



SECURITY AND STABILISATION IN THE NIGER DELTA

Recommendations for the Way Forward



Background Context

The stability of the Niger Delta region remains fragile, as displayed in the violence witnessed during the 2015 general elections, the inconclusive gubernatorial election in Rivers State, the tensions in Bayelsa State and ongoing Biafra agitations.

The failure of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) to effectively dismantle the command structure of the various militant groups, and the inability of the federal government to initiate a major development strategy for the region, mean that the underlying causes of instability remain unaddressed.

At the peak of the insurgency, the region experienced a considerable decline in economic activities¹. High cost of security investment placed considerable burden on the budget of most corporations, particularly in the oil and gas sector, resulting in the diversion of productive resources to securing production facilities and installations. Senior corporate executives relocated to safer locations, notably Lagos, in response to the incessant abduction and kidnappings.

With crude oil prices at the lowest in many years, the oil and gas industry is again taking a hit, and the Nigerian economy is exposing its vulnerability. Lack of investment is creating an economic vacuum where an illegal shadow-economy is thriving. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has made the coastal waters the most dangerous in the world. Meanwhile, crude oil theft and illegal oil refining are involving entire communities.

Against the backdrop of proliferation of arms and weapons², the risk and motivation for re-armament to engage in violence are evidently high and can be readily activated. Security services in the Niger Delta region are pushed to compete for shrinking resources with those fighting the intransigent insurgency in the North-East. It would therefore be extremely damaging to be sucked into trying to combat a fresh wave of conflict in the south too.

This paper explores the interrelated drivers of the conflict, and proposes policy recommendations to address the prevailing challenges and reduce future instability.

¹ The Nigerian economy experienced a fall in in-flow of foreign direct investment from about \$20 billion in 2007 to about \$6.1 billion in 2010. Nwogwugwu et al. 2012. Militancy and Insecurity in the Niger Delta: Impact on the inflow of foreign direct investment to Nigeria. Available Online: http://www.arabianjbr.com/pdfs/KD_VOL_2_1/3.pdf

² Professor Aloysius Okolie, who is the South East coordinator on House Survey of PRESCOM, made the revelation during a two-day stakeholders' sensitization forum on the Comprehensive National Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) survey in Nigeria held at Villa Toscana Hotel, Enugu. Reported in Vanguard newspaper, 27th October 2015.

Analysis of the Causes of Instability

The underlying causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta region are complex. At the root of the conflict are structural factors that keep the state weak and fragmented. These factors cause tensions between the state and its citizens, thereby creating the conditions for conflict.

Patrimonialism creates competition for control of ‘who gets what, when and how’. This phenomenon occurs in political offices, allocation of key ministries, and complex patronage system of god-fatherism. State resources provide opportunities for enrichment and are, for many, the only vehicle through which they can advance and protect their privileges. An analysis by Nextier reveals that from 2010 to 2015, about US\$ 39.46 billion³ was allocated to the nine state governments in the region, while development results have been lacking. This amount does not include the amounts allocated to security issues and controlled by the state governors without recourse to any accountability processes. The threat of violence remains until these resources begin to be used effectively.

Institutions in a patrimonial system are kept weak for the system to work, resulting in (1) a state that is vulnerable to interferences by powerful actors; (2) security and justice institutions that lack the capacity to provide security and enforce the rule of law as

these are used instead to secure private interests; and, (3) a state that does not provide a functioning regulatory framework. The consequence of these three dynamics is that people live in physical and institutional insecurity, which exacerbates their reliance on exclusive extra-judiciary means. When manipulated by armed actors, these tensions can turn violent.

Fragmented-identities. In uncertain times, people fall back on smaller reciprocal networks, which are usually made up of their tribe, clan and extended family. The more outside pressure there is, in the form of increased violence or reduced livelihoods, the more people are likely to define their social group in small, exclusive terms, increasing the perceived differences between themselves and other groups. Patrimonialism is reinforced and political entrepreneurs take advantage of these dynamics to fuel tensions and mobilize groups in their favour.

³ Nextier (2015). “Political Economy Analysis of Fund Flow to the Niger Delta Region”

Frame of reference built on violence. The region has been embroiled in various forms of conflict for decades. As people have little experience of change through non-violent means, violence has become engrained as a legitimate response to resolve actual, potential, or perceived conflict. This creates a society which tends to be sceptical about long-term peaceful political change and which, once mobilized, can turn very violent. Furthermore, not knowing what the future would bring has made many people's outlook quite short-term, and focused on day-to-day survival. It is crucial to build a sense of transformation and hope in the region to support stability as a medium-term outcome.

Poverty. As the result of environmental pollution, significant areas are no longer able to support traditional livelihoods such as fishing and cultivation. Competition over ownership and access to the remaining productive areas is intensifying regional and ethnic tensions. Many of the rural poor migrate to cities in search of employment. However, since the urban poor across Nigeria are marginally better off than the rural poor,⁴ this migration simply increases the pool of unemployed youths in the cities. This results in a burgeoning pool of unemployed youth who become potential recruits for acts of violence. These youth are mostly found within the urban and periphery-urban areas and generally comprise a mixture of skilled and unskilled youth within the ages of 18-34 years.

⁴ National Bureau of Statistics (2010). Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010

Conflict Drivers and Multipliers

The interactions between the root causes of conflict are worsened by the presence of conflict ‘multipliers’ (such as the availability of small arms and light weapons, impunity and abuse of access, activities of conflict entrepreneurs, etc.). This conflict map takes as a starting point the inability of people to meet their basic needs, be it in the form of security, livelihoods, or community solidarity, and how this condition in the presence of conflict multipliers leads to a cycle of violence that perpetuates and feeds on itself. Within the Niger Delta, four negative dynamics or multipliers of conflict can be identified:

Security dilemmas: Security dilemmas are a result of the patrimonial nature of the state, which has kept institutions, in particular justice, defence and security, weak and fragmented. As the state has previously been unable or unwilling to protect people and their livelihoods, communities tend to rely on militant leaders for self-defence. The security ‘vacuum’ presents an opportunity for multiple, competing armed groups to flourish and expand their influence and agendas, more so if the judicial institutions are purposefully compromised.

Mobilisation around land and identity:

Community grievances are mobilised through a complex interplay of root causes of violence (discussed above). As livelihoods are difficult to come by and ecosystems are weakened to support agriculture, communities fall back on exclusive ethnic or tribal identities as a source of solidarity and resources. Political or armed actors (conflict entrepreneurs) can easily manipulate these grievances.

Exploitation of natural resources: The availability of valuable, marketable natural resources – which can be exploited illegally by methods requiring relatively low financial inputs and low labour intensity - is attractive to various parties (disaffected communities, armed groups, political actors, fraudulent businessmen, etc.). In particular, young men find themselves in exploitative economic situations that leave them vulnerable to recruitment by militant groups and oil theft and illegal refining networks.

Porous Borders: A combination of extensive and highly porous borders, such as the open water outlets to the Gulf of Guinea, facilitates easy access to illegal oil sales and importation of illicit weapons in the Niger Delta. Deployment of military and naval personnel has not solved the problem as these security personnel have themselves become involved in the oil theft and bunkering.

The diagram below (fig.1) shows conflict dynamics at the micro level. It illustrates how the interplay of poverty and youth unemployment can breed social despair and frustrations, and how the potential for conflict is heightened with the proliferation of small arms and weapons as a multiplier of conflict. The interplay of weapon proliferation and weak state security institutions induced by irresponsible governance leads to political violence.

Irresponsible governance in the context of Patrimonialism can result in weak security institutions that in turn results in security vacuum. Conflict entrepreneurs and restive youths can exploit this situation to ferment conflict.

Interplay of Conflict dynamics and causes and illustrative program responses Microlevel

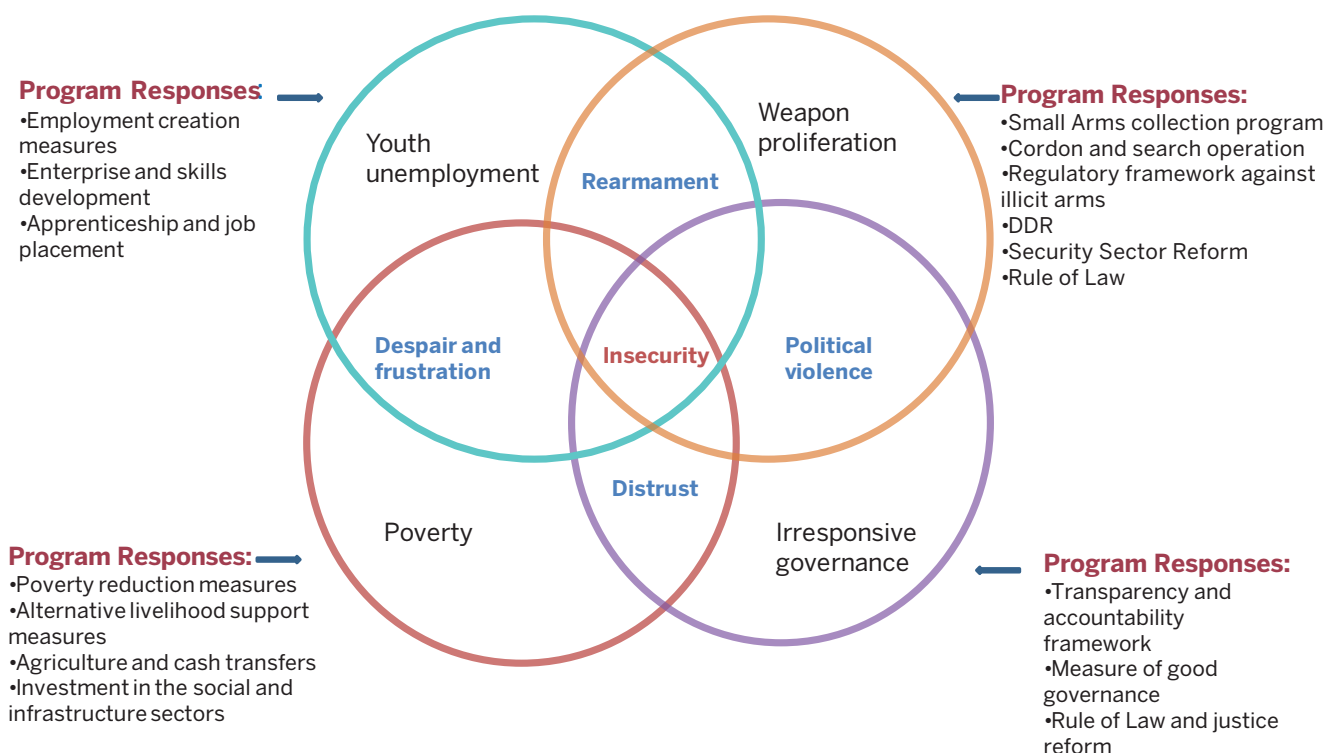


Figure 1. Interplay of Conflict Dynamics and Causes and Illustrative Programme Responses

Macro-Level Conflict Interplay

Interplay of Conflict drivers and causes – Macro -level

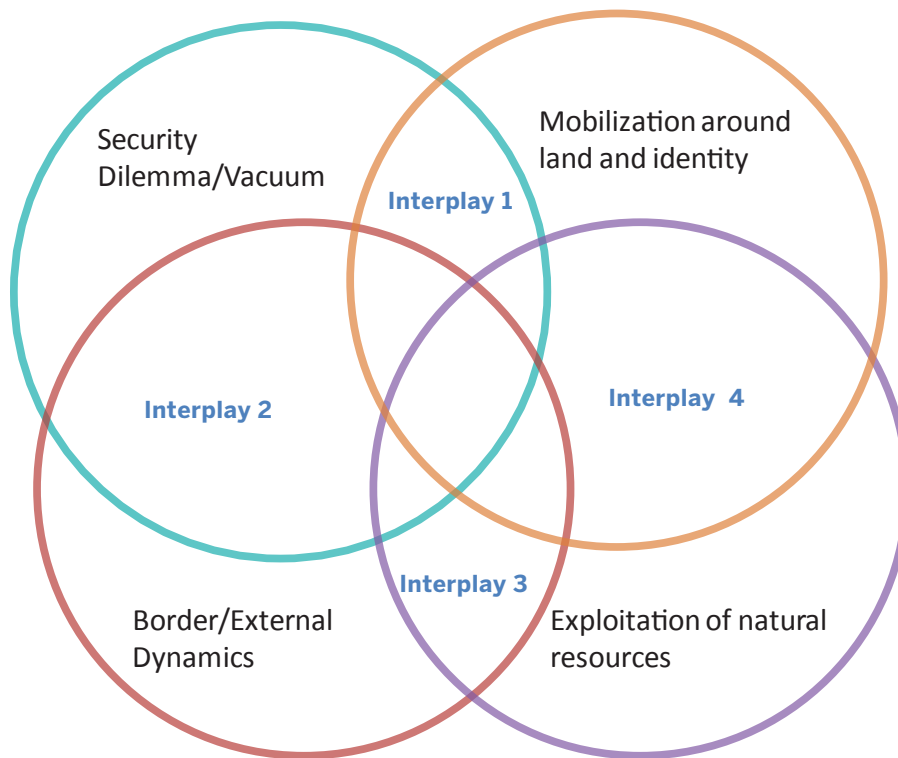


Figure 2. Macro-level interplay of conflict drivers and causes

1. Interplay between ‘security dilemmas’ and ‘mobilisation around land and identities’:

This analysis reveals why people form militant groups to meet their needs or to exploit the security vacuum created through fragmented and weakened state institutions, and how tensions around land crystallise around identity as competition for land grows and the state cannot or will not protect people’s safety or property. Conflict entrepreneurs can then manipulate these tensions.

The original interplay is strengthened by the addition of ‘border dynamics’ that provide easy access to import illicit arms and weapons. The ‘exploitation of natural resources’ reinforces the dynamic by providing a readily available source of income for armed groups and the struggle for exploitation of natural resources through oil theft and bunkering.

2. Interplay between ‘security dilemmas’ and ‘border or external dynamics’:

As a result of the fragmented nature of state institutions, borders are insecure and external actors with interest in illicit trades on oil can expand their influence through importation of arms into the region.

3. Interplay between ‘exploitation of natural resources’ and ‘external or border dynamics’:

External actors involved in oil bunkering cultivate strong partnership with local militant leaders and bunkerers to secure lucrative oil business. Through the supply of illicit weapons, they keep the region insecure for purposes of sustaining their illegal trading activities.

4. Interplay between ‘mobilisation around land and identity’ and ‘exploitation of natural resources’:

As communities closely link their ethnic identity to the land that produces the resources, they tend to jealously guard rights of access and exploitation. This makes a more rational regime of planned investment difficult and uncertain unless there is a quick and clear financial advantage to the community claiming possession of the asset. This difficulty extends to even legitimate business interests based in the region.

5. Interplay between ‘security dilemmas’ and ‘exploitation of natural resources’:

Security dilemmas define the context in which a state is unable to neither regulate the trade in its natural resources nor provide security for its citizens. In most cases, high-placed officials and security officers benefit from trades of the national resources. The presence of militant groups, proliferation of weapons, and lucrative pricing for the commodity combine to heighten insecurity in the region.

Strategic Framework for Stabilisation

In the context of the Niger Delta, stabilisation is envisaged as an integrated, holistic but targeted process of enabling Nigeria and the region to build mutual accountability and capacity to address and mitigate existing or emerging drivers of violent conflict, creating the conditions for improved governance and longer-term development. It is the role of the Presidential Amnesty Office to create the space in which other agencies can achieve this.

Reducing fragility is at the core of stabilisation intervention measures. Its causes and characteristics are diverse with most descriptions focusing on the extent to which weak governments are unable or unwilling to deliver core services. Fragility failures provide stumbling blocks in the normal growth trajectories of countries – especially ones emerging from war – and can lead to conflict traps whereby the outbreak of fighting begets prolonged armed conflict by activating cycles of retaliation and vengeance, and by locking elites and commanders into a system where their surest profit comes from violence.

The following approach has been adapted for the Niger Delta from strategic areas⁵ outlined by the United Nations.

Re-engagement of high-level government and stakeholders support for stabilisation: Successful stabilisation measures must be built on high-level government and stakeholder support for both the objectives of stabilisation and also the essential strategic component and the delivery modalities. Securing broad stakeholder input and concurrence are vital in the overall achievement of stabilisation in the region. Peace and stability must be owned by the people. The stakeholders and the government in the Niger Delta agree on the need for a clear development compact with a commitment for peace and stability in the region. This must include a joint-accountability framework.

Development of complementary mechanisms to create an inclusive process for peace and stability in the region: The mechanism for the delivery of stabilisation measures should be all-inclusive and anchored within a broad stakeholder framework of decision-making.

Economic and development issues are core in every stabilisation programme: The economic issues underlying armed conflicts and the belligerents' motivation to fight are often overlooked in most stabilisation policies. They are usually relegated to the later stage of post-conflict reconstruction as largely technical or humanitarian matters, while political and military issues take centre stage. However, there is a growing recognition that such a neat separation between the political' peace process, and 'economic' – or 'developmental' – is no longer conducive to brokering a lasting peace. Economic issues are associated with conflict economies, natural resources or socio-economic inequalities, and as such they are an intrinsic part of many armed conflicts.

Reintegration of agitators. Stabilisation can only be maintained when conflict drivers for ex-combatants and restless youths are uprooted. A reintegration process needs to be planned to transform ex-agitators into functioning citizens with the ability to contribute to, and participate positively in political, economic and social life.

⁵ Better Protected? Stabilisation Strategies and the Protection of Civilians 25 March 2011, Geneva Roundtable Summary by UNHCR

Stakeholder Analysis

Identifying and streaming critical stakeholders’ interest towards stabilisation is essential in sustaining peace and stability in the region

Chart 1 below outlines the various actors in the Niger Delta and their interest and power to influence the level of security stabilisation and development in the region. The stakeholders in Quadrants 1 and 2 are most critical for maintaining security stabilisation and realising development for the region:

- Quadrant 1 stakeholders have high power and high interest in security stabilisation and development. This group consists of the federal government, traditional rulers in the various communities in the region, and international development agencies working in the region.

- Quadrant 2 stakeholders have high power and low interest in security stabilisation and development. This group of people, who benefit from the insecurity in the region, include some unscrupulous political elite, criminal elements, some at the states and local government levels, etc. There is need to ensure that any security stabilisation strategy for the region explores ways to reorient their interest and align their power behind the need for stability and development in the region.

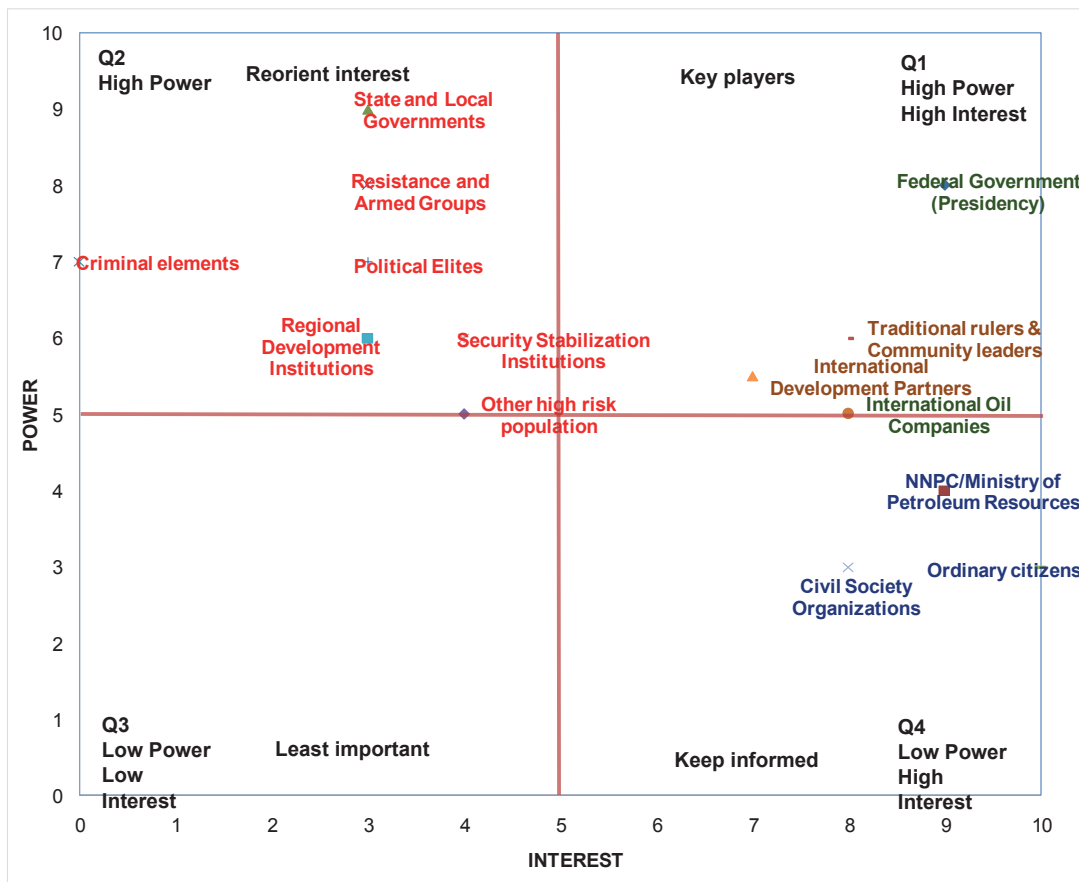


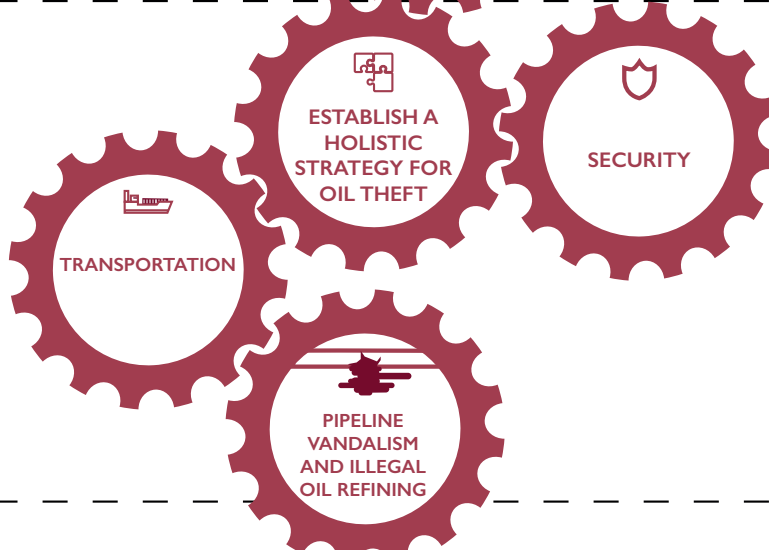
Chart 1. Stakeholder map

INTEGRAL PARTS OF SECURITY AND STABILISATION IN THE NIGER DELTA

POLICY RESPONSE ONE:
Post-Niger Delta Amnesty



POLICY RESPONSE TWO:
Oil Theft and Illegal Oil Refining



POLICY RESPONSE THREE:
Security at the Community Level





POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RESPONSE 1: Post-Niger Delta Amnesty Programme

The Amnesty Programme created the space for development and reintegration, but the process was not executed effectively and needs to be accelerated. Focus should shift to sustained assistance to high-risk population groups with emphasis on an inclusive strategy for job creation, job referrals and job placements.

This can be complemented with enterprise development and grant support. Linking training programmes to employment opportunities remains critical for successful socio-economic reintegration of the ex-militants.

1.1 Increased Focus on Vocational Training

The training programmes offered to ex-militants need to be linked to the existing or potential opportunities in the labour market.

1.1.1 Mapping of existing training institutions with analysis of capacity

1.1.2 Mapping of economic opportunities in the region and absorption capacity

1.1.3 Identification of key areas for new vocational training centres based on both needs assessment and potential e.g. a training centre for fish farming livelihoods in Bori

1.1.4 Ensure programme support is offered to a balanced ratio of participants, equally to ex-agitators and community members with support from other agencies and ministries.

1.1.5 Establish Federal-State-Private sector partnerships for linkages between vocational courses and entry into job opportunities. Strategy focused on entry-level apprenticeship schemes for participants to put skills learnt into practice while earning a small wage.

1.2 Reintegration and Job Support Centres for Ex-militants

1.2.1 Centres across the region to provide support to ex-militants enrolled in the Amnesty Programme throughout the reintegration process.

1.2.2 Staff with mediators and key influencer teams trained to facilitate disputes locally and act as advisors in communities. Ex-militants enrolled on the scheme should be first appointments.

1.2.3 Form partnerships with local employers to advertise job opportunities free of charge, and develop a scheme to give bonuses to employers when they take on ex-militants.

1.2.4 Establish State-level headquarters to coordinate local offices, and work intimately with the Amnesty Office

1.2.5 Use centres to house courses in key employability skills, such as ICT skills.



1.3 Capacity and Technical Partnerships for the Amnesty Office

1.3.1 The Presidency must lead a unified response by the Amnesty Committee, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and Ministry of the Niger Delta to provide a strategic plan that will ensure the rapid delivery of infrastructure and training necessary to support the evolving economic landscape of the Niger Delta.

1.3.2 Oil companies should support government plans to support the future economies of the Niger Delta by focusing efforts on access to fuel and electricity across the region.

1.3.3 Civil society could identify actionable strategies along key value chains to support economic diversification in the Niger Delta and demand more from the money paid by the international oil companies to NDDC and others.

1.3.4 The international community should focus efforts on generating employment opportunities as alternatives to crude oil theft.

1.3.5 Provide public services and access to private goods and services



POLICY RESPONSE 2: Oil Theft and Illegal Oil Refining

Crude oil theft and the illegal oil refining business it feeds, supports the families, small businesses and social aspirations of many Niger Delta communities. Residents in the communities described illegal oil refining as an entrepreneurial, free market response to local economic dysfunction, socioeconomic pressures and failure of government to provide basic services. As the communities' living environment worsens due to pipeline vandalism and oil spillage, incomes to fishing and farming families deteriorate as water sources are contaminated. Appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks are essential in defining the status operation in this area.

In communities, the feeling of anger and demand for attention motivates interruption of pipelines at the expense of their environment and livelihoods, with many addicted to easy money from surveillance and clean-up contracts. Others vandalise to survive in the absence of other employment choices ignoring the long-term impact to their local environment and health. The environmental impact is immense with an estimated 51,500 hectares devastated by oil spills in 2014 as a direct consequence of pipeline vandalism.

An estimated \$7-10 billion has been lost in oil revenue due to theft and vandalism⁶. So far the government has focused more on interrupting production and sales of illegal refined products (diesel and kerosene) rather than on the main game of stopping the supply of stolen crude oil. The Nigerian government should articulate a more comprehensive strategy for dismantling the trade in stolen crude oil and address the factors driving people to engage with the trade.

2.1 Establish a Holistic Strategy for Oil Theft

2.1.1 Framework that enables domestic actions on intercepting and securing transportation

2.1.2 Demonstrate leadership in addressing the international dimension of oil theft by working with international government partners on international markets, banks, and shipping companies.

2.2 Security

2.2.1 Introduce a more rigorous process of inspecting export and import cargoes at ports. Install meters on pipes and discharge tanks so that customs officers can make accurate records.

2.2.2 Implement a strategy to prosecute larger mother vessels used to tranship large amounts of stolen crude oil, and those involved in fuel subsidy fraud

2.3 Transportation

2.3.1 Increase transparency and accountability of ships legally transporting Nigerian Oil

2.3.2 Establish a certification standard for Nigerian crude oil to expose illegal cargoes leaving the country. Conduct regular spot checks on cargoes to ascertain source details are in line with production details.

2.3.3 Publish the list of lifting licenses issued and volumes lifted on a regular basis

2.3.4 Fund a monitoring response to oil theft that can monitor perpetrators in real time

⁶ The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) painted a worrisome picture of the effects of oil theft on Nigerian economy, saying the nation has lost over 136 million barrels of crude oil estimated at \$10.9 billion through pilfering and sabotage from 2009 to 2011. Chairman of the National Stakeholder Working Group (NSWG) of NEITI, Mr. Ledum Mitce, ThisDay Newspaper July 30, 2013.



2.3.5 Focus security efforts on the key choke points used for transporting illegal loads through the delta

2.3.6 Increase prosecutions for those implicated in oil theft, and continue investigations beyond those found at pipelines and on vessels to expose those orchestrating the illegal economy.

2.4 Pipeline Vandalism and Illegal Oil Refining

2.4.1 Explore success-based equity sharing relationships between communities and oil producers as an incentive to protect infrastructure.

2.4.2 Explore establishment of Community Development Foundations to receive a formalised channel of pipeline surveillance contracts, funds, and to be in charge of spending on development projects

2.4.3 Facilitate a Niger Delta energy needs assessment to evaluate what infrastructure and legal product flows would be needed to ensure a sufficient supply of legal products to the region.

2.4.4 Remove tariffs on solar lanterns to allow citizens greater access to alternative and renewable solar products to light homes and businesses in a clean, low cost and sustainable manner.

2.4.5 Support decentralized and private sector-driven off-grid pilot projects to supply flared gas for power generation in rural communities to reduce community reliance on diesel generators and kerosene stoves.



POLICY RESPONSE 3: Security at the Community Level

The government aimed to stabilise the security situation in the Niger Delta through an intensive presence of a military group – the Joint Task Force (JTF) - with personnel drawn from the various branches of the military. However, their operations became ineffective with many communities perceiving them as an occupation force especially given their violations of human rights and other abuses. Allegations of complicity in oil theft by the JTF became rife in the region.

The emphasis needs to be on reactivating the capacity of local communities to ensure effective policing of their communities. The measures include the use of a community warden system, and the adoption of traditional systems of justice adjudication using traditional organs of leadership. Drawing extensively from existing community structures for enforcing law and order at community levels strengthens the capacity for measures of local security policing.

3.1 Community Policing

3.1.1 Accelerate community arms collection initiatives to reduce profusion of arms across the region, alongside or after development interventions.

3.1.2. Mobilise local community youths for intelligence gathering regarding conflict critical hot-spots

3.1.3. Cultivate effective community-police relationship

3.1.4. Promote grass-root recruitment into the police force through local level involvement

3.2 Be Proactive Against Human Rights Abuses

3.2.1 Enforce and empower agencies and legal institutions to remove the culture of impunity in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta, and collusion from state security services involved with vandal barons and sponsors

3.2.2 Sign up to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights to ensure government, companies and communities work together in maintaining the safety and security of their operations within an operating framework that encourages respect for human rights and recognise other priorities.

Collaborating Agencies/Organisations and Funding

Federal and State Ministries and Departments:

Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs; Ministry of Power, Works and Housing; Ministry of Budget and National Planning; Ministry of Education;

National Agencies and Commissions:

Niger Delta Amnesty Programme Office, Niger Delta Development Commission.

Organised Private Sector: *Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, International Oil Companies Domestic Oil Companies, Regional Electricity Distribution Companies*

International: *International Government Support*

Domestic Third Sector: *Civil Society Organisations, Technical Colleges, Youth Groups, Traditional Leaders*

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs should coordinate the planning and implementation stages of the initiatives to ensure efforts compliment other development initiatives outlined for the region. It will have to be supported by the Presidential Amnesty Programme.