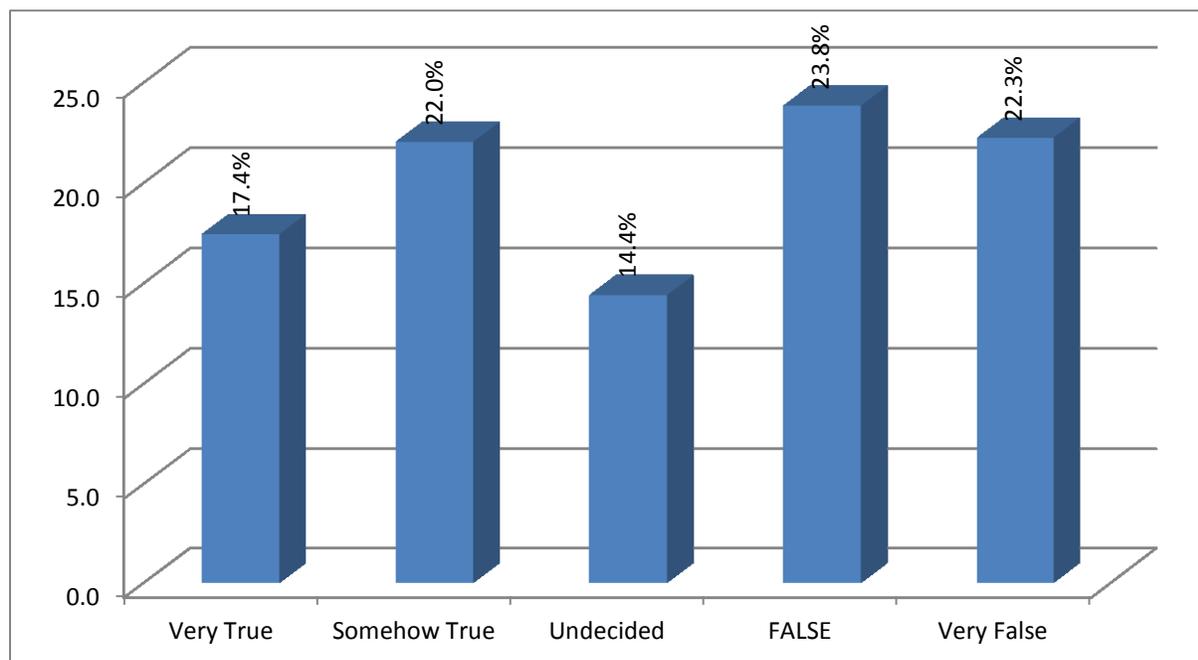


Figure 1 contains a follow-up analysis of the responses obtained for all the items included in table 2 above. The analysis of summed data shows that the modal frequency occurred among 23.8% of the respondents who indicated that it is false that amnesty programme has had significant effects on the various aspects of socio-economic development examined. Meanwhile, another closer proportion (22.0%) of them equally claimed that it is somehow true that the programme has significantly influenced the various aspects of socio-economic development identified. These findings imply that for many people, amnesty programme has not made significant improvements in their socio-economic lives; while for others, the programme has made fairly significant improvements in their socio-economic lives. Findings obtained qualitatively also conform to these data. For instance, an FGD participant at Palm Lane in Port Harcourt reacted as follows, *“for now amnesty has not brought any positive change, especially in our community here. Government should be sincere and come out with something tangible if they want to develop this region”* (Male, 47 years, A Teacher). Also, a KII respondent at Esanegonu in Nembe responded to the issue in his own words saying:

I tell you there is no achievement, since the amnesty nothing serious has come to this our community from the government, if not the government school they renovated and that road the NDDC is doing now, you don't know the barrel of oil they make, we deserve good life” (Male, 71 years, Community Chief).

In a similar way, a KII respondent at Sii in Khana voiced out his opinion by saying that,

Well, we hear them on radio and on paper. I have not seen anything fantastic and encouraging, even the boys they claim to be training where is the list, where is the statistics, oil flows here but I have not seen anything from the government, how many of our boys were sent to school or being trained” (Male, 71 years, Community Chief).

Going by the majority responses regarding the effects of amnesty programme on the socio-economic development of the people of Bayelsa and Rivers states, it could be concluded that amnesty programme at the time of this study has not yielded the expected outcome that could translate the lives of the people of Niger Delta region into meaningful existence; even though there is at least attempts on the ground by the Federal Government.

Effects of Amnesty Programme on Community Development in Bayelsa and Rivers States

Table 3:

Respondents' Views on the most Visible Social Amenity Provided for Communities through Amnesty Programme

Responses	Frequency	Percent
- Establishment of more schools	169	21.3
- Establishment of hospitals	77	9.7
- Availability of pipe borne water	99	12.5
- Provision of electricity	88	11.1
- Civic centers	58	7.3
- All of the Above	53	6.7
- None of the Above	178	22.4
- Others	71	9.0
Total	793	100.0

Field Survey, 2019

Table 3 shows a majority (22.4%) of the respondents claimed that none of the identified social amenities were provided within their local communities through the amnesty programme. However, 21.3% of them indicated that more schools were established through the programme. 12.5% of the respondents indicated that more pipe-borne water amenities were made available through the programme, and for 11.1% of them, electricity was provided. 9.7% of the respondents indicated that more hospitals were established through the programme, and 7.3% of them indicated that of civic centers. Meanwhile, only a lower proportion (6.7%) of them indicated that all the highlighted social amenities were provided for their communities through the programme; and 9.0% of them indicated other options. The result implies that even though the amnesty programme gave room for improvement of social amenities in some communities of Bayelsa and Rivers States, the coverage in the provision of such amenities may not have been significantly felt across various communities of the

States. The FGD and KII results coincide with the findings of quantitative data. An FGD participant during the session at Palm Lane in Port Harcourt said that: *“I am aware that since the amnesty started, the government has renovated some schools both in the towns and villages, they built skill acquisition centers, and unfortunately nothing is happening in some of them”* (Female, 46 years, Teacher). Another FGD participant at Yenaka in Yenagoa mentioned that:

there should be good learning environment, when there is no good learning environment teachers are discouraged, even the students. Like the secondary school I attended, some students sit on ground till today, now how can a child learn in such environment, you see the classrooms were small but over hundred people will be inside and no air? They park us like sadin in the classroom, so government should provide more school in that area” (Female, 33years, Self-Employed).

Another KII respondent voiced that: *“The federal government presence is here we have pipe borne water, we have some healthcare centre, but not enough, some village don’t have”* (Male, 71 years, Community Chief). Also another KII respondent at Yenaka in Yenagoa in describing the issue said, *“No social amenities, if there is any social amenities this community suppose to have healthcare in this community, and it is very big community in the Niger Delta”* (Male, 36 Years, Ex-militant).

Fig. 2: Respondents’ Views on the major Rural Socio-economic Development

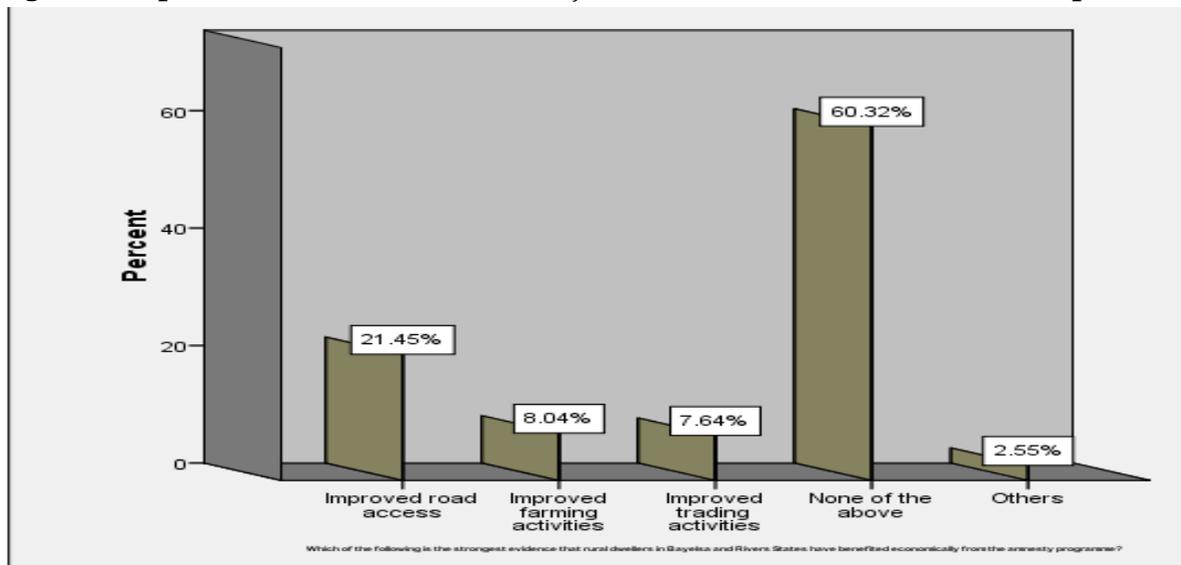


Figure 2 indicates that a majority (60.3%) of the respondents indicated that none of the areas of socio-economic development highlighted was observed within their various local communities. Meanwhile, 21.45% of them were of the view that improved road access is the strongest evidence that rural dwellers have benefited socio-economically from amnesty programme. 8.04% of them indicated improved farming activities, 7.6% of them opted for improved trading activities, while 2.6% indicated other options. This result implies that the people within local communities have not benefited adequately from the amnesty programme. The FGD and KII results supported this result. For instance, a 44 years old male FGD participant at Sii in Khana while describing the situation said in his own words- *“Our people are suffering, especially those in the villages, no good land to farm on oil has spoilt everywhere, many are into petty trade for survival”*.

Another FGD participant at Palm Lane in Port Harcourt said that,

“Many people in the communities are not really getting anything from this amnesty programme. You can imagine some people with the little space they have will farm and no road to the produce out for sale. The government through NDDC has constructed some roads but it is not enough and it has not gone round, people are still and dying in some rural areas of Bayelsa and Rivers states as the case may be” (Male, 52 years, Civil Servant).

In addition, one of the KII participants also said that,

“...for ages our people have been suffering, no government has given attention to this area, all they know is the revenue they generate from it finish. Few people that still managing to farm are suffering, no road in most of the rural areas of these states. Majority of them have access to any mechanize tools. This amnesty in fact is for these boys and their Generals” (Male, 69 years, Community Chief).

Also another KII respondent at Sii in Khana voiced out in the following manner, *“Our parents have nowhere to go just to suffer in the village but some of us can provide small for them. This place has not gained much from amnesty programme but individuals, the leaders”* (Male, 31 years, Ex-militant).

The respondents were also asked to indicate the major aspect of agricultural activities that was significantly improved through the amnesty programme. Findings to this are presented in table 4.

Table 4:

Respondents' Views on the Major aspect of Agricultural Activities Improved through Amnesty Programme

Response	Frequency	Percent
Increased farming activities	144	18.2
Increased livestock rearing	109	13.7
Improved fishing and fish farming	41	5.2
New agricultural technology	102	12.9
None of the above	359	45.3
No response	38	4.8
Total	793	100.0

Field Survey, 2017

Table 4 shows that close to half proportion (45.3%) of the respondents claimed that none of the under listed agricultural activities were improved through the amnesty programme. However, 18.2% of them attested that the amnesty programme led to increase in farming activities. Other responses were, increased livestock rearing (13.7%); improved fishing and fish farming (5.2%) and new agricultural technology (12.9%); while 4.8% were unspecified. These results suggest that the people of Bayelsa and Rivers states have the view that amnesty programme did not have significant effect on the improved agricultural activities within local communities. The FGD and KII results also supported this position. For instance, an FGD participant during one of the sessions at Yenaka in Yenagoa responded thus: *"To be sincere, personally this amnesty is not yielding much, is not encouraging, what we needed is development but we are not seeing it"* (Female, 36 years, A Teacher). Another FGD participant at Sii in Khana had this to say,

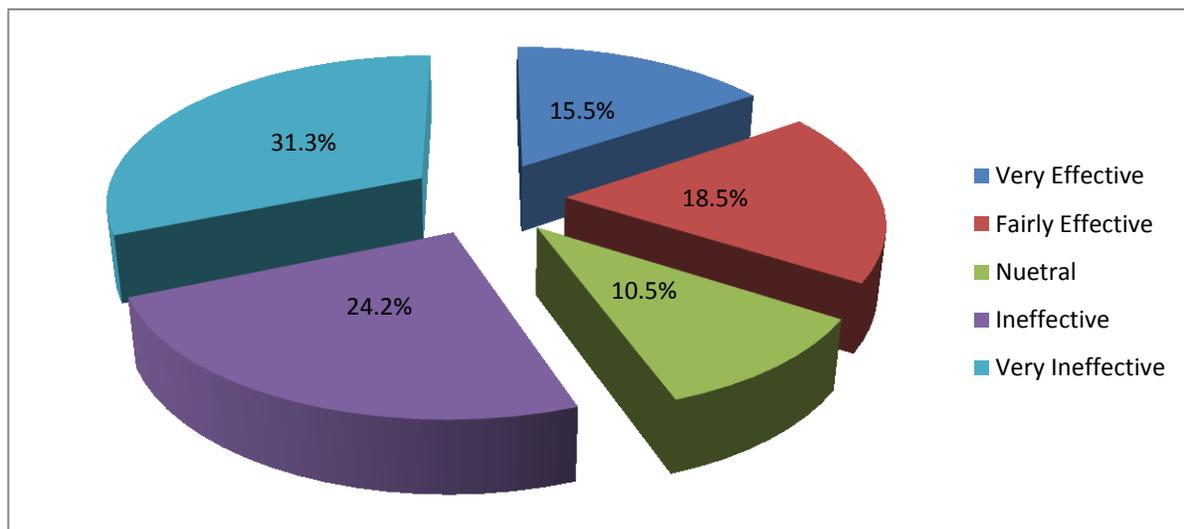
...amnesty has not contributed much in developing Rivers State especially in improving the lives of those in the villages. Some of them are farmers but they are still finding it difficult despite whatever the government claims they are doing through the programme. The land is no longer good enough, no good road and no support from the government to improve on it for commercial

purposes. Even when there are relief materials or money, it will be hijacked by the government officials before it can reach to some communities (Female, 51 years, A Secondary School Teacher).

One of the KII respondents at Sii in Khana also had this to say, *“We expected that this amnesty programme will improve our lives over here, but nothing is happening, nobody is happy except those that are benefiting, majority of the people are not benefitting anything, instead fear and sometimes lost of lives”* (Male, 73 years, Community Chief).

The respondents were further asked to indicate their general ratings regarding the effects of amnesty programmes on community development in local communities of Bayelsa and Rivers State.

Fig. 3: General Ratings of the Respondents Regarding the Effects of Amnesty Programme on Community Development .



Data analysis shows that cumulatively, the proportions ($31.3\% + 24.2\% = 55.5\%$) of the respondents who had negative ratings (i.e. very ineffective & ineffective respectively), were greater than the cumulative proportions ($18.5\% + 15.5\% = 34.0\%$) of the respondents who had positive ratings about the effects of amnesty programme on community development in Bayelsa and Rivers States. This implies that a majority of the people of Bayelsa and Rivers states had the view that the amnesty programme has not influenced significant improvements

community development of the two States. The FGD and KII results are supportive of these findings. For instance, an FGD participant at Esanegonu in Nembe said that: *“For a long time nothing much has to the community from the government or the amnesty programme, our development here is individual approach; individuals are the ones developing the community, except the road they are doing now and the secondary school they renovated”* (Male, 51 years, Civil Servant). Another FGD participant at Sii in Khana commented that:

...amnesty is a good idea to reduce militancy at the same time to develop our communities, but it is not working out. ...we thought by now our lives would have changed to better. People are still suffering. No good roads, no industries to boast economic growth. Some primary schools are not conducive at all for our children; no good market place apart from the ones managed by the community themselves (Female, 48 years, Business Woman).

A KII respondent at Yenaka in Yenagoa said, *“I know that many communities in Bayelsa State have not seen any effect of amnesty at all, no good life at all”* (Male, 32 years, Ex-militant). Similarly, one other KII respondent commented that: *“You can see the big generator is being maintained by the community with the help of our children that are well to do, we have our security, and even water. The community ensures there are water and some other essential community needs. The government is neglecting us”* (Male, 71 years, Community Chief).

Table 5:
Multiple Regression Analysis of Perceived Outcome of the Federal Government Amnesty Programme with Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Model/Variable</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardize</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>d Coefficients Beta</i>		
(Constant)	.124	.344		.359	.720
Residence	.051	.049	.052	1.031	.303
Age	-.005	.002	-.113	-1.988	.047
Gender	.067	.050	.068	1.346	.179

Income	.061	.032	.099	1.903	.058
Education	-.110	.053	-.113	-2.103	.036

R = .222 R²= .049 F-value = 3.076 P = 0.004

Dependent Variable = *Perceived outcome of the Federal Government Amnesty Programme*

The multiple linear regression model estimates the unique (independent) and combined effects of five socio-demographic variables (predictors), on perceived outcome of the federal government amnesty programme within the study areas. A close examination of vital statistics on how well the model fits indicates that the R²value (predictive strength of all predictors taken together), explain about 4.9% of the variance in perceived outcome of the Federal Government amnesty programme. Furthermore, the F-value (3.076) as generated from the ANOVA statistics is very significant (0.004). This shows that the predictor variables combined, have a statistically significant impact on the perceived outcome of the Federal Government amnesty programme. In other words, there is only a 0.4 in a 100 chance that there is really a relationship between residence, age, gender, income, education of the respondents and perceived outcome of the federal government amnesty programme.

To understand the independent effects of each variable, the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) estimates the exact change in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases one unit while holding all of the other independent variables constant. The B values thus show, in comparison to the probability (significance) values for the t-scores from the t-test, that, age ($p = 0.047$), and education ($p = 0.036$), independently have a statistically significant relationship with perceived outcome of the federal government amnesty programme, with education (0.036) standing out as the predictor variable with the most statistical significance or precise estimate. What these translate to in terms of predictive effect on the dependent variable is that when all other variables in the model are held constant, an increase in age by one year will lead to a - 0.005 negative difference in respondents' perception of outcome of the Federal Government amnesty programme. What this invariably means is that older respondents have a more negative perception of the Federal Government amnesty programme. This may be attributable to the fact they have suffered more from the consequences of government neglect of the region over the years, and are therefore, more likely to have a negative perception of existing

government policies and programmes in the region. Similarly, holding all other variables constant, the model shows that a unit increase in educational attainment of respondents will lead to a - 0.110 negative difference in perception of outcome of the Federal Government amnesty programme. A possible explanation for this negative association is that persons with higher levels of educational attainment are more informed, exposed and critically minded than persons with lower levels of education, and are therefore more likely to observe the inadequacies of any government policy or programme in the Niger-Delta.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study was conducted with the motive to assess the effects of amnesty programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria on the lives of the local people within the Niger Delta region, particularly in Bayelsa and Rivers States. This was considered necessary step considering the view that since inception of the programme in 2009, not much research efforts have geared towards assessment of the outcomes of the programme. Assessing the effects of the programme on the socio-economic as well as community development of Bayelsa and Rivers States from the views of the local people was considered significant approach to understanding the issue from the beneficiaries' standpoint. Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, it is concluded in this study that the amnesty programme is attempts to bring lasting solution to lingering crises in the Niger Delta region and such efforts by the government cannot be totally regarded as fruitless; as evidences point to the fact that efforts are actually made by the Federal Government through the amnesty programme.

However, the programme is yet to achieve maximum result that could transform the socio-economic and community development of the Niger Delta region. A lot still need to done to achieve the desired peace and development in the zone. Thus, the hope of permanently resolving the crises that have over the years ravaged the Niger Delta region of the Nigeria cannot be achieved over night, bearing in mind that the people of the region have robustly gained from militancy, hostage taking and pipe line vandalism in that region and to them, this is the only life they have always known. Taking the Niger Delta youths out of the life in the creek will require more efforts from the government. The local people need to see actions on the ground and not promises on the pages of the newspapers. Landmark infrastructural developments need to be seen by the people. Nigerian government should address youth employment as well as education issues in the Bayelsa and Rivers states. This may in turn discourage

violence and frustrate militant activities, thereby enhancing a stable socio-economic and political landscape in the Niger Delta region.

The amnesty programme projects should be monitored by the agencies of the Federal Government, to ensure effective and efficient implementation and also help to discourage diversion of funds. Social amenities such as road, hospital, school, electricity, pipe-borne water etc, should be prioritized by the Federal Government, so as to improve the living standard of the people, especially those in the rural areas. The Federal Government should grant credit facilities direct to small and medium businesses because most often, the funds do not get to the appropriate people for which they are meant for. The Federal Government agency in charge of the ex-militants should directly pay them the stipulated stipends instead of through intermediaries who always surcharge or will not pay them at the proper time.

Based on the findings of this study, the amnesty programme skill acquisition packages and other training by the government, promises a brighter and better future for Niger Delta, the multinational and the nation at large. Upon the completion of training of the ex-militants in oil related courses and skills, the oil companies and the Federal Government should ensure that they are recruited and engaged in the industry through the reservation of some employment quota for the local people. This will help to curtail militancy to the barest minimum and enhances development in Bayelsa and Rivers states. Structurally, some of the communities in Bayelsa and Rivers states have benefited from skill acquisition centers, but most of these centers are empty, devoid of equipment and tutors. To promote and improve entrepreneurship, these centers should be functional especially for youth and women empowerment. Improve in farming activities and mechanize farming system should be a thing of concern to the Federal Government. The will promote and encourage self-reliance and employment and will go a long way to curb militant activities in the Niger Delta.

There is enormous need to improve community involvement and active participation in the amnesty programme which has been low. The involvement of the community leaders is very essential. This should exclude cash gift which ends up enriching some individuals against community development. The credit facilities meant for farmers through amnesty programme should be made available to them without the intervention of the stakeholders. There should be synergy between the communities and the agencies of the amnesty programme as regards to cash or loan for human development. There should be regular

sensitization, seminars and workshops for community and youth leaders to enable them adequately understand and follow the efforts and projects and activities of the government in their different communities. The ex-militants should not be excluded from these types of training; by so doing, the crises and militant activities in Bayelsa and Rivers states will be minimized.

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