

# POST-AMNESTY PLAN, PEACE-BUILDING AND PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA: A POLYCENTRIC PLANNING AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY (PPPRS)

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## SYNOPSIS

This proposal charts a course of action that the Federal Government of Nigeria can take in order to consolidate the gains of amnesty programme by building peace and engineering people-centred development in the Niger Delta. From theoretical formulations to empirical analysis, this proposal uses the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework to diagnose the missing links in several efforts and programmes designed to addressing the crisis in the Niger Delta. While the present amnesty programme has yielded some good results, the grey area – post-amnesty plan – that can address the problems and challenges that triggered violence, insecurity and economic loss in the Niger Delta requires urgent attentions. In other words, amnesty programme needs be complemented with pragmatic post-amnesty poverty reduction and development strategies that are people-oriented. It is apposite to make hay while the sun shines. In the light of this exigency, this proposal considers it imperative to adopt a polycentric planning and poverty reduction strategy (PPPRS) to resolving the Niger Delta crisis.

The proposal is a summary of innovative problem-solving and solution-seeking ideas that area capable of addressing several challenges that are confronting the Niger Delta. It contains a well designed post-amnesty plan and programmes that can ensure economic empowerment, poverty reduction, people-centred development and peace-building in the region. The proposal designs a Niger-Delta Post-Amnesty Development Model (NDPADM) that derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from fifteen (15) African development models that are problem-solving and solution-seeking in several sectors of the economy in the Niger Delta. At the heart of NDPADM is African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) designed for the setting up self-governing community assembly (SGCA) for deliberation, collegiality, mutual trust, reciprocity and shared community of understanding to enable citizens, both elite and non-elite to operate in synergy to collectively achieve socio-economic and techno-political objectives. Without a restructuring of the public space that could enable all the diverse interests in the Niger Delta to operate as colleagues with equal standing such that oil benefits are shared equitably, amnesty programme will be tantamount to fire brigade exercise, a waste of resources and a cycle of reinforced violence.

Under the proposed new institutional arrangement, amnestied persons will be involved in the activities of community assembly where they can function as agents of change in development arenas. Invariably, the amnesty programme of the federal government would enable ex-militants, freedom fighters, revolutionists and other citizens to make meaningful contributions towards development. The outcome of the restructuring is emergence of new institutional arrangements, which would reflect integrative constitutional order in socio-economic and techno-political realms. It is this joint action and synergy by the major stakeholders (public officials, scholars, oil companies and representatives of community self-governing institutions) that would eventually determine how government policies in all spheres of life in the region are to be implemented. After the institutional arrangement has been designed, operational strategy for implementation of any programme/project (e.g. employment generation, food security, road development, poverty reduction, environmental management, security of life and property, electoral reform and democratisation, conflict detection, prevention and resolution, etc.) can then be fashioned out. It is at this stage that any of the fifteen models can be applied to any of the specific action situations. For example, the Nigerian government can kick start post-amnesty programmes by implementing food security and employment generation programmes in the Niger Delta.

## INTRODUCTION

This proposal charts a course of action that the Federal Government of Nigeria can take in order to consolidate the gains of amnesty programme by building peace and engineering people-centred development in the Niger Delta. As the seventh largest producer of oil and gas in the world and the largest in Africa, the Niger Delta contributes over 40% to the Nigeria's GDP, about 90% of total annual earnings and about 80% of the national gross income (Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN] 2008:212). Despite the population of the region (about 33.5 million) accounting for about 23.0% of the national population (FGN 2008:189), the Niger Delta is characterized by accumulated problems - poverty, neglect, environmental degradation, and transport bottlenecks (Naanen 1995; Obi 2004:450; Akinola 2008b:89). In spite of its strategic economic importance, the demographic picture of the region as shown by the Human Development Index<sup>1</sup> (HDI) is deplorable. The HDI of the region is as low as 0.564, compared with other regions and nations with the same oil and gas resources such as Saudi Arabia (0.800), United Arab Emirate (0.846), Kuwait (0.844), Libya (0.799), etc. (Human Development Index Report 2005:6 cited in Okaba 2008:30).

These problems are consequential upon the public sphere being dominated by the few elite with "particularistic" concerns at the exclusion of the people. The affluence exhibited by many workers of the oil companies and political office holders in Nigeria sharply contrasts with the social deprivation of most residents of oil communities whose livelihoods are threatened (Akinola 1992, 1998, 2000, 2003a, 2005d, 2008b:89; Obi 2004:448). In response, the people of oil communities resisted this oppression of the federal government and oil companies in various ways (Douglas and Ola 1999:334; Obi 2000a:281). Consequently, four major groups, as identified by Akinola (2008b:90), with diverse interests have emerged strategizing for different reasons. Consequently, the challenges in the region have become complex and complicated.

The problems are largely a case of institutional dilemma which confirms the problem of "disconnect" that is caused by the absence of appropriate institutional mechanisms that could motivate the people (elite and non-elite) to work together as partners in development in the region. The stakeholders in development – governments, oil companies, other agencies and the Niger Delta people – operate on parallel lines, instead of as colleagues with equal standing within governance and development arenas. Without the citizens playing active role in decision making, governance process would continue to exclude and marginalize them. This factor has also accounted for the Niger Delta Master Plan and dialogue to resolve the problems in the region.

Using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework developed over the years by Vincent Ostrom and Elinor Ostrom and colleagues at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA, this proposal discusses repetitive missing links between and among the stakeholders in the governance of public affairs in the Niger Delta and also proffers possible solution to the challenges in the region. The IAD believes in institutional arrangement designed by people who cooperate based on rules and constitution of their choice, and thereby able to resolve socio-economic and political problems which other people (external to their conditions) are not capable of doing for them.

Akinola (2008b) found that the inability of the elites leadership, governments and oil companies in the Niger Delta to respond appropriately to the needs and aspirations of the citizenry provoked opportunity for the people to carry out social responsibility that the state has effectively dodged over the years. The local people through self-governing institutions in the region have been able to respond to social challenges by exploring pre-colonial governance heritage and to certain extents have been able to address their daily needs (Akinola 2008b). The contention of this paper is that these people-centred creativities and adaptation strategies should form the basis

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<sup>1</sup> Human Development Index is a standard measure of well being of people, encompassing the longevity of age, knowledge and decent standard of living in terms of access to safe and clean water, quality health and education services, electricity, road, gainful employment, political participation, rule of law, etc. It is measured with 1 being the highest ranking score.

for reconstructing governance and development in the Niger Delta. It is in this regard that polycentric planning and decision making arrangements that regard community self-governing institution as a major player in crisis resolution and development become imperative. Polycentric planning is a deliberate act of setting up multilayered and multicentred institutional mechanism that regards self-governing capabilities of local communities as foundation for reconstituting order from the bottom up. It can also be described as the process of ordering the use of physical, human and institutional resources as well as engaging the citizens in contractual relations with the public authority.

The point of departure of this paper is in problem solving and solution seeking. The paper is, therefore, concerned with how to reconfigure the public space through appropriate institutional mechanism that could bring the Niger Delta people into the main stream of socio-economic and political decisions, thereby synergizing the efforts of the state, oil companies and community institutions through bottom-up and integrative planning. It also suggests adaptive planning strategy, using multi-layers and multi-centres institutional arrangements, to connect the stakeholders in a polycentric manner in order to resolve the hydra-headed challenges in the region. In the light of this exigency, this paper develops a Niger-Delta Post-Amnesty Development Model (NDPADM) that derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from fifteen (15) African development models that are problem-solving and solution-seeking in several sectors of the economy in the Niger Delta.

This proposal is, therefore, concerned with community institutions as the platform and basal point of decision making on the rational utilization and sustainability of environmental resources (natural and artificial) in meeting the yearning and aspirations of Niger Delta citizens. This is where amnestied persons can function as agents of change in development arenas. Invariably, the amnesty programme of the federal government will enable ex-militants, freedom fighters, revolutionists and other citizens in the region to make meaningful contributions towards development. This, undoubtedly, will bring lasting peace and development to the Niger Delta.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper concludes that the good steps of the Federal Government of Nigeria that commenced with amnesty programme can only yield lasting dividends in terms of peace and people-centred development if Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPPRS) is employed in the Niger Delta. In the light of this exigency, this proposal designs post-amnesty plan and programmes that can ensure economic empowerment, poverty reduction, people-centred development and peace-building in the region. The proposal develops a Niger-Delta Post-Amnesty Development Model (NDPADM) that derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from fifteen (15) African development models that are problem-solving and solution-seeking in several sectors of the economy in the Niger Delta. At the heart of NDPADM is African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) designed for the setting up self-governing community assembly (SGCA) for deliberation, collegiality, mutual trust, reciprocity and shared community of understanding to enable citizens, both elite and non-elite to operate in synergy to collectively achieve socio-economic and techno-political objectives. Without a restructuring of the public space that can enable all the diverse interests in the Niger Delta to operate as colleagues with equal standing such that oil benefits are shared equitably, amnesty programme will be tantamount to fire brigade exercise, a waste of resources and a cycle of reinforced violence.

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