

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA CASE

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## **Abstract**

The Niger Delta had for long been a place of serious contention between the state and various groups fighting for conscious environmental practice, resource control and development. The region suffered neglect despite various levels of agitation and protest by the people during the military regime. Sustainable development is tied to sustainable peace. This paper examines response of the State to the Niger Delta problem and how the response to the Niger Delta debacle has contributed to the development of the country. Information was gathered from relevant literature. The importance of democratic governance and the role conflict management has played in the environmental security of the Niger Delta was established. The paper recommends that the oil producing companies and government's measures at conflict management should be increased so that national development will also improve.

**Key words,** conflict management, national development, democratic governance.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria's corporate existence since independence from British colonial rule in 1960 has been marked by economic mismanagement, increasing poverty, high level of unemployment, falling standard of living, decaying infrastructural services, high level official corruption, bureaucratic

inefficiency and general economic decline. These are as a result of failed economic policies of the military regimes that ruled the nation between 1983 and 1999 (Lewis, 1996). Institutionalized corruption by the military made majority of Nigeria's (140 million citizens) to still live without access to basic services like clean water, uninterrupted electricity supply and primary health care despite earning more than 400 billion US Dollar in oil and gas revenues since early 1970s. This has led to a situation where Nigeria has remained at the bottom in the UNDP human development index (UNDP, 2006).

Politically, the last fifty years have been characterized by frequent changes in the government and the leadership of the nation. One of the greatest ironies of our time is the fact that the army of a peace loving and non-violent people, who had opposed colonial rule without bloodshed, took up arms and shed the blood of its own people for reasons which have never been very clear. Under the military, we came to learn that violence and treachery are legitimate weapons for the acquisition of power (Agabi, 2011). Unfortunately, given all that have happened since the advent of civil rule it appears that the mentality still exists. It is no wonder then that our affairs became characterized by intolerance and suspicion. For a nation that became accustomed to changing its

leadership through the barrel of the gun it is no longer any surprise that our youth seek to command attention and to enforce their will, whatever it is, by the use of violence.

The evil foundation was laid in 1966 with the assassination of our duly elected leaders and the institution of military rule. Once that government was allowed to stand it became an example that power could be founded on bloodshed. The assassination of the Prime Minister and others with him was followed almost immediately by the assassination of Gen. Ironsi who had assumed power after the coup of 1966. Under the rule of Gen. Yakubu Gowon, there was a senseless and brutal war, from the effects of which we are yet to recover. Gen. Yakubu Gowon was overthrown by Gen. Murtala Mohammed who himself was later assassinated. He was succeeded by Gen. Obasanjo who returned the nation to civil rule under Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Before Alhaji Shehu Shagari could settle down he was overthrown and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari was installed. Gen. Buhari was overthrown by Gen. Babangida who stepped aside for Chief Ernest Shonekan. Chief Ernest Shonekan was ousted by Gen. Abacha who died in office and was succeeded by Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar who promulgated the Constitution under which the present administration came to power. Against this background we came under dictatorship, corruption, violence and treachery which made it difficult for the seeds of democracy to take root.

The manifestations of governance failure began to show glaringly in the Niger Delta, "the South-South geo-political zone", the region that produce the bulk of the revenue that has for long sustained Nigeria's federal arrangement from its huge reserve of crude-oil and natural gas deposit. In the latter years of military rule, things totally fell apart in the Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. The Delta boiled with varying degree of inter-communal and inter-groups conflicts, youth and communal protests against the Nigerian state and oil multinational corporations

operating in the area. Instead of addressing the deepening crisis of environmental insecurity, rising poverty, the unfair laws governing oil exploration and relationships between the producing communities and the unholy alliance of the state and oil multinationals and stimulate a holistic regional development, the ruling military elites unleashed the coercive apparatus of the State on the hapless people of the region (Luqman, 2011). The violent repression of the Ogoni's through the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force and the criminal hanging of MOSOP leader Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni kinsmen was the height of state excess in the Niger Delta under military rule (Human Rights Watch, 1995; Naneen, 1995; Osaghae, 1995; Welch, 1995).

General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who succeeded the Late General Abacha disbanded the charade transitional process that would have led to Abacha self succession. His administration hurriedly put in place a new transition process that led Nigeria back to democratic rule. Though faced with numerous challenges, the six months transition process, the fastest in Nigeria's political history, was successfully concluded with the conduct of series of elections that culminated in the presidential elections of April, 1999 and the inauguration of a new civilian administration under the Presidency of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired General in the Nigerian Armed Forces and a former Military Head of State.

The democratic administration was welcomed with enthusiasm as also observed in other African countries (Lumumba - Kasongo, 2005) because of the dissatisfaction experienced under the military regime. A lot was expected from the democratic government. The hope was based on the notion that democratic rule will facilitate dialogue, herald political accountability, stimulate good governance, promote sound management of the nation's resource and wealth and facilitate peaceful resolution of disputes under the spirit of democratic

governance. Hope was particularly high in the Niger Delta, the oil producing region which has for decades' remained a centre of agitations against the state and oil multinationals (Luqman 2011).

The enthusiasm for democratic rule displayed by the people were not misplaced considering the electioneering campaign promises of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the presidential flag bearer of the People Democratic Party (PDP) to implement policies and programs that will fast track the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta, protect its fragile ecosystem and promote peace and dialogue between the people of the region and the state and within groups in the region (Isumonah, 2003). The expectation of many in the Niger Delta was that the inauguration of democratic rule in May, 1999 will herald the long awaited change in the region and the country as a whole (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Given the background, this paper intends to assess the performance of the state in resolving the complex oil crisis in the Niger Delta. The paper will look at the policies that had been put in place by the federal government to manage the conflict and make a critical assessment of their suppose strength in stemming the tide of violent anti-state protests in the oil bearing region. Has the policies statement and measures impacted the development of the region? Has it affected the resources of the state and improved development? The answers to these questions are the objective of this paper. In other words, the paper seeks to examine the impact of the various measures of conflict management the state has adopted over the years in the Niger Delta. To achieve this task, various relevant literatures were reviewed.

### **The Concept Of Conflict Management**

The objective of this section is to establish a common frame of reference for the discussion that follows, first by defining the concept of conflict management and outlining its philosophical and theoretical underpinnings

and the various dimensions.

Conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. Long-term intractable conflicts need to be managed, for example, even when there is no prospect of resolution. The conflict management form used in any given situation is somewhat predicted and explained by the social structure or social geometry of the case. Conflict management concerns an ongoing process that may never have a resolution. **Conflict management is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair and efficient manner (Israr, 2011)**

As a nation, we have been strategizing on how to share accruable revenue rather than finding ways of improving our productive systems. The sharing strategy over time strategically maximized the share made available to those outside the economic zones (Saale, 2010). The conflict between the oil producing states (Niger Delta) and the State is based on the notion that the region has been impoverished over the years. As more revenue is derived from oil industry operations, the host communities become more endangered from the resultant hazards. Their expectations also increase and the need to meet the expectations become more imperative. A survey of 85 oil producing communities in Rivers and Bayelsa States in 1990, reveal that the expectations are caused by: 1. developmental gap between host communities and the oil companies. 2. Inadequately paid or unpaid compensation. 3. Quick fix pledges and fame generating promises (Saale, 2010). Unfulfilled expectations have been the major cause of youth restiveness which has affected development in the region and the country at large.

Many fought for and won the battle for democratic rule in the hope that it will herald greater social justice, broaden political participation and enhance peaceful resolution of violent conflicts. In general term expectation was that democratic rule will

bring a more effective human development (UNDP, 2002). However, what is required to achieve effectiveness in democracy includes transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability and rule of law all of which are important for human development. Good governance is democratic governance.

The United Nations Development Programme, argues that democratic governance relates to the protection of human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms; active citizen participation in the making of decisions that affect their lives; accountability of political leaders to the people; the strengthening of institutions that govern social relations and interactions; gender equality in the process of governance and development; freedom from discrimination; the implementation of responsive and people oriented socio-economic policies that will promote prosperity, reduce poverty, facilitate peaceful resolution of conflict through dialogue and enhance sustainable resources management (UNDP, 2002).

The people of the Niger Delta expected that democratic rule will enhance good governance that will change the development fortune of the region for the better. It was their believe that with holistic policies directed at enhancing human development in the region will come improvement in the living standard of the people in the region and by extension the nation in general. Their expectation was based on promise of change by contenders for power in the run-off to the general elections that returned the nation to democratic rule. Although the military invasion of Odi town in Bayelsa state in 1999 (Courson, 2006; Albert, 2003, Effiong, 2002) and the public outcry that followed in its wake might be blight on the integrity of the newly inaugurated democratic regime, other policies measures that were announced were such that raised the hope of the people in the region ( Luqman, 2011).

The 12 point programme announced in November 2000 by President Obasanjo,

which encompassed most of the expectations of the people in the region still remains the main policy thrust of the nation's democratic regimes. The programme which includes: the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission; eradication of gas flaring; rehabilitation of the public/private sector partnership programme; integrated environmental management and development programme; massive provision of basic infrastructures, cottage industries development and support programme; support for agricultural development; community health enhancement and environmental protection programme (Isumonah, 2003). These programmes encapsulate the core of issues underlying oil crisis in the Niger Delta. The implementation of these policy initiatives would have demonstrated the importance with which the new democratic regime takes the development crisis facing the oil bearing region. It would have gone a long way in assuring the deliverance of the dividends of democracy and enhance effective democratic governance, which the people had long yarned for.

Unfortunately, the lackluster and half-hearted attitude of government towards the resolution of the development crisis facing the oil region ended up creating a perception of governance failure in the mind of the people of the region in all levels of government according to the report of the United Nations Development Programme (2006) in the Niger Delta. With this perception, there was a general feeling of discontent and frustration against the state and the oil majors in the region. The feeling of frustration and anger became expressed through heightening violent anti-state protests and increasing militant activities by youth militia groups in the area. The situation in Nigeria's Niger Delta vividly showed that the rituals of holding democratic elections alone cannot resolve the lingering crisis (Luqman, 2011). It is necessary for democratic leaders to ensure that democratic rule translates to a more legitimate, inclusive and effective governance; that encourages the management

of conflict through political dialogue rather than through state repression. Democratic rule enhances accountability of political leaders to the people among other issues (Ibeanu and Luckham, 2006). This can only be accomplished by strengthening democratic institutions and promoting democratic politics that gives free reins to development policies (Luqman, 2011). Despite the present feeling of frustration with the democratic process in Nigeria the resolution of the oil crisis in the Niger Delta still lies with democratic governance. Thus several policies aimed at managing conflict were adopted in the Niger Delta.

#### **Policies Aimed At Managing Conflict In The Niger Delta**

The state has for long used a combination of peaceful strategy and coercion in managing the conflict in the Niger delta (Omotola, 2006). Attempts at managing the challenges of development through state policy have mainly been through the setting up of development commission. This approach is referred to as management through the ideology of development commission. Indeed, the setting up of development commission on the Niger Delta dated back to 1958 when the departing colonial government set up the Willinks Commission to enquire into the fears of Minorities groups and the means of allaying them. A major recommendation of the commission was that a development commission should be set up for the riverine areas.

The development commission remains an important policy measure although successive regimes have put in place other policy measures directed at managing environmental and other development crisis in the oil bearing region. Prominent among these are the setting up of the Niger Delta Development Commission, the 13% derivation law, the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry, the empanelling of many committee among others. The Education trust fund and the Petroleum trust fund are among other interventionist agencies set up by the

government to assist in the developmental efforts. It is hoped that the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill will go a long way in managing the conflict in the Niger Delta because of the local content proposed in it. We shall examine the impact of each of these policies on the management of the conflict in the Niger Delta.

#### **The Niger Delta Development Commission**

The basic mandate of the commission was to address the environmental and development challenges facing the oil bearing region. Section 7 of the act establishing the commission stipulates that the NDDC shall formulate policies and guidelines for the development of the Niger Delta. The commission is also to conceive, plan and implement projects that are capable of fostering the sustainable development of the oil region in line with set rules and regulations. To aid it in the effective performance of its functions, the act establishing the commission stipulate in clear term the financial obligations of stakeholders including the federal government, the Niger Delta states and oil and gas producing companies. The act also put in place seemingly, stringent regulatory rules and mechanisms intended to dissuade corruption and ensure accountability and transparency in the activities of the commission (Omotola, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Given the comprehensive and detailed nature of the Act, which establishes the NDDC hope was high, particularly within the region, that unlike past development commissions, the NDDC will perform credibly well. However, notwithstanding, the impressive statistics of projects so far executed by the commission, it is still glaringly clear that the environmental challenges and the crisis of underdevelopment facing the region are by no means fully addressed and taken care of via the NDDC. The popular verdict was that of underperformance. That the NDDC has failed to live up to the high expectation of the people of the region has been clearly echoed (Omotola, 2007; Ikelegbe, 2008). The

reasons for the commission underperformance are many and varied. The under performance of the NDDC may not be unconnected with the problem of funding in particular, the failure of the federal government to give to the commission in full and as and when due its statutory contribution as stipulated in the Act establishing the NDDC (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Aside the crisis related to funding another major reason for the perceived underperformance of the commission, is the issue of corruption (Luqman, 2011).

### **13 Percent Derivation Principle**

The issue of revenue allocation between the federal government and constituent states remain a central issue in Nigeria fiscal federalism like most other federations. During the first republic when Nigeria operated a tripartite regional federal arrangement, derivation from mineral rents and royalties was an important source of fund for the three regional governments. Derivation to the constituent regions in the first republic was pegged at 50% of revenue from mineral rents and royalties (Philips, 1991). The exigencies and needs of the civil war period and the oil boom of the 1970s changed the fortune of derivation principle in Nigeria's revenue allocation formula. By 1975, the percentage of derivation revenue paid to state of origin was slashed to 20% and by 1979 when oil proceeds have come to dominate federal revenue, derivation principle was totally abandoned in favor of a special account for mineral producing areas (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Under military centralized federal arrangement, the fortune of derivation as an important principle for sharing federally collected revenue was eclipsed. This trend was reversed under the 1999 constitution that returned the nation back to democratic rule. Under the constitution, derivation principle was entrenched and 13% of mineral rents and royalties were to be returned back to the states of derivation. The arrangement created a semblance of fairness in the revenue

allocation, therefore call for increase in the derivation principle remains at core of agitation of people of the Niger Delta. The need for increase in the percentage was re-echoed in the report of the Ogomudia Security Committee on the Niger Delta of 2001 and was reiterated in the report of the Ledum Mitee Technical Committee submitted to President Yar'Adua in November, 2008. While the call for increase in the derivation principle continued, many people both from within and outside the Delta are also concerned about the issue of governance and proper utilization of revenue by sub-federal units (state and local government) in the region. While corruption is a pervasive governance crisis ravaging the nation as a whole, the extent of corruption and governance failure in the Niger Delta is mind bulging (Ewerenmadu, 2008). Before any increase in the percent of derivation to oil producing states there may be the need to strengthen transparency and accountability in the use of revenue accruing to the oil bearing states to ensure that they use such for the benefit of the people of the region.

### **Niger Delta Technical Committee**

It is on record that the Yar'Adua administration tried to demonstrate the importance of resolving the lingering crisis in the Delta by including it in the administration cardinal 7 point agenda. However, the failure to come out on time with policy measure and time plan, the "go slow approach to governance", dampened people's enthusiasm about the administration seriousness on the Delta issue and likewise on many other core national issues.

Vice President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated the Niger Delta Technical Committee which represents the Yar'Adua administration first effort two years after it came to power. The technical committee was to develop a coherent, long-term policy strategy for resolving the conflict in the Delta. Launched on the 4th of September, 2008 by the Vice president, its members were drawn from credible people across the nine oil

producing states. The committee terms of reference were: to collate, review and distil the various reports, suggestions and recommendations on the Niger Delta from the Willinks Commission report of 1958 to the present day, and give a summary of the recommendations necessary for government actions; to appraise the recommendations and present detailed short, medium and long-term suggestions to the challenges in the Niger Delta, and to make recommendations that will help the federal government achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta region (ICG, 2009; TELL, 2009).

The Technical Committee's short term recommendations include, among other things: Immediate increase of derivation allocation to the oil producing states from 13 to 25%; complete initial steps to support a DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) process for militant youths inclusive of general amnesty within six months; improve operational integrity of security forces and the police in the Niger Delta to a level that assure communities and businesses of security and safety; establish by the middle of 2009, a direct labour youth employment scheme with a bid to aid job creation across the region; complete the East-West road dualisation from Calabar to Lagos by June 2010 with link to the coast for each of the coastline states; ensure a dedication of 5,000 megawatts of power for the region; establish by 2010 regulations that compel oil companies to have insurance bonds against environmental pollution and strengthen oversight on environmental issues; rehabilitate existing healthcare facilities in the region; rehabilitate and equip existing primary and secondary schools and staff them with trained teachers; to resettle all those displaced from Bakassi peninsula not later than December 2009 (ICG, 2009; TELL, 2009).

The second part laid out broad themes and roles for stakeholders in a regional transformation agenda running to 2020. The

third part recommended the creation of institutions and mechanisms to guide the implementation of the report the most significant of which is the Niger Delta Special Infrastructural Development Fund, Niger Delta Futures Trust Fund and a Community Trust Fund Scheme (TELL, 2009). The most novel idea of these schemes is the region future trust fund, which if properly conceived and supported, can become a stabilization fund from which the region can draw fund to finance important regional development projects that have direct bearing on the people of the region like the future fund for oil bearing region in Norway and Canada. Resolving the development crisis facing the oil region will require a strong political will as issues underlying the crisis revolve around the national question. Yet the only way out of the Delta crisis is to muster the needed political will that will aid the implementation of a holistic development plan for the region.

#### **The Ministry Of Niger Delta Affairs**

Created on the 10th of September, 2008 barely a week after the inauguration of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, the ministry of Niger Delta Affairs represents another policy thrust of the Yar'Adua administration to tackle the crisis of environmental insecurity and underdevelopment in the oil region. The ministry was charged with the twin mandate, which revolve around infrastructural development for the region and youth empowerment. According to the government, the ministry is to be responsible for coordinating and executing federal development projects like roads construction, electricity and the provision of other social services previously executed by multiple ministries. The rationality is that such harmonization will lead to better focus and quick implementation of federal projects in the region (Taiwo, 2008).

The creation of the ministry not only drew reaction from other part of the federation, but also from the Delta region. Some in the Delta see it as a significant sign of federal

government commitment to the crisis in the region while others urge caution arguing that it might end up becoming an avenue for corrupt enrichment, political patronage rather than serving the interest of the region. The prominent Ijaw Leader, Chief Edwin Clark, saw it as "a step in the right direction arguing that it is an evidence of the political will and sagacity of President Yar'Adua". However, if the ministry fails to deliver credible results and live up to expectation, the people of the region will add it to the list of institutions that the Nigerian state uses to hoodwinked the region (ICG, 2009). This can end up deepening the sense of betrayal, frustration and alienation and foster continued support for militancy and criminality in Nigeria's oil creeks and swamp. These among other issues are the challenges that trailed the creation of a special Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs by the Yar'Adua administration.

#### **Other Agencies Set Up By Government To Assist In Development**

The Education Trust Fund and Petroleum Trust Fund are agencies set up by the government that could manage the conflict in the Niger Delta by their handling some of the problems of the region. The carrying out of more of their activities in the Niger Delta could manage the existing conflict in the region.

#### **Social Responsibility By Oil Companies**

In addition to the efforts of the state to manage the conflict in the Niger Delta, the various oil companies have also tried by providing host communities with light, classrooms, town halls, health centers, scholarships, among others. However, the efforts seem not to be enough compared to the developmental needs at hand in the communities. The oil companies expect the government to do more as they have higher percentage of the shared venture. It is unfortunate, that most times the anger of the communities is taken out on the oil companies that are seen on the field. For lasting peace more need to be done by both the government and the oil companies. With the level of development in education and internet

the people now know that they deserve more than they are getting. They want to participate in the industry and not just be given peanuts.

#### **The Impact Of The Petroleum Industry In The Development Of Nigeria**

Oil was first discovered in Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta. This was after nearly 50 years of exploration. Nigeria became an oil-producing country in 1958, with the coming on stream of its first oil field, producing only about 5,000 bpd at the time. More discoveries were made and the oil fields were put into operation in the 1960's. By the late 1960's and early seventies, Nigeria had achieved an output level of over 2 million bpd and the country joined OPEC in 1971. Output rose to a peak of 2.4 million bpd as far back as 1979. Although since then production has witnessed alternating booms and busts, reflecting the movements in international markets, Nigeria was able to achieve a record production level of 2.5 million bpd in 2004. The country's aspiration was to increase production to 4 million bpd by the year 2010.

The petroleum industry is arguably the largest industry in Nigeria in terms of generation of fiscal revenue and foreign exchange, accounting, on the average, for about 85% of fiscal revenue and 95% of the foreign exchange. It is also the second largest contributor to GDP (after agriculture). In view of its critical importance, various policy and institutional arrangements have been put in place over the years by the Nigerian Government towards the effective management of the industry. Broadly, these measures were taken to build local capacity, have greater control in the management of the country's petroleum resources and ensure improved revenue transparency and accountability. The measures taken also include those aimed at ensuring fiscal and environmental sustainability and effective stakeholder management (Odozi, 2009).

The measures taken by Government and the landmarks achieved include:

Establishment of developmental intervention

agencies for the Niger Delta. The Government of Nigeria has at various times been largely proactive in taking measures aimed at the effective management of the petroleum industry and the revenues accruing from it as well as dealing with its negative externalities. Another leading issue in the management of the petroleum industry encompasses the numerous intervention efforts of the Federal Government intended to bring development to the oil-rich Niger Delta as a way of ameliorating its numerous physical, economic and environmental problems arising from the exploration and production of mineral oil in the region. The efforts included the establishment of developmental agencies. An appraisal of the role of petroleum in the Nigerian economy and Government's intervention in the industry shows that they have had far-reaching effects. For instance, huge petrodollar receipts have driven massive investments in capital and infrastructural projects, which would not have been otherwise possible. Indeed, the petroleum industry in Nigeria may aptly be called "the lifeline of West Africa's powerhouse" (Odozi, 2009).

For most countries that are heavily dependent on petroleum, such as Nigeria, it is impossible to contemplate a future without oil; so pervasive and critical is the role of petroleum in their national economies! It is taken as "manna from heaven" (Odozi, 2009). Indeed, petroleum is perceived as not only the main source of energy but also the engine of economic development. The critical role of petroleum encompasses its various linkages, particularly fiscal, forward and backward linkages. Alexeev and Conrad (Feb. 2008) in Odozi (2009) reported that

- i) Contrary to claims made in several papers during the last decade, the effect of a large endowment of oil and other mineral resources on the long-term economic growth of countries has been, on balance, positive.
- ii) The claims of a negative effect of oil and mineral wealth on a country's institutions as well as some other

factors potentially affecting economic growth do not appear valid.

Furthermore, the overriding conclusion of the paper is that "high endowments of oil and other minerals have a positive impact on per capita GDP" and that "natural-resource endowments positively affect long-term growth rates of countries".

### **Impact Of Conflict Management On Development**

From the literature reviewed, it was found that although several measures were adopted by the state to manage the conflict in the Niger Delta, the production of crude continued to reduce due to the conflicts associated with the region.

Amnesty for the militants was recommended by the Technical committee as strategy to manage the conflict in the Niger Delta. This was considered by the President to restore peace in the region and get resources for national development which was dwindling seriously because of the crisis in the region. Before the Presidency extended the olive branch, insurgency had wrecked enormous havoc on the country's economy, particularly in the area of oil prospecting and producing. Crude oil production had dropped to as low as 700,000 barrels per day, and Nigeria stood the risk of financial strangulation on all fronts (Daily Sun Oct, 2011). Socially, there was disequilibrium in the Niger Delta as a result of kidnapping, bombings, sabotage of oil installations and general break down of law and order. A lot of companies relocated from the troubled Niger Delta which affected the economy, as it was associated with loss of jobs.

Amnesty proclamation by President Yar'Adua brought peace to the region as warlords laid down their arms and prevailed on their followers to do same and embrace peace. Today, two years later, crude oil production has risen to 2.7 million barrels per day, and the expatriate community can work without anxiety and sense of apprehension (Daily Sun

Oct. 2011). Developmental projects can be embarked upon with the proceeds from the oil and gas because of the peace the amnesty has achieved in the Niger Delta.

The success of the amnesty programme shows the place of dialogue and constructive engagement in the life of a nation. This is only possible in a democracy. The fortunes of the Niger Delta have been restored to some extent. Anger and ill will towards the nation have been replaced with pacifism and patriotism. It is interesting to note that the feat was achieved without further violence and bloodletting in the disarmament process, unlike what obtains in other parts of the world like Colombia, Sierra-Leone and Liberia (Sunday Sun, Oct, 2011). The Jonathan administration has continued with amnesty programme which we hope will be properly concluded. Other recommendations of the committee need to be explored to improve on the existing achievements

### **Conclusion**

The paper examined the various policies adopted by the past and present regimes in the democratic dispensation to manage the conflict in the Niger Delta, caused by deepening environmental insecurity and challenges of underdevelopment due to oil exploration. The various policies had their positive impact in addressing the conflict but more need to be done for lasting peace in the region. Of all the strategies adopted the amnesty seems to be the most effective so far, as it has immediate effect on the oil production which was very necessary for national development. The implementation of the other recommendations by the Technical Committee may go a long way in ensuring long lasting peace in the region and development in the Nation.

### **Recommendations**

To increase the benefit of conflict management as a strategy for national development the paper proposes the following recommendations:

1. Immediate scrupulous implementation

of the recommendations of the Technical Committee.

2. The adoption and immediate implementation of the Niger Delta Regional Master Plan by the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta.
3. The need to differentiate between the responsibilities of the NDDC and The Ministry of Niger Delta to avoid duplication of efforts in the development of the region.
4. The federal government to ensure that the aims for establishing the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta are being achieved.
5. The federal government to muster the political will to massively develop the region in the interest of unity, peace and stability.
6. The federal government to ensure that the money allocated to the states are judiciously used to develop the states, especially the oil producing states.
7. The creation of jobs for the militants at the end of their training.
8. The institutionalization of non-violent training in school curriculum.
9. A long term plan for the youths of the region in terms of education and employment.
10. Oil companies operating in the region to increase their effort in the area of social responsibility and to ensure that international standards are maintained in their activities.
11. The oil producing states should go into public private partnership and invest in the oil industry to be able to provide jobs for the youths and increase their developmental efforts.
12. Oil companies operating in the region to ensure that the employment laws are obeyed. (i.e. level 1 to 6 positions are occupied by indigenes).

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