

POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

OUTCOMES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAMME (PAP) IN OIL RICH NIGER DELTA

Executive Summary

Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) has been ongoing for the last ten years. The implementation of the PAP has generated significant interest within Nigeria's policy community as the programme facilitates a 'fragile peace' that allows for the unhindered production of oil in the region. Despite its long duration, amnestied ex-militants continue to depend on monthly stipends they receive from the programme for their livelihood. This goes contrary to the original goals of the programme to facilitate the reintegration of ex-militants within a period of five years. There is urgent need for reform of the PAP. Yet, it is not clear what direction the Nigerian government will take to reform the programme without a relapse of violence in the region. This policy brief analyses ex-militants' view of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) and offer recommendations on how to reform the programme in ways that will lead to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP): Origin, Implementation and Outcomes

In the early 2000s, armed militants fighting for the rights of communities to have more share of oil revenues emerged in the Niger Delta. The engagement strategies of these groups include kidnapping of oil companies' employees and destruction of oil industry infrastructure in the Niger Delta. These attacks, especially the destruction of oil industry infrastructure led to a significant decrease in Nigeria's oil production and export. As a consequence, the Nigerian government witnessed a decline in public revenues that are essential to governance across Nigeria.

The election of the late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as President of Nigeria in 2007 created a new window of opportunity for the Nigerian government to address the security and development challenges in the Niger Delta. The overarching policy framework of President Yar'Adua's led administration set out to address three key issues: infrastructure development of the Niger Delta region, transfer of equities in oil licenses to oil producing communities in the Niger Delta and the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme for armed militants to end militancy in the region. The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was set up to manage the objective of infrastructure development. Demands by oil producing communities for participation in the oil industry was taken into account in the proposed Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) and the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) was set up to manage the end of armed militancy in the Niger Delta.

The objective of the PAP was to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate armed militants back into society. Following its proclamation, about 30, 000 ex-militants were reported to have accepted the amnesty in three different phases. The PAP trained ex-militants in various vocational and educational subjects in the Niger Delta and abroad. The trainings began in 2010. Since then, the Nigerian government has witnessed relative stability in oil industry security in the Niger Delta. Threats to oil industry security emerge mainly when issues around the PAP and its key beneficiaries (ex-militants and their leaders) are uncertain. However, research interviewing ex-militants show that the outcomes of the PAP are mixed.

There is evidence to show that ex-militants are participating in the socio-cultural and political life of their communities. Ex-militants have won elections into State House of Assemblies and National House of Representatives. They hold community positions as traditional rulers, chiefs and chairmen of Community Development Committees (CDC). Others have been appointed into executive positions at the state and local government levels. However, it is unclear whether their relationship with other members of communities is shaped by fear, respect or mutual acceptance.

While there have been extensive investments in vocational and formal education of participants in the PAP, it is unclear the extent to which these investments have led to the employment of ex-militants that participated in the programme. Instead, a significant number of ex-militants still depend on monthly payments of stipends from PAP for their livelihood. The failure to achieve this



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economic reintegration objective for most ex-militants partly explains why, after ten years of implementation, the Nigerian government is unable to end the PAP. This

calls for urgent reforms of PAP that will enable the Nigerian government achieve the objective of economic reintegration of ex-militants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for a verification of the number of ex-militants registered in the amnesty programme.

After 10 years of implementation, the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) maintains that it continues to provide for 30, 000 ex-militants. As part of efforts to address the shortcomings of the programme, it is important that the government conduct a verification exercise to confirm the actual number of people that are registered in the programme. This verification exercise should include how many ex-militants who have died or moved elsewhere and those that are gainfully employed.

An assessment of the competence of ex-militants trained in the amnesty programme.

The Presidential Amnesty Programme (The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) should conduct an assessment of the capacities of ex-militants trained through the programme. This assessment should aim to address the capacity gaps that may exist as a result of poor or incomplete training.

Niger Delta Labour Market Assessment

PAP should conduct a labour market assessment in the Niger Delta. This assessment should aim to understand the demand side of the labour market in the region. The labour market assessment should include both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. The outcome of the assessment should be used to design an economic reintegration programme for ex-militants that are still in need of jobs.

Decentralisation and reform of the Presidential Amnesty Programme

The Federal Government of Nigeria should start a decentralization process for the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). This process should

aim to transfer control of the amnesty programme to the local level where ex-militants reside. This is because this is the area where reintegration is expected to take place. This process should aim to add new elements or strengthen existing elements that will address current failures of the amnesty programme to produce the intended outcomes. This will also help government overcome the challenges that will emerge from termination of the programme when the objectives have not been achieved. At the local level, the Nigerian government should aim to include the traditional rulers, chiefs, community development committees and associations and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the objectives of the PAP are achieved at the community level where it is most needed.

Community Reconciliation and Local Peacebuilding

The PAP should revisit the issue of community reconciliation and local peacebuilding in communities across the Niger Delta. This is needed to address hidden grievances held against ex-militants. It will also improve social cohesion in communities and create new entry points for sustainable peacebuilding in the Niger Delta.

Strategic Communications

As one major militant leader pointed out, it is essential that government gives accurate and timely information to the people of the Niger Delta. This should explain any action taken or proposed, in a problem solving way rather than an inflammatory or threatening manner; Government should call the leaders of the region – the traditional rulers, ethnic leaders, women, mainstream youth and ex-agitator leaders – to discuss and find solutions together. Only then will the decisions be owned by the Niger Delta people themselves.

Further Reading

Tarila Marclint Ebiede (2020) 'What the Ex-Militants Say': Analysis of the Outcomes of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in Oil Rich Niger Delta. Research Report for Academic Associates PeaceWorks, Conveners of Niger Delta Dialogue, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria.

Credits

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