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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges of Amnesty Programme for Post Conflict Peacebuilding In Nigeria's Niger Delta

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Abstract: This study examined the mechanism for post conflict peacebuilding of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, with emphasis on the challenges faced in attaining sustainable peace and development in Ondo state of the region. Both primary and secondary means of data collection were adopted for the study. The primary source included the use of key informant interview while the secondary data included published text books, journals and online materials. Atlas Ti was used to analyze data collected for more qualitative insight into the findings. Findings revealed that the approach is not effective, because militants were disarmed without proper mobilization and empowerment process. Other challenges faced by the amnesty programme which are so fundamental to post conflict peacebuilding ranged from inability of the government to properly mobilized and empowered ex-combatants after acquiring the basic education or skills, corruption, political influence to lack of proper monitoring. More so, the program did not include all those involved in the Niger Delta struggle and it was perceived by residents of the region as having some political undertone. In sum, the program is yet to achieve post conflict peace building in Ondo state of the region as expected.

Keywords: Amnesty Program, Post Conflict, Peacebuilding, Niger Delta

1. Introduction

The Nigeria Niger Delta region is known for crude oil and gas exploration and exploitation which resulted in various forms of damage and degradation to the environment. The Niger Delta people have been in the agitation for justice for over four decades for the abuse of human rights and environmental degradation in the region which gave rise to the emergence of organized pressure groups and militant activities in the region. The region is therefore, a place of intense exploration and exploitation of crude oil and gas. The consequence has been the massive environmental degradation of the area. The minority status of the people has led to their political and economic marginalization in the larger Nigerian federation. They have also been marginalized by both the Nigeria federal government and the multinational companies and this neglect of the region has triggered grievances which in turn resulted to insurgency in the region. This has bred in them, a feeling of utter neglect, relegation and discrimination. For them, it is a pathetic case of living by the riverside and washing hands with spittle (Agbegbedia, 2014: 178). However, instead of the government constructively addressing the issues and finding a lasting solution to it, some Nigeria's repressive leaders adopted centralized violence against the people mostly the youths who were agitating for



their rights of ownership of the region. The militarization of the region nevertheless led to kidnappings and hostage takings of mainly the oil workers for ransom as well as other criminal activities by the militants (Ukiwo, 2011: 17).

The situation prompted the Nigeria federal government to introduce the amnesty program in the oil-rich Niger Delta region by former President Umaru Yar'Adua in order to resolve the youths' restiveness. The Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) was viewed as the mechanism for building peace after conflict in the Niger Delta region and thereafter, limited to the militants alone by addressing their needs which have significant effect on the emergence of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) was modeled after the United Nation's DDR interventionist program, as a mechanism for post conflict peace building with the aim of creating peaceful society. DDR describes a cluster of post-conflict interventions that is focused on collecting arms, neutralizing combatants, reintegrating legitimate ex-combatants into the armed forces or civilian life, and preventing a return to armed conflict (Okonofua, 2016). However, the United Nations (2021: 7) sees DDR as majorly a political intervention. According to the organization, experiences in the past decades have reinforced the understanding among DDR practitioners that it is not merely a technical procedure, rather a highly political one which should be directed in wider political procedures and methods. Thus, DDR practitioners should concurrently focus in contributing their efforts at resolving the root causes of political will while using technical solutions to resolve political bottlenecks. Ayissi (2021: 142) defined DDR as an operation that includes the meeting and camping of former combatants, in line with the provisions of a peace agreement, with a view to collecting their weapons, disbanding their formal military framework, and helping them in reintegrating into society, either as civilians or formal members of national armed or security forces. DDR of former combatants has become a main issue for post-conflict peace consolidation particularly in Nigeria and Africa in general. Ayissi (2021: 142) pointed out that successfully implemented DDR programs give the stronger chances to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace. Nevertheless, the metaphysic behind the need to respond immediately to the challenge of former combatants after conflict is that DDR programs are paramount in assisting to prevent the recurrence of war in post-conflict situations.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (2016) described Disarmament as the collection, documentation, destruction and disposal of small arms, light and heavy weapons, explosive and weapon of mass destruction in a conflict zone. In disarming the militants, the program divided Disarmament and Documentation process into three phases (first, second and third phases). The disarmament program process lasted for a period of two months and involved all known militant groups in the region with over 30,000 agitators becoming ex-agitators upon surrendering their weapons and registering in different centers across the region (Austine, 2013: 2). This was to give room for the militants to submit their weapons and ammunition as well renounce their militancy. This unexpected action was different from the violent one been used to suppress the people of the region in time past and the fact that violence does not resolve conflicts rather triggers it. More so, this step depicts a new dawn for the people of the region. Preceding the amnesty introduction was the establishment of a ministry regarded as "Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs" in late 2008 (Ushie, 2013: 30).

In demobilizing the militants after disarming them, amnesty program gave alternatives to their arms in which Kuku (2012) noted that those who accepted amnesty before the deadline will be paid a certain amount. Besides, some ex-militants were also trained on vocational skills at different levels (Okonofua, 2016). From the onset, the program was considered to be a means for regaining peace to the region. This however generated much debate about the strategies and imagined results of the program. According to Albert (2015: 390), the amnesty program failed to adopt the requirements of the two reports in his discourse of the Niger Delta amnesty. One report entails a state of power asymmetry in a conflict: a post-conflict condition between a victor and vanquished (or defeated) party. In this scenario, amnesty is

packaged by the victorious side as part of its post-conflict peace-building strategies. The beneficiaries from such gestures include rebels, insurgents, military deserters and other categories of people who stand the chance of being prosecuted for their past criminal acts. The other report of amnesty is the South-African brand of amnesty, which Nigeria claimed to have adopted: both parties to the conflict considered themselves to have hurt each other in the course of the apartheid rule in the country. To restore harmonious relationship, both sides confessed the wrong they did to each other, asked for forgiveness and were granted amnesty by the government for such criminal acts (Albert, 2015: 391). Explaining further, Albert pointed out that the Nigeria Presidential Amnesty Program is different from the two models presented above on the ground that the Federal Government that introduced it did not attain victory over the Niger Delta warlords. Yet, according to Albert (2015: 391), it was packaged as a victor's benevolence. Similarly, the PAP was not a product of negotiation and dialogue between the Niger Delta militants and the Nigeria. The latter simply decreed it and employed carrot-and-stick strategies to make the militants accept it. This questions the sustainability of the initiatives and its ability to enthrone enduring peace in the troubled region.

According to NEXTIER SPD (2020), the program assisted repentant militants with monthly stipends and also trained them in vocational skills while others gained university certificate as part of the DDR process. Nevertheless, after more than 10 years into the program, there are fears that the program has not achieved its main aims. Besides, the fact that the program was initially proposed to end within five years, it seems it has no specified terminal date at the moment.

1.1. Statement of problem

The Niger Delta amnesty program consisted of a disarmament process which required the ex-combatants to surrender their arms and sign the amnesty register indicating their acceptance of the program. Nevertheless, there are some challenges associated with the program despite the fact that the program has brought relative peace and stability to the region. Several studies have been conducted on the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region; and since the introduction and implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme by the Nigerian government in 2009 which has become the euphemism for the government's Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) policy on the Niger Delta, the methods of research in the region have taken another dimension, and attention has increasingly moved to the post-amnesty era of the Niger Delta. Hence, there have been appreciable developments of literature on the topic of amnesty in the Niger Delta (Aghedo, 2013; Ushie, 2013; Eke, 2014; Obi, 2014; Agbiboa, 2014; Oluwaniyi, 2011a; Ojeleye, 2011; Davidheiser and Nyiayaana, 2011). While most of the works on the topic has indeed been useful to understanding the background, impacts and sustainability of the amnesty policy as a peace strategy in the Niger Delta, the main point of their assessment emphasises the negative aspects of the policy with some doubtful opinions of the program. For instance, Obi argued that 'facts so far point that the PAP is at best a weak condition for sustaining peace and development in the oil-rich region in the medium to long term' (Obi, 2014: 254). He concluded thus that 'the PAP has delivered to the government (rather than the people) the type of peace consistent with a status quo that maintains conditions for state ownership of oil, its optimal extraction in partnership with oil multinationals and the sharing of the spoils'. In a related view, Eke is of the opinion that the deal was a "cash for peace" program cloaked in "amnesty" which has inadvertently increased the appeal of violence for those who seek a slice of the so-called "national cake" (Eke, 2014: 1).

For instance, Imogan and Ikelegbe (2016) pointed out that the amnesty achieved some successes but not without some difficulties which affect the desired peace and harmony. Also, most of the residents still live in abject poverty and without social amenities of any kind. Besides, compensations are not paid to most of those affected by this conflict. This led to questions such as: what are the challenges of amnesty program for post conflict peace

building? What are the structural issues that caused the Niger Delta Conflict? What are the impacts of amnesty program in the Niger Delta region? To what extent is Amnesty program for post conflict peace building effective? However, the study is restricted to Ilaje communities within the geographical region of Ondo State.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the challenges of amnesty programme for post conflict peacebuilding in the Nigeria's Niger Delta. The specific objectives include:

- (1). To examine the structural issues that caused the Niger Delta Conflict
- (2). To evaluate the impact of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta
- (3). To measure the effectiveness of DDR for post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta region

2. Literature Review

2.1. The concept of peacebuilding

There is no definite definition of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding consists of strategies aim at reducing risk of causing conflict and thereby strengthen the abilities which lead to sustainable peace and development using different conflict management approaches. It is used in different ways by different scholars and researchers. Nevertheless, the concept was brought to limelight in the contemporary epoch by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a former UN Secretary General in his most accepted publication, *An Agenda for Peace*. According to him, post conflict peacebuilding is an incident to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid reoccurrence of conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992:11). He used the concept to refer mainly to military and civilian post-conflict support for preventing future occurrence by strengthening structures vital for promoting sustainable peace and post war reconstruction. However, in 1995, he modified his position by saying that there could also be 'pre-conflict peacebuilding' and this he characterised as approaches which include demilitarization, the control of building arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social and economic development (Boutros-Ghali, 1995 cited in Albert, 2001: 57).

The International Alert (1995 cited in Albert, 2001) regarded it to be the employment of approaches to build on peaceful relations and establish a milieu which prevents the occurrence or escalation of tensions which may bring about conflict. Galtung (1969) sees peacebuilding as the means of making personal assistant ways to end causes of wars and provide other ways to war in condition where wars might occur. Lederach (1997) opinion on peacebuilding countered Galtung's opinion when he defined it as an entity which includes, defines and uphold the entire collection of procedures, strategies and phases needed to change conflict into a more peaceful scenario. He argues quite convincingly that peacebuilding should be understood beyond post-accord reconstruction; in its comprehensive meaning, the concept includes, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships both in the pre and post conflict situations.

In agreement with Galtung definition on peacebuilding as comprehensive approach, the debate on the Niger Delta amnesty program is one that would have led to sustainable peace and what core dimension of peacebuilding should target. As a guideline, this method creates an avenue which will permit stakeholders to adopt policies and strategies that aim at verifiable transformations often (Ushie 2013: 33). Nevertheless, these policies and strategies are logical and pointed towards the particular intentions of the nation involved, and they are given proper attention which aim at achieving the set goals. The United Nations (2010: 9-10) defined peacebuilding as involving a range of strategies which are aimed at reducing the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all stages or conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Going

further, the organisation noted that peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and directed towards the specific needs of the people concerned, based on national ownership and should consist of an effective prioritized, structured and hence, relatively narrow set of activities geared at achieving the stated goals.

According to Rahul (2015), peacebuilding is regarded as the entire incidents which occur every day at the end of conflict and before large scale peace and sustainable development. Nevertheless, several diplomats, mostly at the UN, refer to the word as 'late recovery', or 'peace consolidation'. Peacebuilding lays exigencies on resolving conflict by arresting the root causes of the issues instead of just ending the particular crisis. Arnold (2017: 24) regards peacebuilding as the process of removing obstacles to lasting peace by reducing opportunities for both physical and structural violence. By implication, the aim of peacebuilding is not only to end the violence but to also develop mechanisms/approaches that address the root causes in order to achieve sustainable peace. More so, the concept of the peacebuilding is applicable to this study as the Amnesty Program was introduced to solve the human development challenges in the region in order to give room for a sustainable peacebuilding. This collaborates the Africa's peacebuilding approaches of restoring security, managing political transition, anchoring socio-economic development, promotion of human rights and justices and resource mobilization (NEPAD, 2005 cited in Zondi, 2017). The African Union believes that there is no need of placing these in a sequence because it does not accept the logic that one needs one element to be fully in place before the next phases starts as in often the case with the United Nations and Western approaches to peacebuilding (Zondi, 2017).

2.2. The concept of disarmament

According to Egwu (2013: 3), disarmament means surrendering weapons by ex-militants at designated places or environment which entails an end to crisis. NAN (2018 cited in Adeyemi and Shaibu, 2019) regarded disarmament as a concept that portrays all attempts to prevent occurrence of war. For the United Nations and its agencies, it is an unspecific term involving all standards "from little phases to limit anxiety or develop confidence, through control of armaments or arms, up to entire and whole disarmament". National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 2009 cited in Adeyemi and Shaibu, 2019) describes disarmament as the process of reducing weapons especially destructive arms.

For advocates of DDR, disarmament is an essential important area of peacebuilding. Nevertheless, they considered this area alone as unworthy to provide the desired results and should be supported with equivalent activities (Spear, 2006: 168). However, when disarmament is properly carried out with coherent strategies, there is the tendency that mutual confidence will be build amongst the repentant militants. Ex-combatants gain from it as a result of qualitative socio cum economical situations to forgo their focus in achieving weapons for their agitations (Okonofua, 2016). The Federal Government declaration of the amnesty program gave the militants the opportunity to renounce their activities, surrender their ammunitions and accept peace. The government set up demobilisation camps for the demilitarisation and rehabilitation of the repentant combatants for a period of time, with the sole purpose of preparing them for a new civilian life. Oluwaniyi (2011b) reported that the government paid a sum of N65,000.00 each to them as monthly stipends to cater for their immediate needs and discourage them from engaging in criminal activities until the end of their reintegration.

2.3. The concept of demobilization

After disarmament comes the process of demobilization. This consists of moving ex-combatants into some places of formal condition such as camps where they are prepared for a return to civilian life. Egwu (2013: 1) explained demobilization as the transformation from a militarized way of life to that of a civilian. It consists of ending or stopping non-state actors in camps for a transformation which involves counseling on how to live in peace. Demobilization is also regarded as the procedure of separating non state actors from their

armed groups majorly limiting the strength of armed non state actors (Berdala, 1996). According to Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 563), like disarmament, demobilization can possibly lead to unplanned security challenges. Okonofua (2016) explained how demobilization is often misunderstood holding the fact that it is often being carried out as a substitute for disarmament. Two critical requirements are noted of demobilization process. In the first place, any assembly places should be situated very far from the combat zones. This is done in order to create an avenue for security as well prevents re-recruitment. Secondly, no weapons should be allowed into these camps. This is very important in order to achieve a pivotal break from their past life and also to avoid the risk that any intractable combatants might act as spoilers for the whole peace process.

The Niger Delta amnesty program according to Oluwaniyi (2011a) consisted of a disarmament process which required the combatants to surrender their arms and sign the amnesty register indicating their acceptance of the program. A total number of 20,192 combatants volunteered and surrendered their weapons to the government thereby making them to embark on the amnesty program. However, there were two other phases in 2010 and 2012 as a result of those who were earlier skeptical and doubtful about the government's intention with the policy. Oluwaniyi (2011a) stated that 6,166 combatants were included in 2010 while 3,642 joined in phase in 2012 which were regarded as third phase of the program.

2.4. The concept of reintegration

The last stage in the process of attempting to return combatants to normal life is known as reintegration. This approach includes introducing the combatants back into their homes or communities so that they can rejoin the society on positive conditions. It is regarded as the means through which former combatants become civilians and also given employment and other commendable means of livelihood. Nillson (2005) defined it as the process of reintegrating repentant combatants and members of their families into a civil society. It was noted in the work of Okonofua (2016) that reintegration is a major aspect of DDR process which includes several forms such as economic reintegration which consists of the availability of vocational training in various disciplines; social reintegration which focuses on the behavioral and psychological aspect of the ex-combatant and the political reintegration which creates room for the involvement of the ex-combatants in decision making process of the government. Another process to encourage the acceptance and well-being of ex-militants is to involve them in helping to solve communal problems. This entails that the DDR programs can become integrated with wider peacebuilding activities.

Adeyemi (2019: 1857) defined reintegration as the process of absorbing repentant militants into the community having gone through some training and achieved means of livelihood. By implication, the ex-combatants are now in a position to cater for themselves as well contribute towards making the society a peaceful one for existence. Reintegration resolves the particular needs of ex-combatants by providing any great beneficiary support to the converted combatants.

2.5. Theoretical framework

This study adopted the relative deprivation theory and the frustration-aggression theory which provide valuable insights into the causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta region.

2.5.1. Relative deprivation theory

Though protracted social conflicts may not be resolved once and for all, we can at least minimize both the perception and actual deprivation among the Niger Deltans. And Gurr's theory of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970), may provide the road map for a better understanding of the conflicts in the Niger Delta. According to the Relative deprivation (RD) theory, where expectation does not meet attainment, where the available resources are being deprived of the people by those in position to cater for their needs, there will be expression of frustration and aggression by the led. Relative deprivation theory simply says that the

people are deprived of what they consider their due against what their compatriots are getting, that they are likely to rebel. Continuing, Gurr defines value expectations as “the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining given the social means available to them”. Giving meaning to his use of the word relative, Gurr quoted Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel’s from their work, “wage, labour and capital,” our desires and pleasures spring from society and not by the objects which serve their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature (Gurr, 1970: 22).

According to Smith et al., (2011: 203) social scientists use it to determine the expected results of the frustration being experienced by the people. Considering the Niger Delta conflict that began in early 1990s, many researchers then indicated that the discrepancy amongst the parties was basically from the view that the minority ethnic groups were being oppressed and deprived of their rights. This was due to the fact that the people were being marginalized and deprived of the expected development in terms of social amenities. Thus, they were involved in militancy as well as series of social movement activities in order for them to claim what they believed was their natural resources.

This theory corresponds with Gurr (1970) idea that relative deprivation is the major criteria for all forms of crisis in any society. Gurr went further to state that the lack of trust which is derived from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction which expose men to violence’. Referring it to the Niger Delta crisis where the people believed of been deprived of their rights, their value expectations will definitely clash with their value capabilities which will expose them to violence. Looking at different opinion on RD theory, it is imperative for crisis to occur and which was witnessed in the Niger Delta region in the early 1990s because of some discrepancies between the value expectations (what they ought to achieve) and value capabilities (what they can achieve). Gurr therefore concluded that people will definitely revolt against their oppressors when their desired needs are not provided. Thus, when the Niger Delta indigenes were deprived of their desired needs, they adopted violent means in achieving their collective goals and needs. The linkage between Gurr 1970 relative deprivation theory and Niger Delta crisis is widely described. Scholars on their stance on the Niger Delta crisis believed that marginalization of the region is one of the reasons for violence in the region. The discrepancies between value expectations and values capabilities in the lives of Niger Delta people then is widely opened which led to the series of activities which can be regarded as violence at large, with the aims of achieving their value expectations.

2.5.2. *The frustration-aggression theory*

This theory was developed by Dollard John in 1939, expanded and modified by Learnard Berkowitz 1962 and Aubrey Yates 1962 (all noted in Faleti, 2005: 47). It appears to be the most common explanation for violent behaviour stemming from inability to fulfill human needs. This theory stated that there is a difference between what people feel they want or deserve to what they actually get (the want-get-ratio) and difference between expected need satisfaction and actual need satisfaction. In essence, where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. This is the central argument that Ted Gurr’s (1970 stated in Faleti, 2005: 47) relative deprivation thesis addressed in saying that the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result. This is predicated on the premise that the poor (in this case, majority of the masses in the Niger Delta region) live in places of want, deprivation, hunger, apathy and frustrations while the rich get richer as the days go by. The poor therefore due to this apparent disparity vent their anger on government, the multinational oil workers, society and individuals as a sign of disapproval, oppression, exploitation, helplessness and despondency.

The main explanation that the frustration-aggression theory provides is that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as portrayed by the realists and biological theorists but that it is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect impacts of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. In essence, the frustration and aggression is as a result of the deprivation being experienced by the people and this prompts them to vent their anger on the government as well as some of the stakeholders in the region.

3. Research Method and Materials

The research design for this study is descriptive as it systematically described the situation, problems and challenges of post conflict peace building of the amnesty program in the region. Both primary and secondary means of data collection were adopted for the study. The primary source included Key Informants Interview (KII) with sample size of 30 respondents while the secondary source included library sources, journals articles, textbooks and online materials. The study location for this study was Ilaje Local Government of Ondo State, Nigeria. The population of study included both the educated and uneducated people in the community. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the 30 respondents for the KII. Four research questions were raised and answered with the use of Atlas Ti, descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage and mean.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1. Showing the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	22	73.3%
Female	08	26.7%
Religion		
Christianity	21	70.0%
Muslim	02	6.6%
African Traditional Religion	07	23.4%
Marital Status		
Married	26	86.6%
Single	4	13.4%
Divorce	-	-
Level of education		
Tertiary	6	20.2%
Secondary education	17	56.6%
Primary education	5	16.6%
No education	2	6.6%
Occupation		
Civil servant	13	43.2%
Farmer	6	20.2%
Fishing	8	26.6%
Others	3	10.0%

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2023

4.1.2. *Data presentation and analysis according to research questions*
 4.1.2.1. *Perception on issues that caused the Niger Delta conflict*

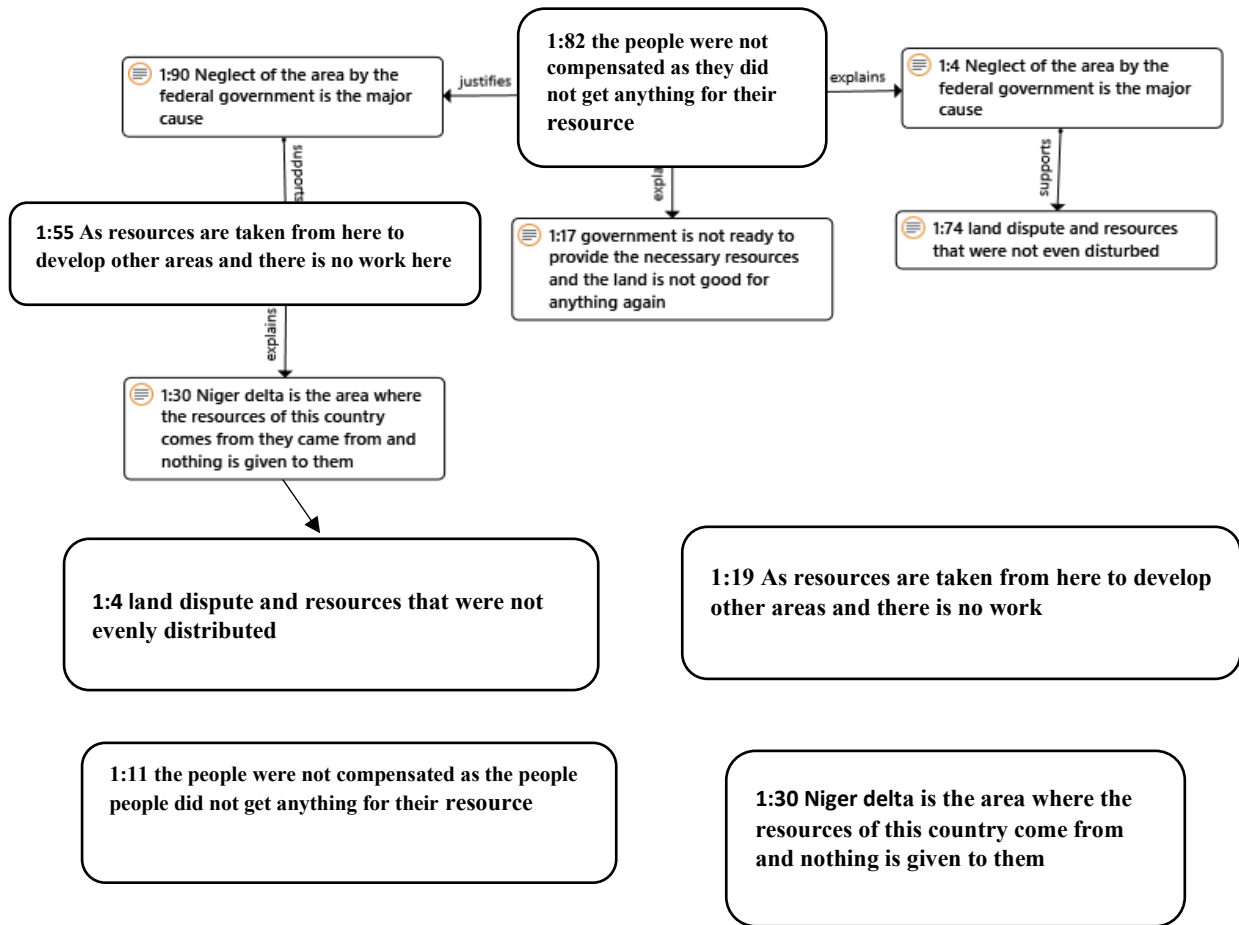


Figure 1. Showing the network analysis on issues responsible for the outbreak of the conflict in the Niger Delta
 Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2023.

4.1.2.2. *Perceptions on the major challenges faced by the amnesty program*

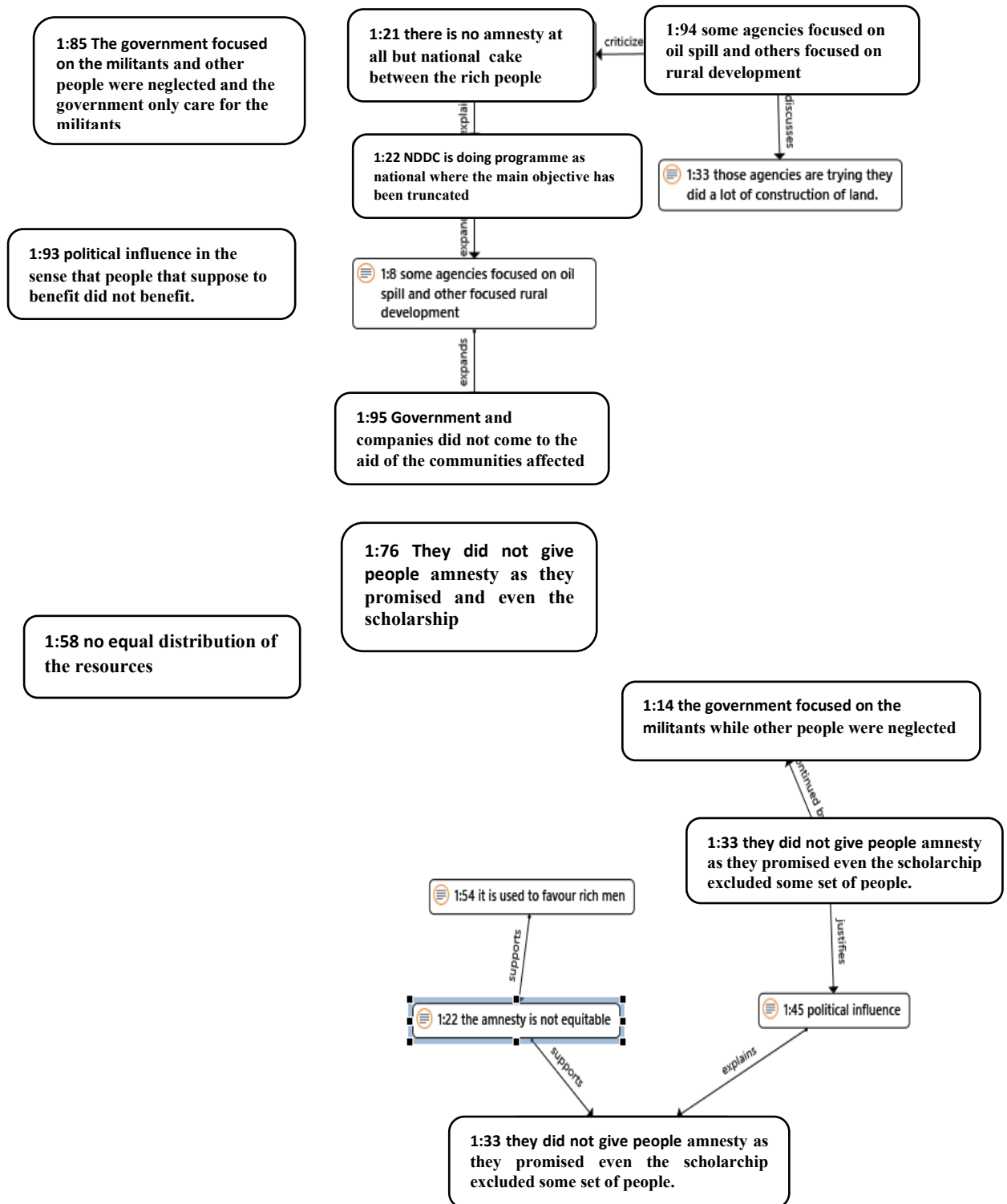


Figure 2. showing the network analysis of the challenges faced by the amnesty programme and agencies created.
 Source: Authors fieldwork, 2023

4.1.2.3. *Perceptions on the impact of the presidential amnesty program in the Niger Delta*

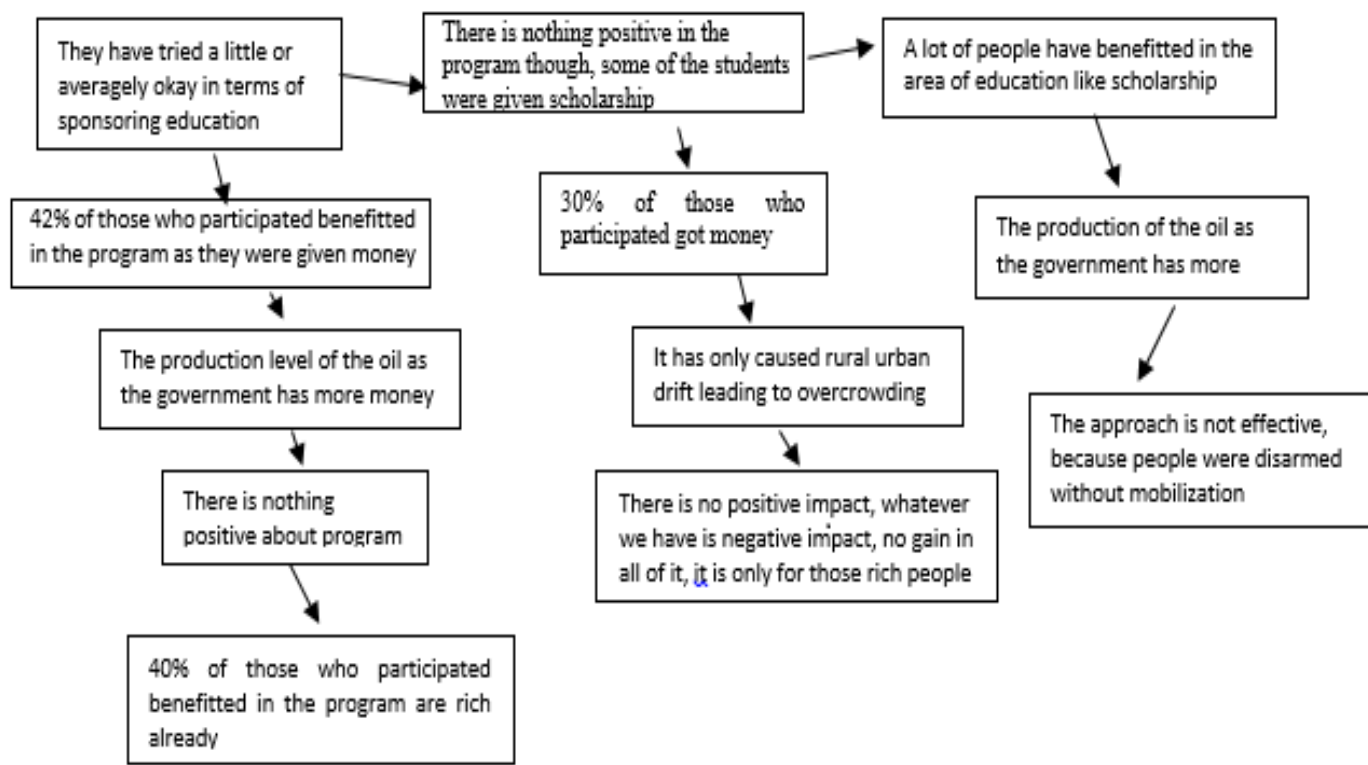


Figure 3. Showing the network analysis on the impact of the presidential amnesty program in the Niger Delta Region.

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2023.

4.1.2.4. *Perceptions on the effectiveness of DDR:*

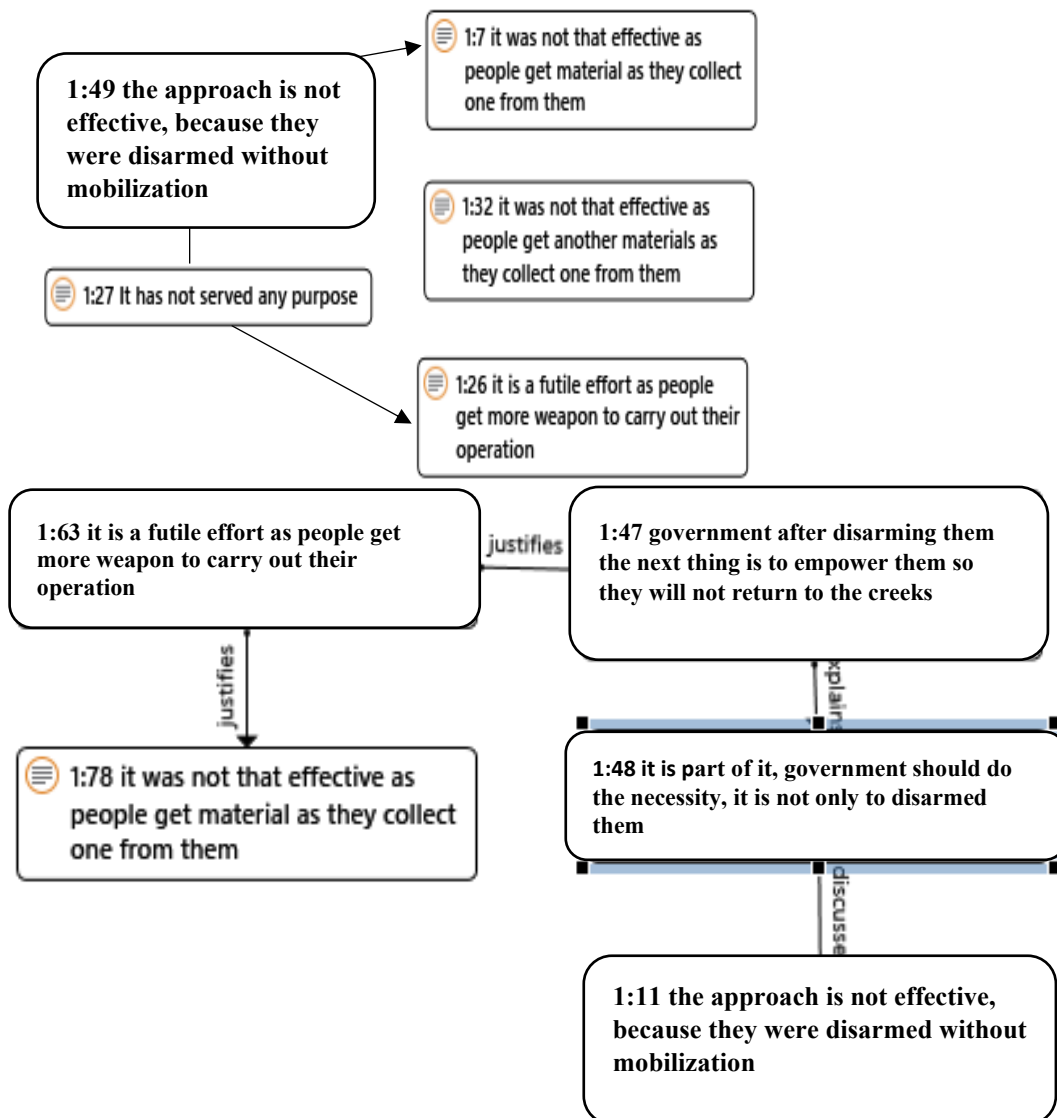


Figure 4. Showing the network analysis on the perception of the people on the effectiveness of DDR for post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta region

4.2. *Discussion of findings*

4.2.1. *Perceptions on the issues that caused the Niger Delta Conflict:*

From figure 1, it can be deduced that environmental degradation by oil corporations and neglect, ineffectivity of the government in providing infrastructures and social amenities to the region whereas the resources derived from the region are used to develop other parts of the country were some of the causes of the Niger delta conflict. For instance, one of the informants said:

“Niger delta is the area where the resources of this country come from and there is nothing to show for it in terms of social and infrastructural amenities: no water, no electricity and no good road. One can say it is because of the quest for infrastructural and social amenities together with environmental degradation which serve as major pollutant of water in the region”.

Another informant added:

“The people were not compensated as they did not get anything for their resources which are being taken from here to develop other areas and there is no work; in essence the hen that lays the golden egg is not catered for”.

This confirmed the findings of Ojakorotu (2009) which identified some issues that fueled the Niger Delta conflict, such as environmental degradation and poverty escalation, failed expectations, political subjugation and internal colonialization. As revealed by the network analysis above, one will also see that the lands and rivers are also polluted which have made the people to leave their traditional occupation of fishing and farming and embraced some social vices, even the programs that spring forth as a response to the problem like scholarships and job opportunities, leaving people to continue in penury and this observation is fully captured in the word of one of the participants which goes thus:

“Our land is not good for anything again, it is not good for farming or fishing (amnesty program is not given to the people that are supposed to benefit from the program, scholarship is given to rich people and their children) there is much suffering in the region”.

This concurred with the finding of Ukpo (2006 cited in Ojakorotu, 2009) on the consequences of oil exploitation, exploration and degradation being experienced in the region without appropriate compensation either from the oil companies or the Nigeria federal government.

In the same vein, the further question that was asked on whether or not there were attentions on the issue before the outbreak of the crisis, majority of the respondents are of the view that there were no attentions given to the people of the region and this was what caused the outbreak of the Niger Delta conflict in the first place; if there were, there would not be any crisis at all. One of the informants said “there was no attention because if there is any attention, there would not have been any problem”. To buttress the point about negligence of the government, another informant said:

“There was no attention and that is why the agitation came about and most of them have to leave their jobs because of oil exploration that has spoiled the region and the attentions only came after several protests, for example, the case of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni community members. That is why late Yara’dua established the amnesty program and the derivation formula clause evolved and establishment of different Federal and State agencies like OSOPADEC in Ondo State”.

These findings collaborated Ushie (2013: 30) explanation on the necessary solutions needed to be taken in resolving the conflict in the Niger Delta region.

4.2.2. Perceptions on the major challenges faced by the amnesty program

The figure 2 shows the challenges of amnesty program for post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta. The informants’ expressions include lack of sincerity on the part of the government as they did not give all the ex-combatants the amnesty as they promised. This was corroborated by another informant that the amnesty was not given to all the people as they promised and even the scholarship opportunity as expected. It was selective and given to the children of the elites and politicians. More so, the program focused on those militants alone and other people were neglected and this act did not encourage sanity as other people who were not involved in the protest or agitation were encouraged to venture into hooliganism. An informant corroborated this that “the government focused on the militants alone and other people were neglected”.

Another challenge the amnesty program witnessed according to the informants is lack of monitoring by the government in support of rural development. When projects are given to contractors, most times they do not check to see if those projects are properly monitored”. The study also discovered that the agencies are guilty of embezzlement or money laundering. For instance, NDDC took the money that came out of the programs as ‘national’ cake according to an informant. This was buttressed by an informant that:

“There is no amnesty at all but national cake among the rich people; the people whom they supposed to reach out to are being neglected; and even those sent abroad for training are not catered for”.



Government Domineering is also an obstacle as people cannot decide those who are in the agencies (NDDC, OSOPADEC) like before and people can no longer appoint representatives in this corporation. There is political influence in the structure of these agencies as people are being appointed for important positions based on connections and favoritism. One of the informants said “no equal rights of selections; opportunity to represent were given to the elites”.

4.2.3. *Perceptions on the impacts of the presidential amnesty program in the Ondo State of the Niger Delta region*

The figure 3 answers the question on the impact of amnesty program in resolving the major causes of the crisis in the Niger Delta region. Most of the informants are of the view that the program has little positive impact whatsoever as the program is perceived as venture to widen the gap in economic inequality. That is, it is designed to make the rich richer and the poor unchanged and even become poorer. For example, the scholarship which is supposed to be given mainly to the ex-combatants has been politicized as it is been given to the children of the rich. This corroborates Hakeem and Abdul-Wasi (2016: 51-53) opinion on some of the challenges of the amnesty program which include corruption, problem of inclusion and placement, politicization of the program and post-training opportunities. One of the informants said:

“I have not seen any positivity in the program, though there were some students who were given scholarship which is an individual benefit. No community benefits; even though very little people have benefited in the area of education like scholarships and even infrastructure, but it is not enough effort in terms of the portion of the people that have benefited”. Another informant said “there is no positive impact, whatsoever we have is negative impact, no gain in all of it. It is only for the rich people”.

This partially confirmed the findings of Ikelegbe (2016) on the inability of the federal government to employ most of the youths who have undergone trainings in abroad and returned back to the country while those who were never part of the struggle are being given employment. Another informant emphasized that the program has caused rural urban drift leading to overcrowding as people travel from villages to other places to get enlisted for some financial benefits given to people. In summary, the presidential amnesty program is not yet effective in the state.

4.2.4. *Perceptions on the effectiveness of DDR*

The figure 4 shows the effectiveness of DDR for post conflict peacebuilding in Niger Delta Region. DDR is a strategy used as a component of creating peaceful environment. The strategy has to some extents promoted peace as more people agreed to the fact that they witnessed harmony in the region. For instance, one of the informants said it has promoted peace as it opened way for them to go to school for those who can go. In contrary however, another informant said: “DDR approach has not done anything as it is just a shadow of itself because most people that are disarmed were not properly integrated into the society and they were not even properly mobilized nor empowered at all. Hence, they are left with no other choice than to go back to their former ways of life”. For another informants, “it is a futile effort as people get more weapon to carry out their operation; the problem has metamorphosed into another thing like genocide, kidnapping”. This support the findings of Muggah (2009: 1) on the reality attributed to other development interventions established by more groups in complicated settings, the “fact that DDR deals specifically with weapons and armed groups suggests an extra layer of caution is warranted”

On the issue of those who accepted or embraced the presidential amnesty program, one can say that few people embraced the program even though some were at the beginning afraid of it as it could be a trap set by the government for people of the region to be arrested. One of those that accepted it said “some people accepted it although some people were afraid” and the other people did not accept it because of the fact that it was not properly implemented. This confirmed a statement by an informant that:

“People did not embrace it because it is not properly implemented and the money being voted is not seen and did not have positive impact on the people”.

5. Conclusion

The study examined the challenges of amnesty program for post conflict peace building in Nigeria Niger Delta with particular reference to Ondo State. It evaluated the causes, challenges, impacts and effectiveness of the presidential amnesty program not in addressing the issues alone, but also in promoting sustainable peace and development in the state. It could be deduced from the findings that though the amnesty programme has brought stability to the region and has also brought relative and sustainable peace for oil and gas activities to thrive, it is however faced with some challenges. Some of these challenges faced by the amnesty program which are so fundamental to post conflict peacebuilding ranged from inability of the government to properly mobilized and empowered ex-combatants after acquiring the basic education or skills, corruption, political influence to lack of proper monitoring. The program was faced with all these challenges majorly because the program stands as the mechanism for post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta and thereafter, is limited to the ex-militants alone by addressing their needs which have significant effect on the emergence of DDR.

In sum, the program is yet to achieve post conflict peace building in the region as expected majorly because the underline issues are still present, even when government established different agencies in addressing them. Finally, the DDR approach adopted by the government has not successfully achieved its mandate because some categories of people are of the view that the rancour has not ended but have only been paused with the hope of government doing the needful.

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