

Report on the  
Assessment of the  
**Presidential Amnesty  
Programme (PAP)**



# **Report on the Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP)**

**Prepared for NEXTIER SPD by a Team of consultants  
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## **Acknowledgements**

In 2019, Nextier SPD (Security, Peace and Development) commissioned a team of consultants to conduct a review of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). As part of this review, the team conducted an institutional assessment of the PAP in order to determine areas where it has been successful; highlighted key issues that were hampering its success; and developed actionable recommendations on how to transition the agency into a vehicle that will be able to address the key issues of the Niger Delta region more effectively. All efforts were made to ensure rigour, balance and evidenced-based research.

Nextier SPD is grateful to the team of consultants who worked tirelessly over many months in developing this transition strategy. We want to specially thank Dr. Abiodun Onadipe, Dr. Ndubuisi N. Nwokolo, Dr. Iro Aghedo, Mr. Nana K. A. Busia, Jr. and Mr. Ibrahim Clark. We want to commend your commitment to the project despite the challenges posed by the novel Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). We hope that the transition strategy proposed in this report will help to guide the government and other stakeholders in repositioning the PAP programme for greater heights.

## Executive Summary

Nigeria has continued to lag in human capital and infrastructural development despite being the world's tenth-largest producer of crude oil and Africa's largest exporter of petroleum. The Niger Delta region which harbours these natural resources, like other regions of the country, is marred by youth unemployment, environmental degradation and other forms of socio-economic and political deprivations. On account of perceived neglect of the region, the area was awash with youth restiveness and criminal violence in much of the late-1990s to late-2000s, posing a huge security threat to lives, livelihoods, environment and critical oil infrastructure.

In the era spanning 2007 to 2009, Nigeria's oil production was as low as 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) from the daily crude production of 2.2 million previously recorded, leading to estimated loss of more than 1 million bpd, which as of May 2009 was calculated to be about ₦8.7 billion or \$58 million daily. The economic losses as well as the deteriorating security situation in the region led to the proclamation of amnesty for militant groups in the region by President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2009.

The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) was modelled after the United Nation's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) interventionist programme. The PAP was adjudged a success for restoring oil production to pre-amnesty level and reducing the scale of insecurity in the region.

The programme supported ex-militants with monthly stipends, as well as provided vocational and university education as part of the DDR process. However, 10 years into the programme, there are concerns that the programme has derailed from its original objectives. Besides the fact that the programme was originally designed to last for five years, today, it appears that the programme has no terminal date in sight.

Moreover, it is becoming too expensive to maintain, as well as being marred by corruption, nepotism, prebendal and patrimonial acts. Between 2010 and 2014, the implementation of the Amnesty programme gulped ₦243 billion (US\$1.68 billion) making this home-grown DDR programme one of the world's most expensive. In 2017, the amnesty budget almost tripled, with an additional ₦30 billion (\$98.47 million) being released and an extra ₦5 billion reportedly added at a later stage. Until 2016 the annual budget was ₦20 billion.<sup>1</sup> Like most bureaucratic institutions in the country, the PAP suffers from lack of transparency, consistency and efficient management of resources. It has been characterised by a vision targeted only toward reducing threats to oil production.

Following the not-too-impressive management and implementation of the programme over the last 10 years, especially as it concerns achieving its main objectives, this report, which is based on survey research, reviews the overall performance of the programme, examines challenges which have prevented it from producing optimal results and proposes policy approaches for the transition of the programme.

The report finds that the PAP has succeeded in improving the security situation in the region and putting more than 20,000 beneficiaries through various formal education and vocational training

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<sup>1</sup> Read more at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/02/fg-spent-n243bn-amnesty-5yrs-kuku/>

programmes, enterprise development, apprenticeship schemes, and job placement initiatives. However, there is a growing view that the PAP has overstayed its welcome, even though there is a prevailing attachment to the programme on account that its closure could cause the eruption of more violent agitation from a new crop of militants.

With the overarching goal of the Amnesty programme being security stabilisation as a precondition for intensive socio-economic development of the region, an assessment of the PAP would essentially focus on the effective implementation of the DDR process. To assess the PAP, it will be necessary to examine it from a number of perspectives. This will be done by assessing the following areas:

- *programme performance*: which will consider whether implementation is proceeding in accordance with the programme plan and budget;
- *programme effectiveness*: which will examine whether and to what extent the programme has achieved its objectives, and on what external conditions it depends; and,
- *programme efficiency*: which will determine whether programme outputs and outcomes were produced in the most economical way or are wasteful.

The approach and method adopted by the team of consultants for this project is a mixed research methodology: literature review of PAP documents and relevant research papers, in-depth/oral interviews for identified key stakeholders in the region, and focus group discussions.

In light of the findings of the assessment of the PAP, this report makes the case for a transition strategy away from PAP as it is currently constituted to another form of mechanism that could foster peace and security, and also address the issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, avoiding the challenges as discussed. Four main transition options were presented for consideration, highlighting the implications for each of the options. Of the four options listed below, the team of experts advanced arguments while concluding that Option 4 is the most suitable.

**Option 1: Closure of programme.** Propose a closure process for the programme over a short time frame (about nine months), ensuring that all registered beneficiaries complete their reintegration programme within this period;

**Option 2: Devolution of PAP Programme Activities to Federal MDAs.** Divesting the PAP activities into the programmes of other federal MDAs;

**Option 3: Transforming PAP into an Autonomous Youth Programme** which would not be just focused on militant youth but youth as a whole; and,

**Option 4: Devolving PAP Activities to State Oil Development Commissions** which entails divesting powers from the centre and to agencies of state governments, encouraging more local ownership and supervision.

The following recommendations emanate from the assessment:

- To address this feeling of exclusion from PAP which has made violence a recurring decimal in the Niger Delta, the plight of excluded active youth, women and ravaged communities must be factored into the transition or exit strategy of PAP.

- Corruption needs to be significantly reduced through effective oversight functions, deployment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as well as prosecution and sanctioning of those indicted for corruption.
- Innovative strategies must be used to get jobs for those who have been trained in order to prevent them from relapse into violent crimes in their quest for socioeconomic survival.<sup>2</sup>
- Open up the space for the private, non-oil businesses and not-for-profit sectors to participate in/contribute to the programme. This broadening of participation will promote the integration of those trained on the programme and also boost acceptability of the programme by international actors.
- Finally, even though poverty alleviation does not fall directly within the remit of PAP, the programme has been expected to have significant impact on the socioeconomic wellbeing and thus livelihood of its beneficiaries.

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<sup>2</sup> Sanz, Eneko (2009), “Afghanistan: 2003-2008” in A. Carames and E. Sanz (eds.) *DDR 2009: Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programs in the World during 2008*, Ballatera: School for a Culture of Peace

## Introduction and Background

The Niger Delta, an oil-rich region, paradoxically, is ingloriously described as the oil pollution capital of the world. The region produces Nigeria's crude oil, about two million barrels per day in 2019, supplies 95 per cent of Nigeria's export earnings and 80 per cent of Federal Government revenue, but, ironically, more than 50 per cent of its youths are believed to be unemployed or underemployed.

The Niger Delta occupies about 70,000 sq. km of the landmass of Nigeria, or about 7.5 per cent of Nigeria's total land mass, is inhabited by about 25 million people in nine oil-producing states, six states in the South-South geopolitical zone, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, Cross River and Edo, one from South-West (Ondo) and two from the South-East (Abia and Imo). The nine states cover 185 local government areas in total. The indigenous people are from roughly 40 ethnic groups, including: Bini, Efik, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Yoruba, Oron, Ijaw, Ikwerre, Abua/Odual, Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwuani, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni and Obolo people, and speak an estimated 250 dialects.

Oil has also brought a curse to the region, as millions of barrels of crude oil have been spilled on surface water, groundwater, land and air environment from terminals, pipelines, and oil platforms so much so that violent agitation, sabotage of oil pipelines, layers of rackets revolving around oil siphoning, illegal bunkering and kidnappings were rife in the region as the people felt marginalised and relatively deprived despite the abundance of wealth being pumped from within their land and communities.

Initially community agitations targeted international oil companies (IOCs) for neglecting their social contract<sup>3</sup> and subsequent environmental degradation. Often, compensation payments for damages to property caused by oil exploration and production activities did not reach the grass roots or were mis-used by various stakeholders. This eventually turned to conflict between the communities and security operatives such as the police and the army and ultimately turned to insurgency against the state, as militia groups emerged to engage security operatives in armed struggle, just as they made political demands on the Nigerian government.

As far back as the 1960s there had been many development initiatives specifically targeting the region in order to reduce conflict and assuage the simmering anger of the population, ranging from the Niger Delta Development Board in 1961, Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority in 1976, Special Fund for Oil Producing Areas by Revenue Act (1981). Others are: Presidential Taskforce for Oil Producing Areas in 1989, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (1992), Niger Delta Development Commission in 2000 and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2008. However, these efforts failed to bring about stabilisation and inclusion for the region for various reasons such as poor project management and implementation, weak coordination, inadequate funding and corruption.

Thus, when in 2009 late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua offered unconditional pardon to militants and cash payments (monthly and for a specific period) to those who agreed to lay down arms and key into the programme and created the Presidential Amnesty Programme, (PAP), Nigerians hailed the move which was meant to tackle unrest and vandalism of oil pipelines and installations in oil-

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<sup>3</sup> This was the precursor term of the now popular corporate social responsibility (CSR). This contract brought forward the idea that companies function and exist because of public consent, thus, there is an obligation to contribute to the needs of society.

rich Niger Delta. The PAP was established within the Presidency and directly supervised by the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, who also acted as the Programme's Coordinator.

The Federal Government targeted repentant militants whose attacks in the core Niger Delta states affected the country's oil production, causing Nigeria's oil earnings to dip dramatically. No sooner had the militants keyed into the Amnesty process than the country's oil revenue spiked again.

The amnesty offer was officially announced on June 25, 2009 and the militants were given 60 days, between August 6 and October 4, 2009, to submit their arms and ammunition and embrace peace. By the terms of the amnesty, offences committed by the militants in the past were pardoned, while any offences committed in the post-amnesty era would attract the full wrath of the law. By the end of the amnesty period in 2009, a total of 20,192 militants had turned themselves in. Another batch of 6,166 militants, who were initially sceptical of the amnesty offer, were admitted to the programme in 2010. Three years later another 3,642 militants joined to make a grand total of 30,000 beneficiaries and they became known as Phase I, Phase II and Phase III beneficiaries respectively.

Since its establishment more than 10 years ago under great social, political and economic strife and tension, the PAP has had significant but measured impact on the security situation, directly helping to bring about some level of peace that currently exists in the region, heavily predicated on the government's use of monetary incentives to create a conducive environment for oil production.

Educational and entrepreneurial supports were provided for the repentant militants by the Nigerian government. According to the Amnesty Office, the placement of trainees in skills acquisition/vocational programmes was based on their expressed interest in areas such as pipeline welding, underwater welding, ocean diving, crane operations, boat building, oil drilling, automobile technology, fish farming as well as formal education. As at August 2017, 22,000 ex-militants had been trained in vocational and entrepreneurship development while 5,000 ex-militants had acquired further education. They were educated in 28 institutions in 15 foreign countries and 36 local institutions in 10 states in Nigeria. This brings the total number of those who have been trained to 27,000 out of the 30,000 repentant militants.<sup>4</sup>

The PAP has recorded some successes. First, it has helped in mitigating tension and insecurity in the region. Incidences of kidnapping and cases of disruption of the oil economy have significantly reduced and oil workers who had fled the Niger Delta region had returned to sites. These have led to an increase in production to around 1.9 million barrels oil per day.<sup>5</sup> This increment in oil production was, however, threatened in December 2015 following alleged plans to close the PAP. Local discontent resurfaced and in February 2016 a major pipeline operated by the Shell Petroleum and Development Company (SPDC) was vandalised leading to the halting of production and exports from the Shell Forcados terminal.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the few successes, the PAP is enmeshed in daunting challenges:

1. Trust deficit has been a major constrictive factor on the implementation of the amnesty programme. Owing to past dubious and failed peace deals and amnesty offers to leaders of

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<sup>4</sup> Nwokolo, Ndubuisi & Aghedo, Iro (2018), "Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace? The Power Elite and Amnesty Policy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria", *Chinese Political Science Review*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-018-0098-y>

<sup>5</sup> Ubhenin, Oscar Eodor (2013), "The Federal Government's Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta: An Appraisal", *Yonetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, Cilt: 11, Sayı (21) 179-203.

<sup>6</sup> Bolarinwa, Joshua Olusegun (2017), "International Reactions and Actions on Militancy and Insurgency in Nigeria since 1999", *Insight on Africa*, 10(1):98-116

earlier militia groups, such as Adaka Boro and Asari Dokubo, many militants were sceptical about the Yar'Adua amnesty offer in 2009.

2. The criteria used for establishing eligibility of beneficiaries for inclusion in the amnesty programme were unclear as there was no independent verification of the number of the militants amnestied. It was widely believed some of the ex-militant leaders inflated the figure of fighters in their commands in order to increase their share of lucre.
3. The PAP has mainly benefited perpetrators rather than victims of violence. In 2012 and 2013, the Nigerian government expended ₦72 billion and ₦88 billion respectively on the amnesty programme.<sup>7</sup> Despite the huge budgets, women who were widowed and children who were orphaned as well as other youths who did not take to violence were not compensated. Thus, the programme has provided genuine ground for endless agitations and protests for inclusion.
4. Although the government claimed that it was not disposed to cash for arms, the award of contracts to some ex-militant leaders for oil pipeline protection in the name of amnesty seems to contradict this. Ateke Tom, Victor Ben Ebikabowei (Boyloaf), Government Ekpumopolo (Tompolo) and Asari Dokubo were offered oil pipeline protection contracts up to the sums of ₦560 million, ₦560 million, ₦3.6 billion and ₦1.44 billion respectively.
5. The implementation of the amnesty programme appears to have been characterised by political intrigues and allegations of widespread corruption. Also, some members of staff in the Amnesty Office have been charged with corruption. While producing this report, the PAP Coordinator, Prof Charles Dokubo, was fired by President Muhammadu Buhari on 28 February 2020.<sup>8</sup> His replacement has yet to be appointed.

Finally, while various arms and ammunition surrendered by the ex-militants had helped to ensure relative peace, the PAP did not totally resolve the proliferation of arms in the region. For example, by 2015, kidnapping, armed robbery, piracy and oil theft had surged in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea, calling the disarmament and demobilisation processes into serious questioning.<sup>9</sup> However, there has been a gradual improvement though in the piracy and kidnaping in the Gulf of Guinea as a whole, attacks have declined from 80% to about 50% in 2018, but still significant to be of concern<sup>10</sup>.

## Approach and Methodology

In carrying out this assignment, a team of consultants mapped out strategies, reviewed frameworks and programmes of the PAP and developed recommendations on improvements to the effectiveness of PAP through a mixed research methodology: literature review of PAP documents and relevant research papers, in-depth/oral interviews for identified key stakeholders in the region.

This entailed the collection of data related to PAP project interventions in the region, lessons learnt over the past decade, comparative best practices as well as their impacts on host state governments' involvement in addressing youth restiveness within their states. This was achieved by providing relevant, timely and accurate information necessary for evidence-based policy action.

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<sup>7</sup> Eke, Surulola James (2015), "No Pay, No Peace: Political Settlement and Post-amnesty Violence in the Niger Delta, Nigeria", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(6):750-764

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/379578-buhari-suspends-dokubo-as-coordinator-of-amnesty-programme.html>

<sup>9</sup> Agbibo, E. Daniel (2015), "Transformational Strategy or Gilded Pacification? Four Years: The Niger Delta Armed Conflict and the DDR Process of the Nigerian Amnesty Programme", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(4):387-411

<sup>10</sup> Fighting Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea Needs a Radical Rethink, *The Conversation*, University of Greenwich, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019; see also Crime Wave – The Gulf of Guinea in Now Worse Piracy, *The Economist* [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com) Gulf of Guinea - is now worlds-worst piracy hot spot

In-depth interviews with about 20 key stakeholders from various backgrounds in the region and at various government and non-governmental levels were conducted to provide better context of the programme than through the focus groups.

A key limitation the team was faced with in the preparation of this report was that there was insufficient time to interview all the persons that had been identified as key informants. The contact details of some of them were difficult to come by and some of those contacted had not reverted to the team as at the time of writing the report. Another notable constraint in this assessment was the inability to locate a copy of the PAP agreement signed between the Federal Government and the militants in June 2009.

## **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme**

People in the Niger Delta region have consistently claimed that under-development of the region was the main reason for the conflict and thus the emergence of the PAP was to ensure the stabilisation of the security situation to enable the federal government commence the development of the region once this objective was achieved through essentially a dedicated DDR process.

However, there is no public document available to provide evidence of the agreement reached between the government and the militants' leaders to give birth to the PAP, which is a frequent source of misunderstanding between the Federal Government and the Region. The recent announcements of the 2020 Marginal Oilfield Bid Round have been met with hostility from the Region who have stated that the failure to carry along the Oil Bearing Communities is a breach of the promise made by the Yar'Adua administration<sup>11</sup>. There are other aspects of the Amnesty programme such as infrastructural development, including new coastal towns (within the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA)/Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) remit) and ecological remediation (under the purview of the Ministry of Environment) which are hardly discussed or have not been addressed at all.

It is believed that the programme has been selective in that it caters only for ex-agitators rather than the generality of youths in the region. According to a professor of peace and conflict studies who has researched the Niger Delta for over three decades, "The Amnesty has been characterised by politics of exclusion. It has been implemented to favour only those who deployed violence against the state to the detriment of their law-abiding counterparts who now believe that violence pays".<sup>12</sup>

Referring to the Ledum Mitee Niger Delta Technical Committee report, a key informant in the region believed that the PAP has failed totally: "The vast majority of the recommendations remain unimplemented, especially the ones relating to infrastructural development. So, in general, the programme has not succeeded." "The fact that infrastructural projects within the Niger Delta had been excluded in the recent announcement concerning the infrastructure that would be developed from the returned 'Abacha loot' was unfair, unjust and discriminatory against the region," the key informant added.<sup>13</sup>

The successes and failures of the Amnesty programme have necessitated the need to re-examine its mandate, and why it has failed to achieve its optimal goals. The programme's vision statement

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<sup>11</sup> This Day Newspaper (2020) "Concerns Mount in Niger Delta over Marginal Fields Bid Round", July 2, 2020. Site visited on 04/08/2020. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/07/02/concerns-mount-in-niger-delta-over-marginal-fields-bid-round/>

<sup>12</sup> Key informant interview: 20 February 2020, Benin City

<sup>13</sup> Key informant interview: 14 February 2020, Abuja\*

proclaims the need to produce “a Niger Delta Region populated with modern cities with leading edge environmental management practices, economic prosperity, skilled and healthy people and social harmony” and the prime objective of contributing “to security stabilisation in the Niger Delta through the disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and sustainable re-integration of ex-militants as pre-condition for medium- and long-term development”, the PAP and other intervention programmes targeted at developing the Niger Delta region seem to be working at cross purposes.

The PAP seems to be working against its original mandate. For instance, there are accusations that the programme has, in many instances, derailed in the execution of its core mandate and drifted to address other intervention needs. While suspending the incumbent programme Coordinator, Prof Charles Dokubo, from office on Friday, 28 February 2020, the President set up a “Caretaker Committee” tasked with ensuring that allocated resources were properly “utilised in consonance with government’s objective of alleviating problems in the Niger Delta region.”<sup>14</sup> This, therefore, means that even when the main objectives of the programmes revolve around disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation, the administration of the programme has continued to fall short of the objectives as was cited by the President while also dismissing Brigadier-General Paul Boroh (rtd.) from office in March, 2018.<sup>15</sup>

The appointment of the Caretaker Committee has not been without its own controversies; the tenure of the Caretaker Committee was reportedly due to expire as of 24 April 2020; however, as of August 2020, the Caretaker Committee was still in place with allegations that the Committee had failed to deliver on its own mandate;<sup>16</sup> the fact that Committee itself has no Niger Delta representation at all has been a source of concern to regional stakeholders and calls for a substantive replacement for the Coordinator of the Amnesty Programme to be appointed have yet to be heeded.

### *Broad Terms of Reference for the Project*

As the overarching goal of the Amnesty programme is security stabilisation as a precondition for intensive socio-economic development of the region, an assessment of the PAP would essentially focus on the effective implementation of the DDR process. To assess the PAP, it will be necessary to examine it from a number of perspectives. This will be done by assessing the following areas:

- *programme performance*: which will consider whether implementation is proceeding in accordance with the programme plan and budget;
- *programme effectiveness*: which will examine whether and to what extent the programme has achieved its objectives, and on what external conditions it depends; and,
- *programme efficiency*: which will determine whether programme outputs and outcomes were produced in the most economical way or are wasteful.

While these factors are important in assessing the programme, it is also important to mention that the issues of security stabilisation especially as it relates to oil production stability seems to be on

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<sup>14</sup> Guardian Newspaper(2020) “Buhari approves suspension of Coordinator of Amnesty Programme, Charles Dokubo”, February 29,2020. Site visited on 29/02/2020. <https://guardian.ng/news/buhari-approves-suspension-of-coordinator-of-amnesty-programme-charles-dokubo/>

<sup>15</sup> Independent Newspaper( 2018) “Why Buhari fired Boroh as Amnesty Boss”, March 14, 2018. Site visited on 29/02/2020. <https://www.independent.ng/why-buhari-fired-boroh-as-amnesty-boss/>

<sup>16</sup> Guardian Newspaper (2020) “Replace panel with appointment of substantive Amnesty coordinator, Niger Delta stakeholders tell Buhari”, May 11, 2020. Site visited on 04/08/2020. <https://guardian.ng/news/replace-panel-with-appointment-of-substantive-amnesty-coordinator-niger-delta-stakeholders-tell-buhari/>

course, and as the backbone for the formation of the programme, it may have achieved that main goal. As explained by a renowned scholar on Niger Delta issues: “The PAP, given its initial goals has kept to its main target, deescalating the high levels violence that hither-to disrupted the flow of oil from the Niger Delta. It is not too clear if the Disarmament, Reconstruction, Reintegration and Reconciliation aspects of PAP have been effectively achieved. The evidence also does not demonstrate that the roots of the oil conflict in the region have been addressed. Neither has it curtailed the levels of oil theft. The peace in the region remains both brittle and fragile.”<sup>17</sup> He further submitted that: “The PAP has largely contributed to buying out the most violent actors in the Niger Delta militias, and guaranteeing conditions for a fragile peace sufficient for the extraction and exporting of crude oil and gas from the Niger Delta. Since PAP emerged, oil production figures have recovered, even if they are yet to peak.”<sup>18</sup>

Incidentally, the programme has taken the same route as other state institutions, as it is marred by corruption, nepotism and has no drive for optimal goals. As argued by an expert in post-conflict reconstruction, who hails from the region: “The PAP has evolved from being a policy into a full-fledged government institution. As an institution, it is currently performing as a typical Nigerian institution faced with the challenge of funding and lack of a clear structure of how it provides public service”.<sup>19</sup>

For obvious reasons, the PAP has been headed by people from the region, but this has not stopped continued criticism of its activities for various reasons. “The choice of leaders of the programme has also been part of the problem of the PAP as many came with their own agendas. [Kingsley] Kuku, who was a child of the protest and knew the boys involved, was seen as being a bit more focused than the others who lacked this direct experience,” submitted another key informant from the region, who is a former senior PAP staffer. “The politicisation of the PAP has been a major undoing of the programme. This coupled with endemic corruption as many – within and outside of the programme – saw it as a way to make a name or fortune for themselves to the detriment of the objectives of the programme”, the informant continued.<sup>20</sup>

## **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme: Performance**

Overall, there seems to be a consensus that a level of stabilisation has been achieved; just as overall security has been improved. While the disarmament phase of the DDR process, which was handled as a military activity was seen as a success, it created many abiding problems ranging from failure to establish the exact number of agitators to a failure to define and implement clear disarmament criteria to low fighter-to-weapon ratio, indicating that not all weapons were surrendered and there was no registration of surrendered weapons for effective tracking.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the quality of the arms surrendered, there has been concern over whether the disarmament phase actually demilitarised the region in terms of the reduction in the quantity of arms in circulation, considering the high level of criminality the region still experiences. And it seems a number of criminals capitalised on the peace deal for state largesse, as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) encouraged in its derisive response to PAP in 2009: “We call on political thugs, armed robbers, kidnappers, pirates etc. from other states in Nigeria to take advantage of the government’s offer by travelling to one of the centres in Niger Delta and trade their weapons for

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<sup>17</sup> Key Informant Interview: 15 February 2020, New York, USA

<sup>18</sup> Key informant interview: 20 February 2020, Maastricht, The Netherlands

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Key informant interview, 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt. The precipitous dismissal of the incumbent Coordinator, Prof Dokubo on corruption allegations, throws this into sharp relief

<sup>21</sup> See for instance, Surulola James Eke: No pay, no peace: political settlement and post-amnesty violence in the Niger Delta; Sage: Journal of Asian and African Studies, 2015.

amnesty. Come with the whole gang and get rehabilitated with gains of free education, money to start legitimate businesses, etc. This is a unique opportunity in a country where so many graduates cannot find jobs and girls no longer marry for love”.<sup>22</sup>

The programme is essentially focused on beneficiaries as individuals rather than adopting a community-based approach, as it largely concentrates on ex-agitators rather than an approach that includes other individuals from impacted communities, though some non-ex-agitators were included in Phase III batch of ex-militants. (PAP wanted to bring more beneficiaries from the impacted communities into the programme.) However, there is an apparent exclusion of certain groups of ex-agitators, for instance those from Cross River. This marginalisation is worse in some states and communities in the Niger Delta. As one key informant noted: “The Amnesty Programme has not been as inclusive as it should have been; militants from Cross-River State have been struggling to be incorporated in the Programme with little or no success; in spite of militants from LGAs such as Akpabuyo and Bakassi handing over significant caches of weapons, the FG has failed to include them into the Amnesty Programme. Cross-Riverians have been taken for granted. This has been compounded by the ceding of Bakassi to Cameroon and the related issue of the ceding of 76 oil wells to Akwa Ibom, which resulted in derivation revenue being lost to the State. Both these actions were the result of actions taken by the FG, yet the FG has not taken real ownership of the situation. Internally displaced persons (IDP) camps have sprung up in the area for some time and yet the FG has failed to make any meaningful attempt to house the displaced. The failure to incorporate the militants in the Amnesty has significant security implications, which could potentially be exacerbated by the separatist movement in South-West Cameroon, especially if the separatists and the agitators in Cross River came into some sort of agreement to co-operate/collaborate”.<sup>23</sup>

The demobilisation phase has also been criticised for failing on various grounds: the payment of the monthly ₦65,000 to ex-agitators, while ensuring some stability in the region has had the unintended consequence of making some beneficiaries bigger than their communities, ultimately upending some traditional mores;<sup>24</sup> the continued payment of this stipend – the transitional safety-net allowance (TSA) – apart from being seen as too high,<sup>25</sup> has also been criticised for maintaining the command and control structure of the militant groups and for deepening the entitlement culture of not just the ex-agitators, but generally in the region.

One of the main challenges during this phase has been the disparity between the then minimum wage of ₦18,000 (now ₦30,000) and the militant stipend of ₦65,000. “So many beneficiaries declined taking full-time employment even in companies like Julius Berger, which was even offering a ₦45,000 monthly salary,” stressed a key informant in the region.<sup>26</sup>

Though it is understood that the list of beneficiaries is apparently now closed, however, the lack of independent initial verification of the beneficiaries has been a recurring issue for the PAP. The informant disclosed that the reintegration phase of the DDR process was supposed to last five years after the demobilisation phase ended. “It was also expected that as beneficiaries get trained and

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<sup>22</sup>Boas M. (2011:123). Mend Me: The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta and the Empowerment of Violence, in C. Obi and S.A. Rustad (eds.). *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petroviolence*. London: Zed Books, 115-124

<sup>23</sup> Key informant interview, February 14, 2020, Abuja\*

<sup>24</sup> Key informant interview: 11 February 2020, Lagos.

<sup>25</sup> See Benjamin A. Okonofua: “The Niger delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning from Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace”, Sage Open, April-June 2016; Iro Aghedo: “Sowing Peace, Reaping Violence”, Sage: African Studies Association of India, 2015;

<sup>26</sup> Key informant interview, 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt.

given empowerment support, they would be removed from the starting total of 30,000 enrolled on the programme and stop being paid the ₦65,000 monthly stipend. But this hasn't been the case as the 30,000 number has remained constant, with the attendant cost implications.”<sup>27</sup>

Another troubling aspect revolves around the maintenance of the list of 30,000 beneficiaries, which has been seemingly compromised through the direct control of the ex-generals of the various groups. The appropriateness of paying of stipends to ex-agitators has also been a constant refrain throughout the existence of the PAP. Many observers see the stipends as a cash-for-peace incentive; essential for keeping the oil flowing but has been a great impediment to the reintegration efforts as the size of the stipend in comparison to minimum wage, coupled with the current policy of paying in-training allowances in addition to monthly stipends, has made it difficult to break beneficiaries' dependency. In addition to this is the fact that PAP pays the stipends in bulk to leaders for onward disbursement to their subordinates, further reinforcing the existing hierarchies rather than dismantling them.

A former senior PAP staffer, however, presented a different view on this 30,000-beneficiary issue, saying: “The programme has been based around 30,000 agitators and the criticisms that the numbers do not seem to be reducing are well known. This is because the number is actually not based around individuals but “families” – if a beneficiary dies, leaves the country or gets employed, then that same family has the option of replacing that family member. It seems that the militants/ex-agitators will not agree to the concept that the numbers should reduce once someone has been trained and successfully reintegrated. The view amongst the militants is that it is their programme and it is unconditional.”<sup>28</sup>

The informant continued: “Originally, the FG was in charge of the list of beneficiaries but that has now changed.” The informant stated further that: “Ex-militants are the ones who manage the list of beneficiaries and make changes to it; the original key ex-militant leaders are still very involved in the management of the list of beneficiaries. The Special Adviser was said to have alluded to this when he appeared before legislators at the National Assembly, where he apparently stated that when it comes to the beneficiaries, ‘he does not include and that he does not exclude’.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet another informant argues that it does not matter whether the 30,000 are real agitators or family members or friends. What needs to be established is that they all hail from the Niger Delta region; and if they do then they are all beneficiaries or ought to be beneficiaries of the PAP.<sup>30</sup>

The relevance of the formal educational, vocational skills acquisition and entrepreneurship training programmes and the relationship with and involvement of employers has been of critical interest. Thus, it has been difficult for beneficiaries to land jobs after graduation; a situation complicated by the current economic climate in Nigeria. There has been tension between local and international training policy. Originally a lot of the beneficiaries opted for international training which was very expensive, however, the current policy now reserves international training only for certain specialised courses. While most beneficiaries were trained in Nigeria, quite a few were sent abroad to countries including South Africa, the US, UK, Russia, India, Ghana and Israel.

The suitability of the empowerment activities, especially “starter kits”, has also been questioned. Beneficiaries are reported to sometimes ask for assistance in selling the starter kits in exchange for

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Key informant interview: 14 February 2020, Abuja\*\*

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Key Informant interview: 20 February 2020, Lagos

cash. There seems to be little of no incentives to encourage the formation of business partnerships or cooperatives amongst the beneficiaries, or even business support for those who establish their own enterprises.

Though the focus of PAP was to be on human capacity development rather than physical infrastructure, it seems to have shifted its attention of late, with attendant additional running costs. At present there are five PAP Skills Acquisition Centres, namely:

1. Maritime Vocational Training Centre at Oboama, Rivers State;
2. Basic Skills Vocational Training Centre in Boro Town, Kaiama, Bayelsa State;
3. Power and Energy Vocational Training Centre in Bomadi, Delta State;
4. Oil and Gas Vocational Training Centre, Agadagba-Obon, Ondo State;
5. Agricultural Vocational Training Centre in Gelegele, Edo State.

This, the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Godswill Akpabio, views as a preponderance of “redundant skill acquisition centres worth over ₦8 billion” in the region. “For example, a community in Ondo State, where three acquisition centres were built, came to the ministry saying they don’t know what to do with them, requesting that the Federal Government should convert one of the facilities to a university”.<sup>31</sup>

On the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) front, certain amount of data is available, however, the scope, depth and coverage of the M&E activities and their quality is unknown. This lack of transparency has been an issue and has been hinged on security basis. However, in December 2019, the PAP Coordinator, Prof Dokubo, commissioned an M&E committee to oversee programme activities.

Key regional stakeholders complain that other activities which were the basis of the Amnesty are being left undone. The Amnesty, as suggested by the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, recommended a process that aimed to address the underdevelopment in the region at the same time as addressing the militancy. Some of the activities mentioned included: Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs for infrastructural development and Ministry of the Environment for Environmental remediation.

In considering the performance of the programme, it is essential to briefly examine how well the intervention fits in other interventions in the country. Evidence shows that there is a weak or non-existent linkage between the PAP activities and general government strategies in related areas such as vocational training empowerment, which is under the purview of SMEDAN, or educational activities linked to the Ministry of Education, just as there are weak or non-existent linkages between state and federal government initiatives to address the needs of the ex-agitators in particular and those of oil-impacted communities in general.

There is an apparent lack of coherence between the activities of PAP, other Niger Delta intervention agencies at federal as well as state levels and the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of key organisations in the region such as the IOCs, since the PAP activities are largely being implemented in isolation of other related work streams. Neither is there meaningful progress on work streams addressing the major developmental and social inequality issues.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://guardian.ng/news/akpabio-deplores-n8b-redundant-vocational-centres-in-niger-delta/>

Also evident is the lack of involvement or buy-in of some of the main job employers, such as the federal and state governments, the oil producers – both international and indigenous – and other private sector actors into the programme.

### **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme: Effectiveness**

It is generally agreed that the disarmament and demobilisation phases have been completed, as PAP has publicly stated. However, it can be argued that the disarmament objectives have only been partially met. Anecdotal evidence to support the failure of the programme to recover arms and ammunition in the numbers and of the types as was expected, suggests that there are still significant amounts of arms in the region.

Likewise, the demobilisation objectives have also been partially met. For instance, the failure to break down command and control structures of the various militant groups has been a major cause for concern, as the continuation of payment of stipends through former camp commanders shows as well as the massive empowerment of top generals through federal government contracts with limited resultant trickle-down effect. The lack of verification in terms of the numbers of agitators registered for the Amnesty is another key issue in this regard.

The PAP has stated that the reintegration phase is still ongoing and thus its objectives are also partially met. The major issues here have been: The focus on ex-agitators rather than communities; the lack of involvement of the communities in the process resulting in poor levels of social reintegration, sometimes resulting in many ex-agitators relocating to towns and cities.

It is a major challenge getting current and reliable data on the status of reintegration of the ex-agitators. One report claims that as at 2015, PAP had succeeded in placing about 19,000 beneficiaries in the different kinds of the designed reintegration programmes including education, vocational training and others.<sup>32</sup> The report recounts that 11,700 of the beneficiaries were able to graduate from the various training programmes, whilst as many as between 9,000-13,000 beneficiaries as at 2015 were still not placed in any of the reintegration programmes.<sup>33</sup>

There have been accusations that PAP has politicised the opportunities being offered in the programme in order to benefit those with some influence over the PAP activities. The lack of genuine employment opportunities and the mismatch between training and opportunities in the Nigerian labour market have also been points of criticism of the PAP reintegration phase.

The PAP has defended itself in many instances on the basis that the lack of resources hampered its ability to provide true empowerment. This, coupled with the sense of entitlement and apparent lack of desire and drive by some ex-agitators to be truly empowered, has been used in the defence of the PAP.

It is obvious that the root causes of the conflict such as marginalisation, corruption, youth unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation are still visible and unaddressed. As one informant noted: “The high level of unemployment should be addressed. There is need for justice. The oil companies should improve their attention to oil spills and environmental degradation. The oil companies sometimes threaten local people and oil-bearing communities with litigation – ‘we

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<sup>32</sup> See Transitional Strategy for Presidential Amnesty Programme: A Report for the Federal Government of Nigeria on Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme, Scenario Analysis of The Transition Options, Incentives, and a Plan to Obtain buy-in from Critical Stakeholders, Prepared by Nextier, November, 09, 2015 p 22

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

will meet you in court'. The Big Oil should know that nobody is born wicked or born to hate. It is the environment that makes them so. Besides, the regulators of the oil companies need to stop taking sides with oil companies. The excessive corruption perpetrated by the regulators should be addressed. In fact, regulators have been captured by the oil companies. Apart from 'brown envelope' (bribe), when oil spill occurs, it is the oil companies to be investigated that provide the 'flying boats' to take the regulatory officials to the impacted site. Any regulatory officer who insists on proper investigation is threatened by oil company staff thus: 'We will tell your boss not to send you next time if you continue to misbehave'. The government needs to come down from its high horse."<sup>34</sup>

The PAP appears to have rewarded criminality, militancy and aggressiveness while being unable to address the underlying causes that gave birth to the militancy in the first place. There is not an effective corresponding development institution similar to the PAP established to address these thorny problems.

### **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme: Efficiency**

The programme has been well-funded despite the heavy financial burden on the federal budget, which many in the region see as a fair deal being the area that provides Nigeria's economic life-blood. The pace of implementation of the programme has been exceedingly slow. Though the disarmament and demobilisation phases have been officially completed, reintegration is still ongoing and patchy over the past 10 years of the programme's existence.

This has led to a view that the cost of delivering the peace in the region has been high – despite the fact that oil production has increased as a direct result and in the face of a massive increase in oil theft (bunkering), kidnapping and other criminal activities.<sup>35</sup> As another informant noted: "Today, there are different layers of oil thieves or smugglers in the Niger Delta. It is an organised crime involving locals, disengaged staff of oil companies, some serving staff, and state security officials. It is a chain of different actors. Some local people bore holes and tap oil from pipelines. This practice that started small has become a huge criminal business today. Oil workers under-declare/falsify the amount of oil they load at export terminals. These smugglers at the oil terminals are the bigger thieves, not those in the creeks. Tapping oil from pipelines is a terribly risky endeavour. Those engaged in this daredevil business connive with oil workers who inform them when products will be streaming in the pipelines."<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, it is also believed that the programme runs on patronage while appeasing the elite class. Despite, the initial success stories which led to increase in the nation's oil production, "the implementation of PAP has been fraught with challenges many of which stem from the undue influence unleashed on the peace process and its beneficiaries by the political elites."<sup>37</sup>

Initially, with the close scrutiny and oversight of the National Assembly, the programme was seen as cost efficient but with the passage of time and the increase in oil production, this scrutiny declined and dwindled to a passing interest. The looting of equipment bought by PAP for the programme estimated at over ₦2 billion at the Amnesty Vocational Training Centre at Kaiama, Bayelsa state, in 2019, is a lingering issue as nothing has come out of the internal PAP investigations thus far, and

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<sup>34</sup> Key informant interview: 24 January 2020, Yenagoa

<sup>35</sup> Sharkdam Wampuk: "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta." *New Delhi: Insight on Africa* 4, 2 (2012), African Studies Association of India.

<sup>36</sup> Key informant interview: 24 January 2020, Yenagoa

<sup>37</sup> Nwokolo, N. and Aghedo, I. "Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace? The Power Elite and Amnesty Policy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" *Chinese Pol. Science Review*, March 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-018-0098-y>

in spite of an investigation started by the House of Representatives, which has not resulted in any action pointing to the lack of efficiency in the PAP.<sup>38</sup>

Incidents such as these have compounded the financial challenges faced by the PAP, which have also contributed to the mixed results of the reintegration phase of the programme. This range from delayed releases of funds, which is sometimes exacerbated by the FG's budgeting and cash release processes. The PAP's spending priorities is sometimes questionable as stipends often seem to be the highest priority when funds are limited, while spending on physical infrastructure, such as the vocational training centres, appear to be erratic and disjointed.

The level of corruption within the programme has also been reportedly alarming. The programme has, however, been dogged by allegations of corruption against some top government officials including those involved in the Amnesty Programme.<sup>39</sup> This is because there is more interest in the DDR process to the detriment of other objectives of the programme but more importantly because apparent lack of transparency on the details of the agreement between the government and the 'ex-generals and the federal government, especially the aspects dealing with the empowerment process. This allegation of corruption is coupled with the view of a high level of politicisation of the programme. "It is all about patronage and has been politicised. It seems the PAP has been captured by non-Niger Deltans," said one of the key informants from the region.<sup>40</sup>

There have been series of allegations levelled against successive PAP Coordinators. The use of contractors and consultants to execute many of the programme activities have also been criticised, especially as anecdotal evidence points to Northerners dominating the contractors at the Amnesty secretariat. There have also been allegations of contracts being sold at the Hilton Hotel in Abuja. A key informant revealed that: "Contracts are over-priced, such as the haulage contract from the aforementioned vocational centre; the trial of the former Coordinator of the Amnesty Programme, General Boroh, for corruption; these are all indications of the levels of corruption in the place, the informant revealed. The dismissal of the incumbent Coordinator on similar charges only buttresses the level of sleaze within the PAP. In light of the foregoing, an informant called attention to the need to make a clear distinction between funds earmarked for PAP and the beneficiaries and what actually went to them. In his view, " it is not appropriate for it to be said that PAP has been costly when there is no evidence to show clearly how much of the quoted sums of PAP really reached down to the targeted beneficiaries."<sup>41</sup>

## **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme: Impact**

With regard to what difference the programme has made, it is generally agreed that its primary priority was to stabilise the situation enough to keep the oil flowing to replenish the national coffers rather than stabilising the region. This was successful in the short-term relative to security and stabilisation of oil and gas revenues as well as creating a fragile peace between the Federal Government and the militants. It, however, resulted in the over-empowerment of senior generals and commanders and unintentionally made them too comfortable to go back to the creeks themselves, thus potentially incentivising them to maintain the status quo. The gradual integration of some of the senior commanders into the highest strata of politics in the country (e.g. Deputy Governor of Delta State), points to an absence of trickle-down effect to middle and lower levels,

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<sup>38</sup> Key informant interview, 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt.

<sup>39</sup> See for instance: The Cable: "In 2014, ex-militants accused Onyema, Kuku of using Amnesty funds to set up Air Peace", <https://www.thecable.ng/flashback-in-2014-ex-militants-accused-onyema-kuku-of-using-amnesty-funds-to-set-up-air-peace>

<sup>40</sup> Key informant interview, 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt.

<sup>41</sup> Key Informant, 20 February 2020, The Netherlands

and has been quoted as an example by some from the region and beyond that some of the senior commanders of the militancy were selfish and self-serving rather than the freedom fighters they claimed to be.

The creation of new militant/agitation organisations by those excluded from the programme and/or other empowerment processes, over any minor issue concerning the region is significant in assessing the impact of the PAP in the region, as the slow pace of reintegration and lack of employment and job opportunities is, to a large extent, creating further grievances.

The significant skills acquisition and educational opportunities extended to and accepted by many Niger Delta youths has also inadvertently encouraged migration from the communities into towns and cities in search of employment. “PAP has impacted on ex-militants by increasing their level of education. Ex-militant groups have changed significantly. While some groups remain integrated, many have lost members. Overall, PAP has transformed politics at community, local government and regional governments,” a key informant buttressed, going further to say: “The reintegration of ex-militants has been limited. Success cannot be defined in the whole. In the short-term, ex-militants have exited conflict, but we are yet to see long-term reintegration. Ex-militants continue to face challenges in finding jobs leading them to depend on their former leaders. Those who are in politics have used violence to advance their political interest.”<sup>42</sup>

While the organisational setup of the PAP itself – its reporting line to the NSA – has been an issue, the location of the Amnesty Office outside the region has been problematic and pointed out as one aspect that has limited its impact in the region.

“The low Niger Delta content in the PAP hierarchy, which is adjudged to be below the expectations of the stakeholders of the region, has been another sticking point on the impact of the PAP in the region, including the capacity of consultants and contractors on the programme. I do not see why there were so many consultants from non-oil producing areas who are benefitting from the programme,”<sup>43</sup> questioned a key informant from the region. Also, the informant questioned the lack of transparency: “Of the 65 billion Naira [PAP budget] it was not clear what was getting spent on what. There needs to be transparency in the organisation,”<sup>44</sup> disagreeing with the notion that there were potential security implications as a result of such transparency.

## **Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme: Recommendations**

There is a view that the PAP has overstayed its welcome. This is because it has deepened the entitlement culture based on monthly federal government payments and the region witnessing probably the highest level of oil theft despite the massive presence of security agencies; that it is now the time for a viable and sustainable exit strategy to be crafted and implemented especially since the root causes of the conflict are yet to be addressed. “What is needed in PAP is a clear exit strategy. Before this, an assessment of what has been achieved, what are the gaps especially in relation to reintegration of ex-militants and specific policy intervention to reduce these gaps,” a key informant, who is one of the young leading scholars/experts on Niger Delta issues, advised.<sup>45</sup> In agreement, another key informant noted: “The government needs to undertake a rigorous review of

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<sup>42</sup> Key informant interview: 20 February 2020, The Netherlands

<sup>43</sup> Key informant interview: 14 February 2020, Abuja\*

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Key informant interview: 20 February 2020, The Netherlands

the PAP and come up with timelines for integrating the programme into a more comprehensive regional plan for development and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta.”<sup>46</sup>

While there seems to have been no obvious or planned exit strategy from the initiation of the programme, as its main reason for existence is to quieten those who have been fomenting trouble in the region, shutting down the programme is not feasible at this point in time. “If the PAP closes it would be a disaster for the region as well as the country. A vocal minority in the Niger Delta is vehemently against the closure of the programme.”<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that sustained infrastructural development and poverty alleviation activities need to be front and centre stage in the next reiteration of the programme in order to address youth restiveness in the region. Environmental challenges such as gas flaring and improving the lives of the people in the region need to be addressed as well as this is seen as a ticking time bomb.<sup>48</sup> This could result in renewed violence as other youths and activists that have not benefitted from the programme could resort to another round of militancy to attract attention from the federal government and multinationals working in the region.<sup>49</sup> There is a view that there has been a re-militarisation and rearming of the Niger Delta region in the recent years. The termination of the TSA payment would be a major source of discontent and has to be specifically addressed. However, a prevalent view in the region is that there is more division and factionalisation within the region that any new uprising would be resisted by others including the former generals who have made a lot of money and gained political and social status from the current amnesty to want to risk another outbreak of hostilities.

A number of recommendations can be made from the foregoing.

First, to address this feeling of exclusion from PAP which has made violence a recurring decimal in the Niger Delta, the plight of excluded active youth, women and ravaged communities must be factored into the transition or exit strategy of PAP. This will not only imbue the people with some sense of belonging in the peace process, but will also obviate the use of exclusion to legitimise violence.

Second, corruption needs to be significantly reduced through effective oversight function, deployment of actual monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as well as prosecution and sanctioning of those indicted for corruption.

Third, innovative strategies must be used to get jobs for those who have been trained in order to prevent them from relapse into violent crimes in their quest for socioeconomic survival.<sup>50</sup>

Fourth, open up the space for the private/non-oil business and not-for-profit sectors to participate in/contribute to the programme”.<sup>51</sup> To be successful, participation in PAP has to be broadened to include subnational units such as the state and local governments as well as the private sectors. This broadening of participation will promote the integration of those trained on the programme and also boost acceptability of the programme by international actors.

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<sup>46</sup> Key informant interview: 15 February 2020, New York

<sup>47</sup> Key informant interview: 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Iyabobola O. Ajibola: “Nigeria’s Amnesty Program: The Role of Empowerment in Achieving Peace Development in Post-Conflict Niger Delta.” Sage: July-September 2015

<sup>50</sup> Sanz, Eneko (2009), “Afghanistan: 2003-2008” in A. Carames and E. Sanz (eds.) *DDR 2009: Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programs in the World during 2008*, Ballatera: School for a Culture of Peace

<sup>51</sup> Key informant: email response 15 February 2020

Finally, even though poverty alleviation does not fall directly within the remit of PAP, the programme has been expected to have significant impact on the socioeconomic wellbeing of its beneficiaries. The inability of the programme to achieve this has often resulted in renewed restiveness in the region. For the goals of PAP to be fully realised, the grievances which gave rise to the amnesty in the first place need to be addressed so that both activists and criminals will not continue to capitalise on them to legitimise their self-regarding claims in the name of the Niger Delta struggle.

## **Principles to inform the PAP Transition**

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that there is a case to be made for a transition strategy away from PAP as it is currently constituted to another form of mechanism that could foster peace and security, and also address the issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, avoiding the challenges as discussed.

For such a transition strategy to be feasible, it should be guided by certain principles and considerations, which include the following:

- It must be seen to be equitable and fair to all concerned and be refocused from targeted assistance to a more broad-based all-inclusive intervention.
- There must be widespread buy-in in the region and an expressed commitment on the part of the Federal Government, the state governments and the people of the Niger Delta to deliver on the objectives of the transition. According to a key informant: “There is need for greater (and better) cooperation/collaboration between the other Niger Delta intervention agencies, such as MNDA and NDDC; even though there have moves to get MNDA to supervise NDDC, the way that things are being done currently only seemed to result in greater levels of inefficiency. There is need for mixed participation; private investors should be able to have a stake but such a stake should be capped. The general public should be allowed to participate (via the Stock Exchange) and a percentage should be reserved for the indigenes of the area”.<sup>52</sup> The key informant then emphasised the need for the involvement of oil companies for successful reintegration of ex-agitators: “There is also nothing stopping companies such as the oil companies from engaging these ex-agitators; however, there was still a tendency for organisations such as the oil companies to recruit from outside the region, even for jobs that those within the immediate area were capable of handling. And the oil companies themselves often preferred to pay ex-agitators as ghost workers, rather than employing them and this was a practice that should be condemned. A closer relationship with the private sector, including the oil companies ought to be encouraged. The programme has an obligation to place these people in employment, whether it is in the Private Sector or in Government.”<sup>53</sup>
- Relevant regional and international actors should be consulted so that their experiences, know-how and best practices may be brought to bear on the process and the outcome and nature of the transition strategy.

Transition in this case should be akin to what is undertaken by international organisations like the UN, that is keeping the core objectives of PAP but moving to another phase with a different focus. According to one informant, PAP should be retained but the focus and emphasis is what needs to

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<sup>52</sup> Key informant interview, February 14, 2020, Abuja\*

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

be changed, he added “ in the same manner that in the UN system post-conflict countries move from relief, to humanitarian to recovery and finally to a development phase as the ultimate objective. Equally PAP should not be abolished but moving towards addressing the issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta Region”<sup>54</sup>

## **Transition Options**

### **Option 1: Closure of the Programme**

Propose a closure process for the programme over a short time frame (about six months), ensuring that all registered beneficiaries complete their reintegration programme within this period. The need for a comprehensive audit of the beneficiary list is paramount because the unsustainability of the programme at the current level of expenditure and the interminable drawdown of the beneficiary list will be an issue here. How to break the dependency on the payment of ₦65,000 TSA will have to be well thought through.

#### ***Implications of Option 1***

- Any abrupt closure without a viable alternative could bring about the resumption of violence.
- Aside the beneficiaries, there is an institutional interest that has developed which could frustrate any abrupt closure of the programme.

### **Option 2: Devolution of PAP Programme Activities to Federal MDAs**

Divesting the PAP activities into the programmes of other federal MDAs – SMEDAN, National Director for Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), MNDA, Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoY&S), etc. with the Special Adviser -Niger Delta (SA-ND) losing the control over PAP budget but having oversight of the programmes in these other entities, with dedicated officials to follow through on work plans. The implementation of the Niger Delta Action Plan, which is yet to be operationalised, would be a good starting point.

#### ***Implications of Option 2***

- The challenge that may emerge from this option is that devolution if not properly managed can bring about diffusion, so in this case for a successful devolution of the programme there is need for a very competent and “strong” special advisor to coordinate the PAP activities embedded in the Federal Government ministries, department and agencies (MDAs).

### **Option 3: Transforming PAP into an Autonomous Youth Programme**

Under this option, the PAP transitions into a youth development programme and not just focused on militant youth. Use the examples of other similar cases around the world. The funding from PAP will be directly allocated to the agency which will have state level representation and works with relevant state level MDAs and international agencies and private sector in providing training and employment opportunities to achieve its objectives in the long term.

The first step towards transiting into the PAP into a youth development entity is to revamp its training curriculum with courses and vocational trainings that are in demand in the market and less focused on the oil sector, which have left many of the beneficiaries with no jobs. This redefinition will help in attracting the non-oil private sector organisations in the region to offer employment to beneficiaries of the programme. The more youths in the region are able to gain employment and are more economically active, the easier it is for development across the region.

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<sup>54</sup> Key informant interview: 22 February 2020, Lagos

### **Implications of Option 3**

- Transition of PAP from focusing on the youth as a whole in the ND region would be a positive development but given the stark fact that the main source of the conflict is about underdevelopment in the region, this strategy has to be able to accommodate the concerns of the overall communities.

### **Option 4: Devolving PAP Activities to State Oil Development Commissions**

In order to divest powers from the centre and make the agencies of government more accountable, with more local ownership and supervision, the current mandate and activities of the programme should be given to the state development commissions. This reduce the state centric nature of the programme which has helped in fuelling corruption and elite capture, to a better monitored state programme, which will have more control and oversights by communities, civil society organisations (CSOs), Community Development Associations (CDAs) and other non-state actors in the region. For example, there could be a constitutional arrangement that allows for a direct allocation from the federal purse to the state development commissions as part of the derivation revenue.

The issue of the increase in the derivation allocation can be raised as suggested by the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta led by Ledum Mitee in 2009, can be germane here as funding for development projects in the region remain a major challenge. This increase allocation can be ringfenced and distributed among state development commissions specifically for youth development activities in their respective states.

### **Implications of Option 4**

- This could also result in more fragmentation of the resources meant for the region and make it difficult to monitor.
- The additional funds to be added to the derivation fund, if it is not to suffer the same fate, as the said derivation funds, then it should be targeted at specific projects and ring fenced accordingly.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Implication</b>
<b>Option 1: Closure of the Programme</b>	<p>Short time frame: nine months max</p> <p>Comprehensive audit of beneficiaries and liabilities</p> <p>Complete all outstanding activities</p> <p>Stoppage of monthly stipend</p>	<p>Any abrupt closure without a viable alternative could bring about the resumption of violence.</p> <p>Institutional and beneficiary interests that has developed could frustrate any abrupt closure of the programme</p> <p>A resumption of such hostilities will greatly affect oil production and stability of the region.</p>
<b>Option 2: Devolution of PAP Programme Activities to Federal MDAs</b>	<p>Divesting the PAP activities into the programmes of other federal MDAs</p> <p>Special Adviser on Niger Delta/PAP Coordinator, loses control over PAP budget</p>	<p>Diffusion of PAP activities might lead to further decline in impact and effectiveness</p> <p>a very competent and “strong” political figure to coordinate the</p>

	<p>Comprehensive audit of PAP activities, outstanding liabilities and workplans</p>	<p>PAP activities across the MDAs; probably MNDA minister</p> <p>A devolved programme activity will bring considerable expertise from participating MDAs and likely to give more direction to the programme.</p> <p>There is the likelihood of the programmes been deployed to non-Niger Delta development activities by the ministries.</p> <p>It will function like every other bureaucracy and will little interventionist ability, which might further delay the targeted development in the region</p>
<p><b>Option 3: Transforming PAP into an Autonomous Youth Programme</b></p>	<p>PAP transitions into a youth development body and not just focused on militant youth</p> <p>PAP funds will be directly allocated to the newly created agency which will have state level representation and works with relevant state level MDAs</p> <p>Revamp training curriculum with in demand courses and vocational trainings</p>	<p>Improved partnerships with private sector</p> <p>Better trained and more employable youth in the Niger delta, spurring sustainable development</p>
<p><b>Option 4: Devolving PAP Activities to State Oil Development Commissions</b></p>	<p>Divest powers from the centre and make the agencies of state government more accountable, with more local ownership and supervision</p> <p>Conduct comprehensive audit and handover of PAP activities and resources to state development agencies</p> <p>Increase in the derivation allocation to the states from PAP resources</p> <p>Board of eminent citizens consisting of non-partisan local community leaders, CSOs, retired civil servants and the private sector can be constituted in each state to manage the fund and transit the programme to the end.</p>	<p>More fragmentation of the resources meant for the region might occur, making it difficult to monitor activities.</p> <p>The additional funds to be added to the derivation fund, if it is not to suffer the same fate, as the said derivation funds, then it should be targeted at specific projects and ring fenced accordingly</p> <p>More control and oversight by communities, civil society and other non-state actors. It will allow for more local content from individual states as it fits their situation</p> <p>It is easier to add timeline, milestones, monitoring and</p>

		evaluation indicators in the programme.
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## Justification for Transition: Why is the Transition Important

The PAP is yet to achieve its main *raison d’être* – the sustainable human and infrastructural development of the Niger Delta. However, after a decade of existence, with some visible impact in security stabilisation in the region, there is a fragile peace in the region, which has helped in stabilising oil production. This relative stability in the Niger Delta has prompted many in the region to view the Amnesty programme as “cheap” in comparison to the “cost” of available alternatives for the federal government, such as the return to violence.

Despite what seems like a success, the heavy cost of the Amnesty programme over its lifetime, which some in the region believe is worthwhile, has become an albatross on the federal budget and is seen as unsustainable going forward. With a monthly allocation of ₦5.5 billion, about ₦2.3 billion of which goes into payment of school fees and 65,000 Naira monthly stipends to beneficiaries of the programme, and the rest of the allocation on contracts and office running costs<sup>55</sup>, the programme has not delivered on one of its major objectives, which is getting ex-agitators into regular paid employment. It has continued to pay many of them even after their training showing that the programme’s design may be fundamentally flawed and may not have been designed to achieve its objectives. Consequently, the programme transition should include totally re-examining and overhauling the programme and its main objectives.

Secondly, like every programme, it always has a start and end time. The PAP is a five-year programme which was supposed to run from 2010 to 2015. It is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, and gradually becoming a bureaucratic institution rather than an intervention programme designed to solve a specific problem. It has become more of a contract awarding government department, with 58% of its monthly allocation going into the running of the office and contracts, while 42% is for payment of training and school fees as well as the ₦65,000 stipends.

Thirdly, since its inception, it has been marred by corruption, lack of transparency and elite capture. It is estimated that the programme has gulped more than 500 billion Naira, from 2009 till date. From its inception to 2014, ₦234 billion<sup>56</sup> was estimated to have been expended on the programme. With a boost of its yearly budget from 20 billion Naira to 65 billion Naira in 2017<sup>57</sup>, its yearly budget increased by ₦30 billion. While the programme gifted the monthly stipends to lower cadre ex-militants, it provided multi-dollar pipeline security surveillance contracts to ex-militant generals and other forms of contracts to other elite members of society. The programme has continued to enrich a selected few within the region and in the country while the majority of people from local oil communities are marginalised or excluded.

Finally, while PAP remains a federal government-funded and controlled intervention for the Niger Delta, it is so state-centric that directives from the federal government override desires and contributions from the local communities who are expected to benefit from the programme. With a centralised head office in Abuja and centralised programme administration, the programme has little inputs from the main beneficiaries and cannot meet its objective judging from its current modus operandi.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.independent.ng/how-we-spent-n65bn-amnesty-funds-in-one-year-dokubo/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/02/fg-spent-n243bn-amnesty-5yrs-kuku/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.africanews.com/2017/05/08/nigeria-almost-triples-budget-for-niger-delta-militants-amnesty//>

With the sacking of the incumbent PAP Coordinator, Prof Charles Dokubo, the region has been once again thrown into an avoidable jostling for power to determine who heads the agency and defines its future. This power tussle often pitches some communities in the region against each other over who produces the next head of the agency and if it does not end well, the transition process could be adversely impacted.

The probe of Prof Dokubo's tenure and the appointment of a caretaker committee for the PAP has resulted in many observers blaming the governance structure of the agency, which the Coordinator inherited more than blaming the man. The transition process would provide the best opportunity for adopting a more sustainable leadership structure for the agency. His remarks on the possible termination of the PAP is illuminating:

“Ending the Amnesty programme is a government thing, but if I have any control over it, after the provision of the vocational training centres, the payment of stipends should be looked into, not stopped. Don't get me wrong...For me the ₦65,000 stipend per person is very important...but the bulk payment system where you pay into a particular account, [of] the leader, who in turn disburses the fund to his people...is unfair. When I took over, there was pressure for me to take the step. But I had to look at the environment, knowing well that if I take steps in that direction, the environment could go back to conflict. If you want to audit the programme, they have to shut down the database and get a forensic audit done. It will take about 2-3 months, then how are we going to pay this people.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus, if the transition is not well thought through, well-handled and widely accepted, it might result in the security situation in the region becoming worse than before the Amnesty was proclaimed.

## **Possible Obstacles and Support for the Transition**

One thing is certain in developing the Transition Strategy: the various options offered are likely to attract resistance from different areas. It is impossible to determine accurately those who are likely to resist the transition and those who will support the transition. For example, youth groups are likely to support any option to broaden the amnesty into a youth development agency, not resist it. Regardless, this section provides a rough stakeholder analysis, examining various groups to see which ones might support and which ones would not.

### **Likely Supporters**

#### **1. Presidency and MDAs**

Since the PAP has been a huge drain on government revenues, the Presidency and MDAs are likely to support its transition. Besides, the Buhari administration inherited the Amnesty programme and saw it as a waste pipe. There were some indications that President Buhari wanted to phase out the Amnesty programme in 2015 when his administration terminated the multimillion-dollar oil pipeline protection contracts awarded to ex-militant leaders by the Jonathan administration. However, the abrupt manner with which the Buhari administration wanted to end the PAP was not well received by the majority of the former agitators, leading to renewed violent attacks on oil infrastructure in the region between 2015 and 2016. Thus, any peaceful transition strategy for PAP will be supported by the Buhari-led Federal government. Similarly, the National Assembly, which

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<sup>58</sup> “I've Carved a Niche for Amnesty Programme – Dokubo”, An interview with Amnesty News, a magazine published by Presidential Amnesty Office, December 2019, P29.

has been critical of the corruption allegations levelled against PAP officials and has called for its restructuring in the past will support an effective transition of the Amnesty programme.

## **2. State Governments**

Besides the federal government, MDAs and the National Assembly, most state governments in the oil-producing states are likely to support the transition of the Amnesty programme because they have been at the receiving end of some of the excesses of ex-militants. For example, when the ex-militants embarked on public protests against the federal government over the delay in the payment of their monthly stipends in Benin City, Yenagoa and Port Harcourt, the state governments were called upon to manage the public disorder. As a result, state governments in the Niger Delta would support the transition strategy of PAP in order to checkmate the growing criminal tendencies of some ex-militants and stop them from being a bad influence on law-abiding youth.

## **3. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**

Even though some CSOs have championed the cause of Niger Delta ex-militants, they have also been calling for the reform of PAP. Thus, such CSOs will support the effective transition of PAP for better youth service delivery and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. In the same vein, the oil companies operating in the region have expressed readiness to support a functional and sustainable peace process in the region. As such, they will support a workable transition of the Amnesty programme which has not been able to ensure sustainable peaceful corporate-community relations in the Niger Delta despite the restoration of oil production to pre-amnesty level. However, the oil companies need to be drafted into the reintegration phase of the programme in order to provide employment for some of the ex-militants.

## **Sources of Possible Resistance**

### **1. Ex-Militants**

However, the transition of PAP might be resisted by a number of stakeholders who have vested interests in the continuity of the programme because it promotes their self-agendas. First, the PAP has become a patronage programme for some ex-militant commanders/leaders who are rewarded with contracts as part of the Amnesty deal. Besides, the ₦65,000 monthly stipends of ex-militants are paid through their former commanders who oftentimes short-change the foot soldiers. The transition of PAP is likely to be resisted by these former militant commanders because it is a threat to the corrupt practice they have built into the peace process.

### **2. Ex-Agitators not presently getting the stipend**

Second, several ex-agitators who are yet to receive the empowerment package of PAP are likely to resist the transition. Some of these people include youth groups who are hopeful of eventual inclusion in the Amnesty programme. Some of them have been disarmed and demobilised but are yet to be mobilised for vocational training. They are not likely to take their exclusion lightly in the event of a transition.

### **3. Key Individuals**

Third, the PAP has benefitted individuals rather than oil impacted communities. As a result, host communities which have been degraded by exploration and militant activities and are expectant of benefiting from the largesse may resist the transition.

### **4. Those benefiting from fraudulent contracts**

Fourth, following the culture of corruption that has characterised PAP, many of its officials including contractors and influential members of the political class now have interests in the

continuity of the programme. On account of these institutional interests, the beneficiaries of such corrupt practices in PAP are likely to resist the transition of the programme.

#### **5. Members of Security Agencies**

Finally, members of the security agencies who benefit from the status quo may put up some passive resistance to the transition.

### **Objective of the Transition**

Since the main objective of the PAP is “to contribute to security stabilisation in the Niger Delta through the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and sustainable re-integration of ex-militants as a precondition for medium- and long-term development,” the objective of the transition would be to implement a framework that can build on this same objective of security stabilisation in the Niger Delta but do so in a manner that was more efficient/effective and sustainable.

### **Principles Guiding the Transition**

Clearly there is a case to be made for drawing up a transition strategy for PAP as it is currently constituted to another form of mechanism that could foster peace and security, and also address the issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, avoiding the identified challenges.

For such a transition strategy to be feasible, it should be guided by certain principles and considerations, which include the following:

- It must be seen to be equitable and fair to all concerned and be refocused from targeted assistance to a more broad-based all-inclusive intervention.
- There must be widespread buy-in in the region and an expressed commitment on the part of all key stakeholders including the Federal Government, the state governments and the people of the Niger Delta to deliver on the objectives of the transition. The need for the involvement of oil companies for successful reintegration of ex-agitators should be considered. A closer relationship with the private sector, including the oil companies ought to be encouraged.
- Relevant regional and international actors should be consulted so that their experiences, know-how and best practices may be brought to bear on the process and the outcome and nature of the transition strategy.

### **Transition Scenarios**

Based on the abundant literature review, key informants’ interviews, it is obvious that the status quo at the PAP is not only untenable but unsustainable. In view of the foregoing, there is need to identify and examine some feasible options and scenarios that can be considered. Transition in this case should be akin to what is undertaking by international organisations like the UN, that is keeping the core objectives of PAP but moving to another phase with a different focus.

Also, the prioritisation, funding and implementation of the various regional development plans, such as the Niger Delta Action Plan, would go some way to gaining the commitment of the people in the region into supporting any subsequent activities to tinker with the PAP.

Apart from Option 1, the need to revamp the current PAP training curriculum with in-demand marketable courses and vocational skills trainings to make beneficiaries more employable, must be high on the priority list.

### **Option 1: Closure of the Programme**

It needs to be acknowledged from the outset that the federal government reserves the constitutional prerogative to close or discontinue PAP if it thinks it appropriate. With the drain on national resources by PAP, a decision of closure could have support within the country, especially the majority of states and people outside the Niger Delta region. Such an executive decision could be justified on the grounds that considerable federal resources have been invested in the region with limited appreciable results; more so, the fact that the leadership of PAP are persons who hail from the Niger Delta region.

The main basis for such an executive decision may hinge on the fact that there is nowhere in the world where such a programme has subsisted for more than three to five years unlike the PAP has already doubled this lifespan. Similar interventionist programmes, like the Veterans' programme in Uganda, have transited to new phases where a board took over the programme with a broader remit.<sup>59</sup>

Also, as the current PAP assessment report finds, the programme has set a poor precedence, entrenching a sense of entitlement within the region's population, especially the youth; underscoring the view that bad behaviour pays. The level of corruption within the programme is at an all-time high and needs to be addressed one way or the other.

In addition, the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the cost to the Nigerian economy, could make the option more attractive with the justification or excuse that the federal government cannot continue to shoulder the heavy financial burden of PAP under the prevailing circumstances.

Thus, the programme has to be closed in its current formulation before it can transit to a new, improved and effective phase.

A closure process for the programme over a short time frame (about nine months), will be proposed to ensure that all registered beneficiaries complete their reintegration programme within this period.

However, considering the number of outstanding beneficiaries that have not been trained and are awaiting re-integration, this might not be a realistic timeframe to complete the outstanding caseloads, especially as the financial implications of this alone are huge, let alone the other dependent requirements that would be needed to achieve such a goal. Thus, this nine-month option will need to have an in-built strategy of dealing with the inevitable outstanding caseloads.

The need for a comprehensive audit of the beneficiary list is paramount because the unsustainability of the programme at the current level of expenditure and the interminable drawdown of the beneficiary list will be an issue here. It will also determine the current list of outstanding beneficiaries and their outstanding training/reintegration requirements

This would result in a situation where Option 1 leads to Option 2, as outstanding caseloads are transferred to MDAs especially as the main reintegration mechanism is the provision of vocational and educational training for the demobilised militants. How to break the dependency on the

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<sup>59</sup> The Ugandan Veterans Assistance Board was established by an Act in August 1992. For details, see: <https://ulii.org/ug/legislation/consolidated-act/212>

payment of ₦65,000 TSA (transition support allowance) will have to be well thought through. The conditions surrounding continuing paying the stipends which is very onerous on the FG budget have to be determined. In the short- to medium-term, the closure of PAP is likely to be counter-productive because majority of the ex-militants have not been reintegrated and so have no legitimate livelihoods for self-survival other than the ₦65,000 monthly stipends.

A key issue that may arise should this option be pursued is that the state may return to a security interpretation of the crisis and tighten security in the region and forcibly close the programme. The painful truth is that this option may elicit political support for the regime which is in desperate quest for legitimacy and support. It could gamble a trade-off of the Niger Delta region for national favours. Such an approach though will, in our opinion, short live and certainly not the best option. Since it will not be a win-win situation but a zero-sum game.

**Implications of Option 1**

- Any abrupt closure without a viable alternative could bring about the resumption of violence in the region. This could lead to vandalism of pipelines, threat to the IOCs, which translates to a reduction in crude production and revenue for the government.
- Aside the beneficiaries, there is an institutional interest that has developed which could frustrate any abrupt closure of the programme.
- With the history and high level of distrust in the region, any closure process should be consultative, transparent and inclusive.
- There would be a handover process of outstanding/backlog cases from the PAP to other relevant MDAs, as identified during the audit of the programme

**Process:**

- Sensitisation of all stakeholders through information sharing and consultation on the process.
- Ensure that the security architecture in the region is at a high level of preparedness to quell violence that might ensue
- Comprehensive audit of the programme to ascertain completed and outstanding commitments in the reintegration phase being handed over to the relevant MDAs.
- Phasing out of the TSA within the deadline (probably nine months)
- Ensure that outstanding beneficiaries going through college education, skills and job training are fully funded to complete their courses or are handed over to relevant government agencies. Beneficiaries who have also received start-up kits and microcredit would need to be factored in as well.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside of the Niger delta region, the programme has come to be seen as too expensive for the number of beneficiaries</li> <li>• End widespread corruption that has characterised PAP and save huge revenues for government</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAP not being replaced by an alternative mechanism</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current drastic drop in oil prices provides a unique opportunity for the closure of the programme and stoppage of the monthly stipend payment</li> <li>• The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will further depress the national budget, which has been revised to reflect the shortfall in the oil revenues</li> <li>• The sacking of the PAP Coordinator and the emplacement of a caretaker committee provides a window to change strategy and wind down the programme</li> </ul>

Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be widespread resistance and agitation across the region, leading to disruption of oil production</li> </ul>
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**Option 2: Devolution of PAP Activities to Federal MDAs**

Closing down the programme and divesting the PAP activities into the programmes of other federal MDAs through the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and NDDC – will essentially mainstream the activities into a broad-based programme they will manage themselves or through other relevant federal MDAs. Thus, all the inclusive alternative programme designed and managed by NDDC and MNDA, whose main focus is the region, will meet the yearnings of regional stakeholders for more control and say in programmes targeting the region.

MDAs such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), MNDA, Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoY&S), NDDC, and oil-producing states development commissions such as the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC), the Edo State Oil and Gas Producing Areas Development Commission (EDOSOGPADEC), etc. will be involved in handling former PAP activities within their remit. This is presented as the second preferred transition option for reasons to be discussed in the section below.

A legitimate issue that arises in proposing this transition option is that all the listed MDAs and other entities cannot boast of track records of transparency, accountability and even to put it bluntly, they are not free of corrupt civil servants and party supporters who are placed in these entities for being loyal supporters. Such a view is not peculiar to these particular MDAs, as it could be said to be the norm of most FG and state entities since the discovery of oil in the late 1960s. Transparent and accountable leadership in such institutions is the exception. That being so, why option 2 is being proposed as one of the two preferred options is not based on an assumption that systemic challenges of lack of accountability will not be there. It will be, but it is for that reason that a strong coordinator with the full support of the presidency capable of monitoring the MDAs activities to ensure that there is delivery is on the target, is being proposed. It is also proposed under this option that each participating entity will have a desk officer devoted to the sole issue of PAP. This will not stamp out corrupt practices but will go a long way to minimise such incidences.

***Implications of Option 2***

- The challenge that may emerge from this option is that devolution if not properly managed can bring about diffusion. So, for a successful devolution of the programme there is need for a very competent and “strong” political figure to coordinate the PAP activities embedded in the Federal Government ministries, department and agencies (MDAs).
- When multiple people are charged with a task, things tend to fall through the cracks and they never get done as no-one would admit responsibility for implementation failures.
- There will be a backlash if the budget just gets consumed by Federal Agencies. Even if the Special Adviser loses control over the PAP budget, the region would appreciate visibility and transparency over the former PAP budget. People in the region appear to be very sensitive to this.

**Process:**

- Identify relevant institutions and MDAs, their core competencies and their capacity to undertake assigned PAP roles and tasks. The office of the MNDA Minister will be the overall “caretaker” of the Niger Delta issues that were formerly handled by the PAP.

- Conduct a comprehensive and independent audit of the MNDA (NDDC is currently being audited) to ensure that they can deliver on their added responsibilities
- Rejig state and civil society oversight mechanisms on participating MDAs to ensure efficiency and effectiveness
- Set up an inter-ministry committee comprising all the relevant MDAs as a coordinating body for the transition process
- Draw up a phased transition plan with specific timeframes, tangible deliverables and milestones with each identified institution. Since this will involve agencies with different mandates there is need for clear transitional programme for not more than two years to fully integrate the assigned functions into the programme activities of each MDA.
- Amend the terms of reference (TOR) of the Special Advisor to remove the duties of the PAP Coordinator from his remit. Thus, reverting to the singular role of SA to the President.
- Mandate the Minister of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs to ensure adequate oversight of devolved PAP tasks in these MDAs
- Executive order to back up the new role of the MNDA Minister in order to strengthen his oversight functions over a myriad of MDAs.
- Redeploy identified PAP staff to participating MDAs that are relevant to their roles within the PAP.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will broaden the programme activities beyond the ex-militants to a more development focus for the region</li> <li>• Creates a situation of shared responsibility among the participating MDAs</li> <li>• A sense of local ownership will be created if the state governments and NDDC are involved</li> <li>• Strong central political figure as overall coordinator of former PAP and other similar activities in the region bringing more synergy and focus to development of the region</li> <li>• No constitutional or legislative intervention required, as only an executive order or policy directive may be required.</li> <li>• If skilfully designed, each MDA undertaking PAP functions could be a check on each other and ensure a sense of check and balance.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still driven by federal agencies with limited state and local input</li> <li>• A single person driving development in the region might be open to abuse and inertia</li> <li>• The MDAs have no track record of accountability and efficient delivery of services or outputs so no reason to expect different performance.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current NDDC audit will provide a good basis for assessing its capacity to take on this additional assignment.</li> <li>• With MNDA bringing the NDDC under its purview, the synergy of planning and action will be in place</li> <li>• If civil society from the Niger Delta region or the country as a whole, are involved, playing a watchdog role on the MDAs, corruption may be mitigated.</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalised bureaucratic inertia and corruption within the participating MDAs</li> </ul>

### **Option 3: Transforming PAP into an Autonomous Youth Programme**

Under this option, PAP transitions into a youth development programme within a federal entity like SMEDAN and does not just focus on militant youth.

This moves the focus of the intervention from one of entitlement (where beneficiaries are paid) to one creating opportunity for beneficiaries and making them useful members of the society. This will make them think of business ideas based on the criteria provided to secure support for every youth (which must be defined by age and limit of funds for each project idea).

As training does not in itself lead to the creation of jobs, the employment of unskilled youth should be the priority in terms of turning what is currently a threat to stability in the Niger delta into a positive force for development. The programme would also provide job placement support. Job creation can be mainstreamed into macroeconomic and sectoral (agriculture, industry, services and labour) policies.

New information and communication technologies (ICT) offer significant opportunities for job creation since they allow young people to receive the information they require to increase their education, as well as knowledge of how and where to find income- and employment-generating opportunities. Internet cafes and computer training centres in themselves provide quality jobs in target areas, and if combined with “one-stop information resource centres” could have a multiplier effect.

Youth organisations, trade unions and the business community should be involved in the decision-making process from the design to the implementation of programmes addressing youth employment. Governments and development partners should do more to involve youths at all stages of this process.

The funding from PAP will be directly allocated to the programme which will have state level representation and works with relevant state level MDAs and international agencies and private sector in providing training and employment opportunities to achieve its objectives in the long term.

One major step towards transiting the PAP into a youth development entity is to revamp its training curriculum with courses and vocational trainings that are in demand in the market and less focused on the oil sector, which have left many of the beneficiaries with no jobs. This redefinition will help in attracting the non-oil private sector organisations in the region to offer employment to beneficiaries of the programme. The more youths in the region are able to gain employment and are more economically active, the easier it is for development across the region and the monthly stipend paid to the ex-militants would become a targeted support for participating youths.

Most of the employment generation that will be needed to absorb the youth will come from the private sector. This is particularly the case in an era of shrinking public sectors. However, reliance on private companies to do the heavy lifting may be wishful thinking given the reluctance even of domestic investors, let alone their international counterparts, to sink capital in a region with weak rule of law, rampant corruption and standards of governance that have led to frequent conflict. Nevertheless, the private sector should be actively engaged in the question of youth unemployment. This new youth programme should systematically provide private companies with more information about investment opportunities.

### ***Implications of Option 3***

- This would result in the emergence of a federal programme which might duplicate some roles and functions in a region already awash with interventionist bodies at both federal and state levels with little to show for their presence in development terms.
- Transition of PAP from focusing on the youth as a whole in the Niger Delta region would be a positive development but given the stark fact that the main source of the conflict is about

underdevelopment in the region, this strategy has to be able to accommodate the concerns of the overall communities.

- One of the potential benefits of this approach would be the oversight factor. Currently the lack of oversight over the PAP is one of the potential reasons that there are so many allegations of corruption concerning the institution.

**Process:**

- Region-wide youth consultation to get a buy-in of the youth for such an enterprise: how the PAP will transform into a youth programme.
- Develop a robust communication strategy to reach out to the youth to enable them understand that the PAP transformation is in their general and long-term interest rather than for the 30,000 ex-militants the PAP was focused on.
- Executive bill setting up the youth agency in the region and transferring the duties of the PAP.
- Establish an inter-ministry committee comprising all the relevant MDAs at state and federal levels to act as the coordinating body for the transition process.
- Youth mainstreaming is an enormous challenge when other sectors have their own priorities and the institutionalisation of systems and capacity in the youth sector is still fragmented.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadening of the scope of the programme from ex-militants to youth development in general across the region</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is duplicative as states in the region already have a ministry of youth and social development or similar</li> <li>• Another federal interventionist programme with limited local control</li> <li>• Capacity of the new youth programme to cope with the demand from youth in the region</li> <li>• The focus is narrow; it reduces the complex issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta to a narrow, albeit important, focus of youth employment.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme will interface with private sector actors on job creation for youths and establishing youth-led businesses</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstreaming youth programmes presents an enormous challenge when other sectors have their own contending priorities</li> </ul>

**Option 4: Devolving PAP Activities to State Oil Development Commissions**

The present interventionist initiatives by the federal government through the PAP, MNDA and even the NDDC are basically just surrogate government establishments serving as palliatives and pacification of active protest voices in the region as they fall short of the requirements for meaningful political and economic development of the region. The context and circumstances that gave birth to these institutions have raised questions over their utility in resolving the region’s problems and mapping out a deserving future for it as a self-reliant and viable political and economic geographic zone.

In order to divest powers from the centre and make the agencies of government more accountable, with more local ownership and supervision, the current mandate and activities of the programme should be given to the state development commissions. This reduces the federal centric nature of the programme which has helped in fuelling corruption and elite capture, to a better monitored programme at the state level, which will give more control and oversight by communities, civil society organisations (CSOs), Community Development Associations (CDAs) and the private sector. For example, there could be a constitutional arrangement that allows for a direct allocation from the federal purse to the state development commissions as part of the derivation revenue. This could include making sure that the board members are not card-carrying members of any political

party. This is to reduce board appointments becoming objects for political reward or patronage. The inclusion of CSOs and other eminent citizens of the state, especially those who live in the local communities, will help to increase transparency, local participation and oversight<sup>60</sup> and very importantly, lead to greater demand for accountability from the people<sup>61</sup> and the need for accountability<sup>62</sup> such as giving yearly audited account by the Commission.

The issue of the increase in the derivation allocation can be raised as suggested by the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta led by Ledum Mitee in 2009. This is germane because funding for development projects in the region remain a major challenge. This increase in allocation can be ringfenced and distributed among state development commissions specifically for youth development activities in their respective states.

#### ***Implications of Option 4***

- This could also result in more fragmentation of the resources meant for the region and make it difficult to monitor by the MNDA Minister and also increase administrative and operational costs.
- The additional funds to be added to the derivation fund, if it is not to suffer the same fate as the said derivation funds, should be targeted at specific programme and ring fenced accordingly.
- Not all states in the region have dedicated development commissions in the form of DESOPADEC, which implies that creating them would take more time than is available.
- There currently are five functional state development commissions in the Niger Delta region. These are;
  - Abia: Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC)
  - Imo: Imo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ISOPADEC)
  - Delta: Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC)
  - Edo: Edo State Oil and Gas Producing Areas Development Commission (EDSOGPADEC)
  - Ondo: Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC).

A bill to establish a similar commission in Bayelsa State (Bayelsa State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission – BASOPADEC) has passed its second reading at the State House of Assembly<sup>63</sup>.

There are intense pressures on the governments of Rivers<sup>64</sup> and Akwa-Ibom<sup>65</sup> states to also establish similar oil community development commissions.

#### **Process:**

- Consultations between federal and state governments on the best approaches to handing over roles and functions of PAP to the state development commissions. A comprehensive and independent audit of each commission would be appropriate to determine their financial viability among other indices.
- The commissions, as presently constituted, have boards appointed by the state governors and ratified by the state Houses of Assembly, which also exercise oversight functions over the commissions. However, like many bureaucratic institutions in Nigeria, they have often been accused of corruption and lack of transparency.

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<sup>60</sup> <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/imo-state-gov-reassures-oil-producing-communities/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/09/imo-to-probe-funds-for-oil-communities/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://tribuneonlineng.com/tag/delta-state-oil-producing-areas-development-commission-desopadec/>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.independent.ng/bayelsa-oil-producing-areas-development-commission-bill-passes-second-reading/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://guardian.ng/news/mosop-coalition-demand-rivers-oil-areas-development-commission/>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/372666-group-demands-development-commission-for-akwa-ibom-oil-producing-communities.html>

- To guard against the above, CSOs, local community leaders who not affiliated to political parties and retired public servants should be appointed by communities to represent them on the boards of the commissions.
- There should also be state legislations on mandatory submission of yearly audited account of the commissions before the state Houses of Assembly.
- Task a committee of legal experts to advise on the constitutional and other legal processes and their implications for this handover.
- Establish a mixed institutionalised forum of state and non-state actors to regularly meet and review the state play in each state.
- Timeline and milestones to be set and agreed for projects and winding up of the programme, especially when considerable development

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater local involvement and oversight of programme activities by state authorities, local communities and local civil society groups</li> <li>• It is easier to allow communities to suggest or appoint their representatives and involve Community Development Associations (CDAs) to determine youths who genuinely want to be trained through the programme.</li> <li>• Direct allocation to state development commissions from PAP budget and possible derivation funds</li> <li>• It is easier to add timeline, milestones, monitoring and evaluation indicators in the programme</li> <li>• It will allow each state to cater for the army of unemployed and unemployable youths who were excluded by the programme.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmentation of funds might be difficult to track and monitor</li> <li>• Not all states have established development commissions and process of establishing will be time consuming</li> <li>• Will increase operational and administrative costs</li> <li>• May deepen local corruption and patronage politics</li> <li>• Appointments and projects will be prone to ethnic interpretation and consideration in multi-ethnic states like Rivers, Delta, Edo, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State development commissions become more involved in the development of their youth and communities</li> <li>• There is likelihood of the Federal government working directly with the state development commissions as a devolved part of PAP, thereby making PAP more locally accountable.</li> <li>• It would create opportunity for the private sector within the states (especially in the non-oil sector) to make input on the skill sets required by them.</li> <li>• A high probability that this could focus on addressing the challenges of underdevelopment; the main driver of the conflict.</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of handing over tasks from federal to state authorities could be messy and prolonged by turf wars.</li> <li>• Inability of state development commissions to adequately mainstream the PAP activities into their workload</li> <li>• It may lead to another round of local conflicts if the selection or appointment of members of the board is badly handled.</li> <li>• It may create room for political compensation leading to a cesspool of corruption if it is insulated from political consideration.</li> <li>• It might lead to inter- and intra-ethnic/communal power tussle over headship of development commissions</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible constitutional amendments required for increasing the derivation allocation might delay or derail the process</li> </ul> |
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## Preferred Options

In making the choice of the preferred transition strategy option, a SWOT analysis was deployed, to enable the assessments of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each strategy, and most importantly, to understand which transition strategy is likely to be accepted by most of the stakeholders. Furthermore, considering the major inherent weaknesses in the PAP programme as currently configured, any preferred transition strategy should be able to provide remedies to the current situation, with little risks and threats but greater strengths and opportunities. Relying on these explanations, **Option 4** – Devolving PAP Activities to State Oil Development Commissions – has been chosen as the most suitable model for PAP transition, while Option 2 – Devolution of PAP Activities to Federal MDAs – has been adjudged the runner-up option. In this section, the case is made for each selection, starting with the second preferred option then the preferred alternative – **Option 4**.

### 1. Second Preferred Option: Making a Case for Option 2 (Devolution of PAP Activities to Federal MDAs)

In deciding the preferred option from the scenarios presented in the previous section, thought has been given to the option that presents the least risk in security terms – reducing the chances of returning the region to the *status quo ante* with all its attendant violence. Consideration is also given to the question of which option is likely to present a better framework which will in the medium- and long-term be able to address the more fundamental problem of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region; agreeably the main driver of the conflict.

In view of the objective of the transition, therefore, the option to be proposed, must have an inherent capability to contribute to addressing the fundamental issue of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. Put differently, the best option should be the one capable of delivering on development in a sustainable manner.

Against this backdrop, Option 2 is ranked as the second preferred option. Significantly, the adoption of this option does not require any legislative intervention, it may at best require an executive order or policy direction for its realisation. This is relevant in the sense that aside its inherent ability to address the challenges as stated it can also be executed within a comparatively shorter period.

Option 2 presents a classic case of shared responsibility among state institutions through the devolution of functions. If properly implemented could ensure that accountability for the region’s perennial underdevelopment challenge, generally agreed as the source of the conflict, will be borne by all the relevant MDAs to some extent. The key limitation of Option 2 is that of the MDAs listed, none of them can demonstrate any history of accountability within the Nigerian polity. Since the discovery of oil, as stated above, most state institutions have become key participants in systemic corruption. The “mischief” of Option 2 is essentially addressed by Option 3, in that it seeks to involve local communities, the beneficiaries and civil society organisations to play a very important oversight role on the MDAs. Better still, it can be relatively insulated from the partisan party politics, which undermines efficiency.

The involvement of oil-producing states development commissions such as DESOPADEC, EDOSOGPADEC, etc. in the devolution programme will promote local content and enable the

communities to buy into the youth empowerment processes. The conceptualisation and implementation of PAP as a federal government programme has hitherto excluded the participation of oil-producing states in the post-amnesty peace process. With their involvement through devolution, a sense of local ownership will be created and this is particularly relevant in the Niger Delta where many people have always felt marginalised by ethnic majorities in the Nigerian federation.

In addition, Option 2, acknowledges that the problem of Niger Delta is principally developmental and thus multi-faceted which requires the inputs of the various MDAs for sustainable development. As conceptualised and proposed, Option 2, in this strategy, if properly implemented is able to accommodate the off-loading of ongoing cases from PAP and handled by the appropriate MDA and phased out gradually over time without the shocks that the other options presented may not necessarily be able to adequately deal with.

Transitioning the PAP to Option 2 would also not be abrupt and therefore the security risk would be largely mitigated. It might inadvertently pave the way for some ex-militants to be employed in the various MDAs they are assigned. Depending on their qualifications, the monthly ₦65,000 stipends can be mainstreamed into the salary structure of such MDAs. This will help to resolve the post-training employment crisis, which has been a major challenge of PAP.

Significantly, the devolution of PAP programme activities into federal and state MDAs may help to address the culture of corruption which has been institutionalised in PAP. Once the ex-militants are engaged directly by MDAs, the embezzlement of funds by administrative elite under the guise of ex-militants' empowerment will reduce or stop, thus mitigating corruption for which PAP has been notorious. In addition, direct engagement of ex-militants by MDAs will also put an end to the short-changing of ex-militants by their former commanders through whom they have been paid thus far. A key feature that is absent in Option 2, which Option 3 takes on board, is need to de-concentrate the PAP activities away from the centre (the federal government) to the states and local communities. In addition, cognisant of the history and culture of systemic corruption at that level, the involvement of local actors and civil society organisations playing key oversight roles might minimise the incidences of corruption; the bane of PAP since its inception.

## **2. The Preferred Option: The Case for Option 4 (Devolution of PAP Activities to Oil State Development Commissions)**

Having discussed the criteria for making preference of the options, and Option 2 been examined and considered as the second preferred option, **Option 4** is considered as the preferred option of the four transition options that have been presented in this report, based on the use of SWOT analysis in examining all the options.

In view of the PAP's objectives and the transition of the programme as highlighted in this document, Option 4 is considered the preferred strategy. This is based on its capability to address most of the inherent problems which exist in the structure, operations and management of the current programme. More fundamentally, it has the ability to effectively address the issue of underdevelopment associated with youth unemployment and livelihoods in the Niger Delta region. Again, judging that the existing oil community development commissions in five of the nine Niger Delta states, among other things, tackle issues of unemployment, it provides a better platform to incorporate the non-militant youths excluded by PAP from its inception.

One of the major findings of this research, which has directly affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the PAP as a programme, is the lack of local involvement and contributions in programme design and management. With appointments of managers of the programme coming from the federal government, with no contributions by local communities on choice of representations or on nomination of youths who really need such vocational training, has made the programme, another route for politically settling party loyalists. Option 4, which allows for local communities' involvement through CDAs, will insulate the programme from being used as a mechanism for compensating party members as against the objectives of providing job trainings and other form of developments to the local communities. The fear that this will increase local political patronage and corruption will be checked through the inclusion of members of CSOs, CDAs and private sector on the board of the commission and in managing the funds.

The transition to Option 4 from the present federal government-controlled structure will still allow PAP to function as an interventionist programme with clear timelines, milestones, and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Considering that the original mandate of the federal government was to end PAP after five years from its initial inception, Option 4 will provide a clear exit route for closing the programme without necessarily re-igniting the conflict in the region. This is because it can help in improving the human development projects over the agreed period, thereby making every stakeholder commit to the objectives of the programme. Again, because it is locally accountable to the communities and the local people, its success rate, is likely to be higher than what is presently achieved with the PAP.

The involvement of local stakeholders, it is very likely to include the private sector, especially the non-oil sector, mainly in Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMSEs) in developing skill sets that are in great demand in the market. This will help in turning out graduates and technicians who are employable and required by the market. This will be better than the present situation, in which beneficiaries of the PAP skills training programmes are without jobs.

Furthermore, the fact that the present activities undertaken by the oil community development commissions are funded from the 13 percent oil derivation to the oil producing states, Option 4 offers a good opportunity for transferring the activities of PAP to the various states, as some of their activities are similar to what PAP does. As such, a direct allocation of PAP budgets to the states' development commissions for project execution, can be negotiated between the federal government and the states of Niger Delta region. For instance, such funds coming from the federal government to the oil development commission could be ring-fenced for youth development alone, thereby ensuring that such funds are not diverted to other issues. The composition of the management board could include representatives of oil-producing communities, members of civil society organisations and other groups that can provide effective oversight.

Although the establishment of development commissions in the four states where they currently do not exist will require the enactment of state legislation, however, a declaration of intention by the federal government to execute PAP through such community-based institutions will lead to the initiation and fast-tracking of bills into laws in the affected states as they would want their youths to benefit from the programme. The long-term benefit of pursuing Option 3 in terms of sustainable security, transparency, community involvement and improved infrastructure and ultimately dealing with the fundamental question of underdevelopment far outweighs the temporary challenge posed by the process of constitutional arrangement to establish the development commissions.

## Concluding Remarks

In developing the strategic options that PAP must transition to, this study took as its point of departure that PAP as constituted and operated since inception in 2009, has not achieved its major objectives of sustainable peace and addressing the challenges of underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region. The question therefore that the study sought to address was what strategic options are available for a suitable and sustainable PAP transition. Why is the change necessary, if PAP has achieved the objective of security stabilisation, but not peace and development?

In responding to this fundamental question, the team did not embark on a mere theoretical exercise of constructing ideal models for such a transition, rather, consideration was given to sets of realistic contextual factors, being mainly, the need to ensure that the Niger Delta region's security continued to be stabilised in the manner that PAP has reasonably succeeded in doing, but in addition also ensure that the central underlying cause of the violent conflict – underdevelopment – is also addressed in the medium- and long-term by the preferred model. The team was also cognisant of the varied interests of state and non-state actors involved in the search for a feasible option. This meant taking due cognisance of the primary role and interest of the people in the Niger Delta region by ensuring, among other things, through their participation in an oversight role in any proposed model. This is also because the team was not oblivious to the role of systemic corruption within the polity that has been brought to bear on PAP. That done, the consultants were also mindful of the stark fact that for any model to enjoy legitimacy and work well, there must be a role for the youth to play, as they have been at the centre of the violence in the region.

Beyond the youth and other community actors and CSOs, the federating states also has an interest and role that were taken on board in the selection process. The challenges they pose were acknowledged but without their buy-in and participation, any option will face challenges at the state level. Nor could the federal government and, in fact, the perception and views of states and Nigerians outside the Niger Delta region be ignored in the exercise; they were carefully studied and weighted and thus factored in.

In the end, the team, based on the research findings, had to do a serious balancing act of these various factors and interests of multiplicity of actors, sometimes with competing interests, before settling on the models presented. None of the models presented is ideal; they rank from the more problematic and less odious to variations and different shades of what is feasible and close to optimal. Attention was also paid to the issue of options which when selected, could deliver on peace and ultimately contribute in addressing the development challenges in Niger Delta, but might still require constitutional amendments. Such a model, the project team thought was risky process and a variable that its outcome would be impossible to control and predict with any certainty, since it will be an act and art of politics with horse trading taking centre stage and not necessarily the development objective.

Each option has inherent challenges and also inbuilt strength as presented in the SWOT analysis and it was that critical exercise that helped settle the choices and the least problematic amongst them: Option 4. A few comments on the various options may suffice by way of concluding remarks.

Option 1 is presently politically inexpedient as closure would definitely come with some significant risks, if not carefully managed. Option 2 is essentially distinguished from, say Option 3 (the creation of a youth programme), which can be described as “reductionist” in that, as useful as this is, it essentially reduces the complex and interrelated issues of the region to just a youth question. While it is agreed that youth militancy was and is at the heart of the resistance and its accompanying

violence, but it's not sufficient to focus on that as an option with an expectation of delivering a sustainable development solution for the region, especially as the percentage of 'troubled' youths that PAP was catering for is extremely limited. In sum, Option 3, while being a good vehicle for job creation for the youth, appears to be too narrow for the overall broader development problems of the Niger Delta region.

It is in light of the limitations of these two options that the Project Team settled for Options 4 and 2 as first and second preferred transition models respectively. Option 2 has been presented as second preferred option with reasons assigned being mainly that Option 2 unlike Options 1 and 3, will broaden the participation of actors beyond the ex-militants and assume a more development focus. It will also engender a sense of local ownership, and could result in a situation of shared responsibility. The realistic and practical gaps were also pointed out, particularly, the fact that the programme will remain an Abuja-centric option (controlled by the federal government). And, it is based on this and other lacunae that have been identified that **Option 4** is proposed as the preferred transition option. Finally, being an interventionist programme, **Option 4** gives room for the inclusion of workable timelines to determine when the programme can be fully closed. This is unlike Option 2, which though presents a feasible framework, will lead to the institutionalisation of such departments or office units in the MDAs and not amenable to timelines for its closure.

Ultimately, therefore, **Option 4**, though not perfect, is the most appropriate model basically because it is the one with a more comprehensive mechanism and processes to address the limitations of other options, especially Option 2, and invariably a more suitable transition option to replace PAP as currently constituted.

## **Key Informants interviewed**

1. Chief Edwin Clark: 14 February 2020, Abuja (in person)\*
2. Mr. Morris Alagoa: 24 January 2020, Yenagoa (in person)
3. Prof Austin Ikelegbe: 20 February 2020, Benin City (in person)
4. Dr Patterson Ogon: 03 February 2020, Port Harcourt (Phone)
5. Dr Cyril Obi: 15 February 2020, New York (Phone and Email)
6. Charles Achodo: 01 February 2020, Abuja (in person)
7. Onengiya Erekosima: 11 February 2020, Port Harcourt (Phone)
8. Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo 01 February 2020 Abuja (Phone)
9. Dr Tarila Marclint Ebiede: 20 February 2020, The Netherlands (Email)
10. Former PAP Staff, 14 February 2020, Abuja (in person)\*\*
11. Dr Femi Badejo: 22 February 2020, Lagos (Phone)
12. Donu Kogbara: 15 February 2020, Abuja (in person)
13. Senator Bassey Ewa-Henshaw: 14 February 2020, Abuja (in person)
14. Dr. Alfred Mulade: 01 April 2020, Warri (Phone)

Note: The \* and \*\* differentiates the KIIs held on the same day 14 February 2020 in Abuja.

## Glossary of Terms

ASOPADEC	Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
BASOPADEC	Bayelsa State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
CDAs	Community Development Associations
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease pandemic
CSOs	Civil society organisations
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DESOPADEC	Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
EDOSOGPADEC	Edo State Oil and Gas Producing Areas Development Commission
FG	Federal government
FMoE	Federal Ministry of Education
ICT	Information communication technology
IOCs	International oil companies
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
ITF	Industrial Training Fund
ISOPADEC	Imo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
LGA	Local government area
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNDA	Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs
MoY&S	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
OSOPADEC	Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
PAP	Presidential Amnesty Programme
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
SMSEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SPDC	Shell Petroleum and Development Corporation
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat
TOR	Terms of reference
TSA	Transitional Safety-net Allowance
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

