

POST AMNESTY FOR MILITANTS IN THE NIGER DELTA 2015 – 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The term amnesty and militancy are very common terms within Niger Delta area of Nigeria. This has been so because of the activities of militants and the government's approach in curbing their activities. Post 2018 that saw Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of persons into the society has yielded positive fruits by way of economic improvement. The government had introduced various programmes of reintegration for them and this has paid off the economy of the state has improved because there has been no destruction of the pipelines by militants.

The Federal Government now has to only work on the sustenance of the various programmes to keep them busy and off the lines in the Niger Delta to stabilize the economy of Nigeria. Request made by host communities on the government and on the International Oil Companies (IOC) must be critically looked into to avert unrest in communities hosting the IOC's.

The youths must not also be left out in the scheme of things as they are the leaders of tomorrow and that is why within 2015 - 2024 a total sum of 1.9 trillion naira has been invested in the programme.¹ These funds have been made available to ensure that this programme succeeds. The Federal Government of Nigeria and it's agencies must ensure that the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) lives to achieve its aims and objectives in building a formidable Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

We hope at the end of this write up we should be able to know how much the government and the IOC's have done by way of synergy in programmes trying to improve the lives of those in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This will also help us to see if the effects of these programmes by the government has been able to improve the lives of the youths, women and children in the region.

Post Militancy (DDR) Programme

During the period of 2015 to 2018, the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) focused on providing vocational training, formal education, and empowerment schemes for ex-militants and youths in the impacted communities of the Niger Delta. However, the period was also marked by significant challenges, including concerns over corruption, the sustainability of stipends, and the program's overall effectiveness in fostering long-term peace.

At the perceived end to hostilities in the Niger Delta region the federal government of Nigeria introduced the programme to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate these militants to the society to be useful back to themselves and their communities. The Federal Government in achieving this supported by reintegrating with the following;

¹ Office of the Accountant General of the Federation 2015.

REINTEGRATION TRAINING OF EX-MILITANTS.

AREA OF SPECIALIZATION

1	Education:	
	Nigerian universities	1,620
	Foreign universities	1,454
2	Welding and fabrication	5,194
3	Entrepreneurship	2,798
4	Maritime	1,086
5	Crane and heavy duty	1,030
6	Pipefitting	250
7	Boat building	299
8	Agriculture	239
9	Automobile	207
10	Electrical installation	89
11	Aviation:	
	Engineers	138
	Pilot (fixed wing)	71
	Helicopter	21
	Instructors	5
12	Diving	230
13	Drilling	197
14	Health, safety and environment	104
15	Industry automation	86
16	Entertainment	60
17	Instrumentation	46
	Total	15,224²

The presidential amnesty programme (PAP) came at a high price, however. While at its conception in 2009, the Nigerian government estimated that the entire programme would cost about US\$360 million, it actually cost much more. In particular, the changes introduced in 2011 by Kingsley Kuku former Chairman presidential amnesty programme during the Goodluck Jonathan administration led to a significant increase in the cost of the programme. Due to this increase, the Nigerian government budgeted US\$2.714 billion for the PAP between 2011 and 2017. The training programmes and the monthly stipend payments have been the main expenses of the PAP budget. Thus, Nigeria’s PAP has been considerably more expensive than initially planned and much more expensive than comparable programmes operated by international organization. The government perceived successes is actually a far-cry from the realities on ground because corruption which has always been a clog in the wheel of our progress had also creped into the programme and affected the capturing of the actual actors in the crisis.³

Federal Government Approach to Peace:

The Federal Government of Nigeria in a bid to keep the peace fationed out various programmes for the ex-agitators to keep the peace one of which is the pipe line surveillance contract job given to Tantita Security Company of Nigeria headed by chief government Ekpemupolo Aka Tompolo. The award of the contract brought about a lot of agitation from other agitators who felt that the job should have best been shared among them to handle, but in his words the Governor of Delta State His Excellency Ifeanyi Okowa said "to check the rising oil theft cases, the Federal Government should involve the oil-bearing communities, where the oil is produced," the statement said.

² Office of the Special Adviser to the President on the Niger Delta, October 2015.

³ N. Kiege. Youth resque International development organization(Repented militant) 2017.

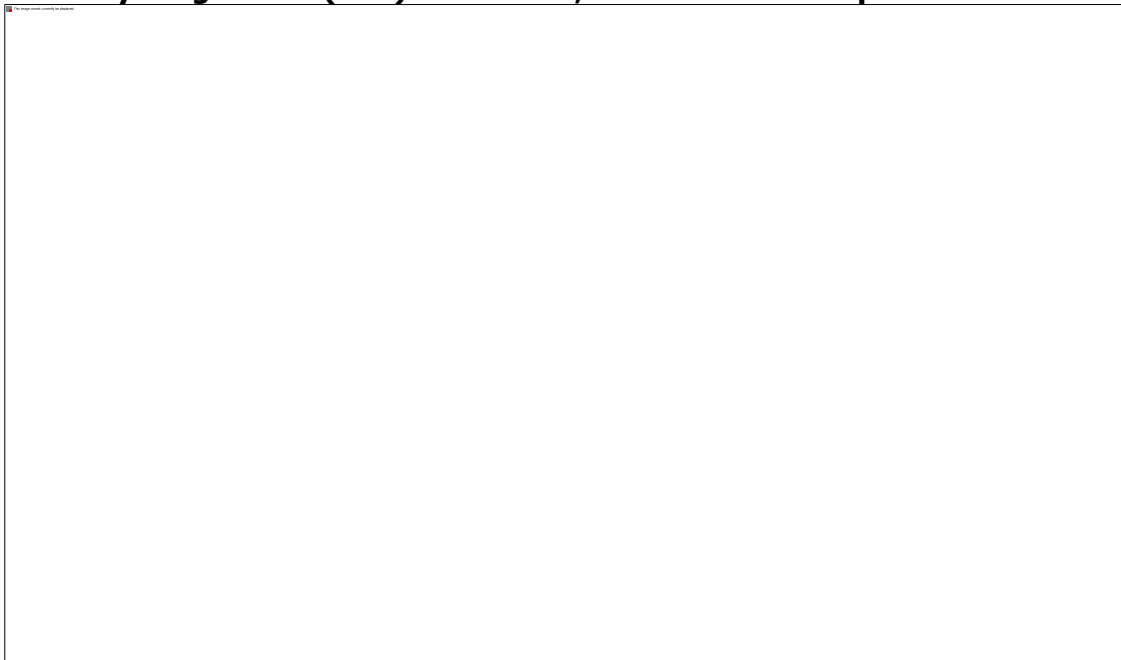
“And, to involve them, the surveillance contracts for oil facilities surveillance in the area should be reviewed.

“In other words, make them own it, let them be partners because if you make them part of it, they will guard, police and protect it.”⁴

“They will do anything to make sure they protect it, but if you alienate them from it, they will leave it and allow anything to happen to it he said.”

He said the state was happy to hear that just a few days after their visit, the federal government listened to Governor Okowa’s advice and awarded the surveillance contract to Chief Government Ekpemupolo popularly known as Tompolo. This was welcoming because this pipeline surveillance job was to cover almost all the youths by way of empowerment.

Amnesty Programme (PAP) since 2015, with over 68% expanded in 2017



*Source: Office of the Accountant General of the Federation*⁵

Key takeaways:

₦1.9 trillion spent on the PAP from 2015 to 2024, a significant amount dedicated to reintegrating former militants and fostering peace in the Niger Delta.

2017 saw an extraordinary spike with ₦1.3 trillion spent, which is over 68% of the entire decade’s spending.

Expenditure stabilized after 2017, maintaining a consistent ₦59.6 billion - ₦65 billion annually to 2018.

What has Changed 2015 - Date

The programme of amnesty has brought about lots of changes in the activities of militants in the Niger Delta and the country at large as it has provided an alternative source of livelihood in the form of direct and indirect jobs for the teeming youths and former militants.

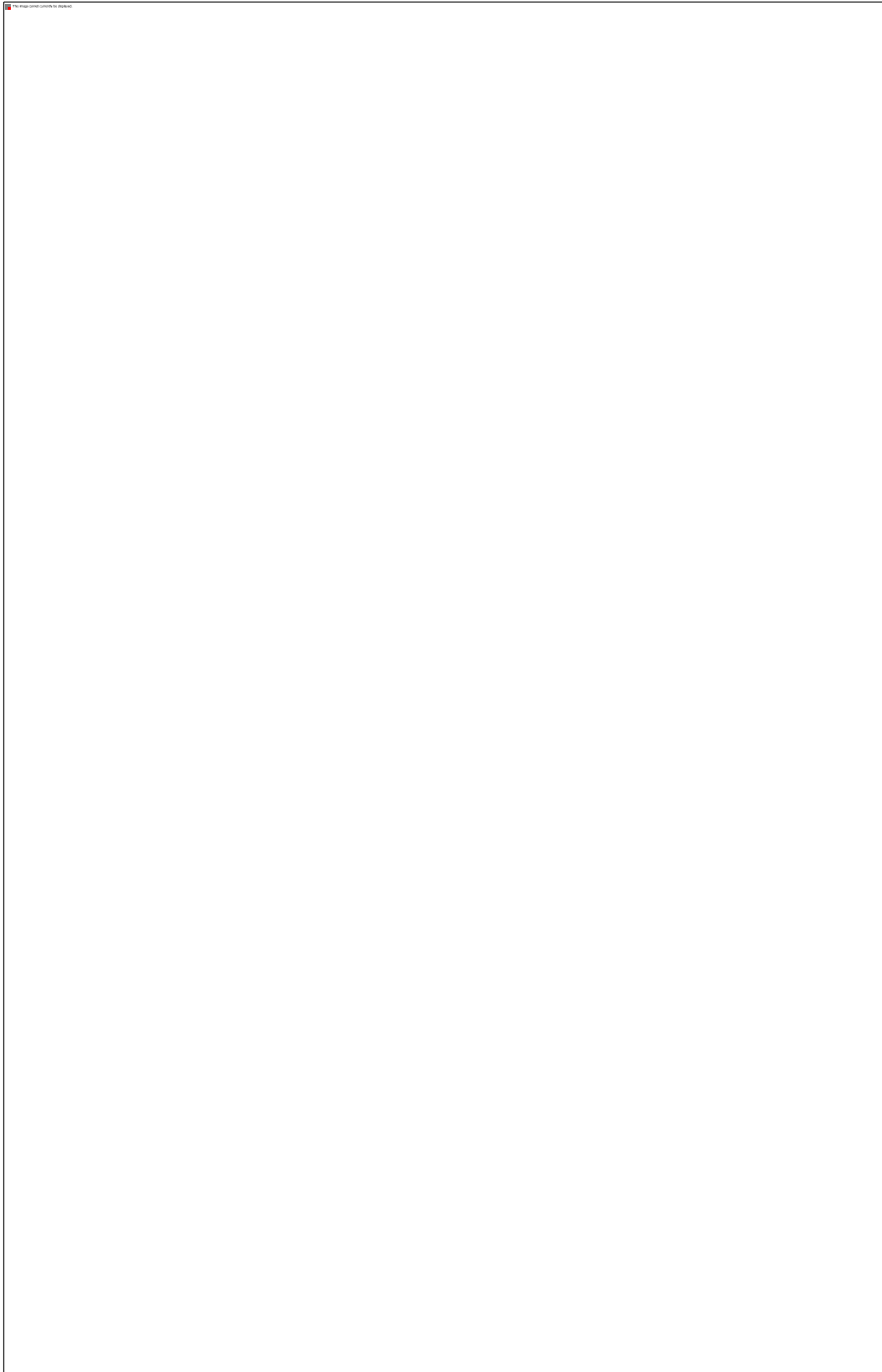
The creeks have been largely deserted by the militants who have been positively engaged in educational ventures or vocational skills to put food on their tables and that of their family members. The elderly have been provided with facility to Carter for their medical needs while the women and

⁴ Ifeanyi Okowa, 2015

⁵ Office of the Accountant General of the Federation

children have been provided with pipe borne water to take away long distance walk to get water and schools to provide for the educational needs of their children, even though these facilities are still faced with issues of teachers etc.

The government has also provided scholarship grants for various levels to equip the ex-agitators to be better citizens of the country.⁶



The government has not narrowed itself to programmes of pipeline surveillance, but has shown credible intention to better the lives of the ex- agitators but the greed and selfishness of some

⁶ Presidential Amnesty Programme 2023.

individuals cannot be put aside as the issue of the production of diesel, kerosene and petrol alias kpo-fire illegally cannot be ignored. The quest for constant cash to spend have driven most of this same agitators into leading huge gangs into the production of poorly refined products that have maimed and killed during it's production, destroyed machinery of those who patronize them and polluted the air space. This has also reduce Massively the Production Capacity of crude because of the constant Pipeline breaches and cost the country loss of revenue.

Illegal Refining of Products (Kpo- Fire)

The end of Militancy saw the rise in the illegal refining of petroleum products AKA kpo- fire. The constant incursion into mangroves, forest and bushes had given enlightenment to the militants on the routes and the illegal collaborators of the multi- nationals had entered into partnership with ex-agitators (some) to bridge the pipes collect crude, refine and sell to ready buyers and collect quick money. Boris notes that the amount of stolen crude oil is put at over 300,000 barrels per day.⁷ While in Aug 2022, the government announced that Nigeria lost \$2 billion to oil theft between January and August.⁸

The fall of the Niger Delta militancy and the rise of Kpo- firism has been seen as gain for the poor, ready-made products availability and quick funding for the jobless youths, these refined products were made available to filling station, households etc. and was causing the government massive loss in revenue because the market had been stolen by the new brewers that where closer to the market and where selling at cheaper rates.

The Benefit and the Course of the New Found Kpo- Naira (Crude)

Jonny run to Mama Barine and get kerosene of ₦200.00 for me, we have run out of kero to complete our cooking. This was how cheap and accessible the product was to the end users who needed it for their day to day use. The average man and woman could for once feel that they actually marched the name petroleum Producing country as this was made possible by the suppliers of the Kpo-fire products whether as kero, petrol or diesel the impact was felt and they believed it elevated their suffering in a country where over ninety percent of the Populace where living below the poverty line but this was not without a dangerous price for their perceived benefits.

The Dark and Dangerous Side of Kpo- Naira

Jonny have you bought the kero from Mama Barine? Please put it in the stove. Just as Jonny attempts to get kero into the stove bum an explosion occurs and fire engulfs the entire kitchen with Jonny in the flames. These where the sought of tales that came out of the region on daily basis, because of poorly refined crude made available by criminals for domestic use all in the name of affordable products. Vehicle mechanics and generator mechanics where cashing out on their customers because of regular visits to them as a result of bad diesel or bad petrol used in their vehicles. As a result of proliferation of Kpo- fire sites around the environment the people began to battle against lung diseases because black soot had taken over the environment. This menace became a challenge for the government as debris took over everything it came in sight with. The perceived blessing had become a National curse for all citizens of the Delta region and the question arose what do we do to curb this disaster?

⁷ Boris, H. O. (2015). The Upsurge of Oil Theft and Illegal Bunkering in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 235–245.

⁸ Omorogbe, P. (2022). Nigeria lost \$2bn to oil theft between January and August this year. *Nigerian Tribune*, 22 November, 2022.

State Governments Actions to Stop the Menace of Kpo-Fire

Despite the public outcry against air pollution from the fine particles of soot emanating from artisanal refineries scattered across the rural areas in the region.⁹

The obvious signs seen by all including government officials was a clear sign that the government needed to act swiftly before the health situation in their states deteriorated to a state of crisis. The governments set-up joint task forces to combat the illegal refineries by destroying sites for production, licences were granted to individuals to build modular refineries to improve the crude and destructive manner in which these products were produced.

Challenges and Ongoing Issues

Despite the program's efforts, a resurgence of militancy and attacks on oil infrastructure occurred during this period. This was partly fueled by the Buhari administration's initial plan to phase out the program's stipend payments, which was eventually walked back.

Despite crackdowns, illegal oil refining persists, with some arguing that complete eradication is impossible.

Kpo-fire is simply a local oil process of heating the stolen crude in a fabricated oven to extract petroleum products while the residual is released into the environment not minding the implication on the ecosystem.¹⁰

The process of illegal refining, known as "kpo-fire," is criticized for causing air pollution, soot, charred sites, oil spillage, and environmental degradation. The aspect of greed in human existence cannot be pushed aside for it has been seen as a knack for destruction of so many things and our environment and health is part of what has been destroyed by this act. The Federal government is expected to swing into action to put an end to this devastating menace.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The pipeline surveillance team should be additionally strengthened to curtail the excesses of these criminals that have decided to distort the flow of crude, thereby reducing the economic financial benefits of the country.
2. Modular refineries should be built and licences given to these same operators of these illegal sites to refine quality products for sale.
3. There should be a total dismantling of sites used for these illegal operations to discourage them from returning to these sites.
4. A reintegration process has to also be considered for those who could not be structured into the modular refinery production line and given other programmes that can create sustainability for them and their families.
5. The governments and the multinationals should improve on their operations in their host communities to avoid a reoccurrence of the past happening.

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¹⁰ (Raging Kpo-fire: Deadly disease looking in the Niger Delta.) *Vanguard*, March, 27th 2022.

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