Background and problem statement

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is an epitome of contradictions. Although the area is characterized by oil deposits that have made the country one of the leading oil producing nations, it is among the poorest areas not only in Nigeria but also the world (Ikporukpo 2002). Studies on the Niger Delta have identified some interlinking factors such as political marginalization, economic strangulation and environmental degradation with conflicts and recurring restiveness (Ikporukpo, 2002; Gbadegesin, 2001; Durotoye, 2000; Osuntokun, 2000; Petters, 2000; Ibeanu, 1999; Onosode 2000; Onishi, 1999; Banigo 2005; CLO, 1996; Dan-jumbo 2006; Okoosi, 1995).

For the most part, a large majority of the people did not perceive the magnitude of their exploitation mainly due to lack of exposure to the information necessary for an objective assessment of the social, economic and environmental reality (Nwokocha 2006). Consequently, only a few elite activists, with knowledge of events in the area, challenged the people's subjugation achieving little or no success. Events indicate that the situation in the Niger Delta is such that the people's condition continues to deteriorate, leaving violence almost as the only viable option for overcoming perceived society-inflicted inadequacies (Banigo 2005). The people's agony is exacerbated by continued government neglect which has accounted for the amplification of frustration and aggression among a large majority of the poor who incidentally constitute more than three-quarters of the entire population of the area (Dan-jumbo 2006). With the realization of the delusiveness inherent in projects such as the Oil and Mineral Producing and Development Commission (OMPADEC), and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) among others, Niger Delta cities have become theatres of restiveness and insecurity that manifest in different ways with kidnapping as the most recent in literature.

This study argues that justifiable as the course of challenging injustice may be, innovations embedded in militancy, political *thuggery* and kidnapping are in themselves illegitimate and can hardly contribute to meaningful development. These would rather, in the long run, deplete the human capital of relevant communities whose members would as a result be reoriented to thrive in violence rather than intellectual progression that may draw its peoples out of poverty and powerlessness. In what follows, we examine the phases of these protests by emphasizing how the contradictions of each stage gave impetus to another.

From Environmental activism to human kidnapping: the processes

…ever since shell struck oil and drilled its first well in Ogoniland in the 60s Ogoni lands, forests, rivers, creeks and lakes have continued to be degraded and polluted from massive spills and leaks. Gas flaring has totally banished the night and acid rains have corroded buildings and metals. In many instances in Ogoniland, and other areas, Shell flares gas horizontally, directly on to the shoulders of the community, causing a rise in temperature, discomfort, dehydration and posing serious health hazards… the people now live in disease and squalor, in huts and dilapidated buildings. Many suffer from malnutrition and disease of the lungs, heart attacks, skin disease, dysentery, typhoid fever, asthma, etc. the roads are bad, and scarcely motorable… the Ogoni people have virtually nothing to show for the vast revenue Nigeria gets from the oil on their land. They lack basic amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, equipped schools, and hospitals etc. With so much wealth raked in by shell and government from Ogoniland and with increasing sufferings of the people, survival instincts and threats of annihilation evolved a vision to struggle for survival (Civil Liberties Organization 1996:xiii).

The above situation is common among communities in the Niger Delta. This catalogue of inadequacies resulted in organized critical protests initially championed by Environmental Activists that adopted non-violent means to seek justice such as rallies and petitions. This stage of the protest was characterized by the activities of a few individuals in a region where illiteracy levels are quite high. With time, the strategy, wherein legitimate mechanisms were used to seek equity, caved-in in the early 1990s as exemplified in the manifest calculated insensitivity of the government and sustained underdevelopment of the region (Banigo 2005). For instance, experience shows that the allocation of resources among component units in Nigeria runs against the principle of equity and fair play even though the authorities strive to hoodwink individuals and groups through justifications that find expression in propaganda (Dan-Jumbo 2006). As Akinyemi (2001: 9) observed:

It is an act of self-deception for anyone to argue that there is nothing wrong with the revenue allocation formula. We have had basically two systems of revenue allocation in Nigeria. The first system, which we practised during the First Republic, allowed the North to keep the proceeds from its groundnut and cotton, the West to keep the proceeds from its cocoa and East to keep the proceeds from its coal and oil palm produce. Then we changed the system so that the Federal Government got its hands on the proceeds from on-shore and off-shore crude petroleum, and yet we don't expect the minorities in the oil producing areas to perceive that this is an injustice done to them.

Understandably, people in the thematic area perceived the situation as a kind of internal colonialism and a sort of gerrymandering which has led to the formation of various groups and organizations, some of which are external to the region, whose immediate preoccupation was to enthrone justice and equity (Ikporukpo, 2000). Unfortunately in some instances, the leaders of these groups were murdered extra-judicially; the case of Ken Saro-wiwa an environmentalist and human rights activist is a classic example (Civil Liberties Organization, 1996). The implications of such barbaric acts included loss of faith in seeking redress through legitimate means and in the extreme, the reorientation of the people to design their

own pathways to freedom without necessarily assessing inherent micro and macro consequences.

Militancy was adopted in the face of the obvious failure of legitimate activism as a strategy to challenge injustice. The latter mechanism combined elements of persuasive appeal with restiveness and raw force. As such, it not only differed in approach from the former but also in the composition of actors. For instance, a large majority of Niger Delta militants were young, illiterate and unemployed people whose frustration became unbearable after an excursion to Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja in the wake of organized rallies to support the transformation of General Abacha (a maximum military dictator) from military head of state to civilian president (Tamunonengi 2008). Inevitably, these youths were confronted with the reality of Nigeria's wealth which flows from the impoverished Niger Delta communities, and the contrasting affluence of the FCT and its environs which scarcely contribute to the economy of the country (Akinola, 2008). Amaechi (2009:37) aptly captured the situation when he stated:

> When Sanni Abacha wanted to perpetuate himself in office, he hired people all over the country to sing praise songs for him in Abuja including the people of Niger Delta and when they got to Abuja they saw some things that looked like Washington DC and these people have never travelled outside this country before so they felt they were in a different world, they wanted to make sure that this was the capital of Nigeria so they asked is this Nigeria? And got confirmation that it was Nigeria… so they said if they could build this kind of beautiful place why can't they do it in the Niger Delta; they were told that arrangements were "in the pipeline". So, the people felt that the money was in the pipeline and they began breaking oil pipelines. Up till today they've been looking for those plans that the federal government has for them in the pipeline.

They immediately perceived their backwardness and strangulation. Karl Marx had argued that unless and until a class transforms from a 'class in itself' to a 'class for itself' exhibiting revolutionary tendencies is difficult to achieve (Ritzer 2008, Haralambos and Holborn 2004). Indeed, a large majority of peoples of the Niger Delta were embedded in false consciousness and hardly perceived the enormity of the underdevelopment of the area. That journey to the capital city and the consequent reorientation of a host of youth in the area not only altered their hitherto docile approach to seeking redress but also gave impetus to the institutionalization of violence which the Nigerian state has not been able to fully grapple with. Ikporukpo (2002:30) chronologically highlighted some activities of militants in the Niger Delta as follows:

> Blockades of oil production activities, some of which are violent, became particularly prominent in the 1990s…in 1994 and 1995, the occurrence was less than 100 annually. This increased to 150 in 1997 and as many as 325 in 1998; although there was a decline thereafter. Some of these were peaceful invasions while others involved the use of firearms. For instance,

of the 176 incidents in 2000, 18 percent involved the use of firearms. Youths from virtually all parts of the oil-producing areas, have been involved in such incidents which affect not only SPDC, which is the largest company, but also all others.

This paper argues quite forcefully that militancy in the region was (and still is) characterized by the desire to sabotage Nigeria's economy and by extension its development. The actions of militants led to multifaceted effects that impacted negatively on the operations of oil companies (including Shell, Chevron, Mobil etc), the host communities and other groups in the area. What is remarkable about this stage is the selflessness exhibited by these militants in the course of their actions, to the extent that accepting pecuniary gratification was/is perceived not only as a distortion of the goal of sabotaging the system but also an anathema that must be resisted (Peterside 2009). In the long run though, these militants got closer to extreme poverty and were eventually engaged in other ignoble activities such as political *thuggery*. It has been noted that part of the reason why militancy caved-in, in the wake of the 2007 general elections was the engagement of these militants as political thugs (Tamunonengi 2008).

Unlike activists and militants, political thugs did not have a well organized structure whereby some form of hierarchy and leadership existed. It was a loose activity that emphasized individualism and secrecy. For the most part, the activities of these thugs ran contrary to the collective goal of the region and in fact amounted to a dislocation of the essence of the movement. The contradiction of this stage of the transition is mainly in its characteristic internal disaffection wherein thugs from the Niger Delta were hired to act against individuals and groups from the same region (Tamunonengi, 2008). It became the case of enemies from within. Eventually, the motivation for the struggle against injustice was almost completely extinguished as a result of the competing goals of selflessness and greed. It needs to be pointed out that the activities of these thugs were largely periodic with the perpetrators receiving compelling rewards from their sponsors.

Having been exposed to mega-money in earlier periods, these thugs became unstoppable even after elections. So disoriented, the quest for money became a constant concern which led to change in tactic among hitherto political thugs who could no longer wait for another four years until the next elections to perpetrate their heinous activities (Peterside 2009). Consequently, the metamorphosis of these individuals and groups into kidnappers was swift. Initially perceived as a re-emergence of militancy, given that those kidnapped were mainly expatriate oil workers, it later became evident that their client-base (scope of victimization) was limitless. As such anybody, irrespective of age, sex, religion or

ethnicity could be abducted insofar as the kidnappers were convinced that a "reasonable ransom" could be paid by the families and/or friends of their victim (Tamunonengi, 2008; peterside 2009). Thus, Niger Delta cities became enclaves of insecurity characterized by anomie and normlessness.

Events during the period showed that both government and religion lost their power of control. For instance, Port Harcourt was under siege for more than five months, between June and October 2007, as a result of the activities of militants and kidnappers. Initially, it was difficult to ascertain whether the seemingly re-emergent militant groups were genuinely committed to the cause of the Niger Delta. With time the change in status from militancy to kidnapping became increasingly clear. The antithesis of the events of that period was in the exposure of all and sundry to the risk of death as the *anything goes* approach was employed in attaining the goal of kidnapping. Disappointingly, the Rivers State government exhibited an incontrovertible incapacity at quelling the insurgence. Although the city of Port Harcourt, which is a microcosm of Niger Delta cities, was brought under control by the Joint Task Force (JTF) constituted by the Federal government, these locations remained cities of insecurity for individuals and groups.

Interestingly, kidnapping has become almost a national issue with its occurrence reported in virtually all states in the southern part of the country. It has been argued that even when such an act takes place outside the thematic region, the perpetrators have links with the Niger Delta area (Tamunonengi, 2008). Needless to say, such activity is unconnected with protesting the, now generally acknowledged, injustice on the people of the Niger Delta but purely on individualistic grounds. As such, the spectre of neglect haunting the region rages on.

Demographic implications of insecurity and transition in the Niger Delta

The DTT has been modified and adapted in examining the Niger Delta situation. Conventional transition theory focuses on the fertility-mortality interaction as it impacts population dynamics of society at different epochs of development (Jhingan, Bhatt & Desai 2006). The theory in characterising the pre-modern era identified high fertility and mortality as its uniqueness arising mainly due to lack of awareness, rudimentary technology and traditional conservatism. The beginning of modernisation saw developmental improvements in communication, medicine, agriculture and machinery that led to significant reduction in mortality rate while fertility remained high, again due to the people's faithfulness to pronatalism. The third among the trinity of these evolutionary stages, the modern era,

characterised by low fertility and mortality resulted from awareness, adoption of family planning methods, high technology and particularly in medicine, massive involvement in paid jobs in the formal sector among others accounted for decrease in population.

Although severely criticised for de-emphasising migration and for being less relevant in explaining population change in the 21st century Africa, DTT serves as the threshold upon which some other perspectives thrived (Newman & Matzke 1984; Kammeyer & Ginn 1986). For instance, assuming that the theory places Nigeria at the second stage of the transition, it could generate the impetus for a deeper inquiry that may eventually throw-up other perspectives in understanding of the basis for such placement. To be sure, Caldwell's theory of Intergenerational Wealth Flows which, in this case, explains African high fertility on the basis of parents' calculated benefits from a large family size and the corresponding upward wealth flows (Caldwell 2005) finds expression when juxtaposed against DTT's first and second stages in particular as they relate to high fertility.

The theory of Wealth Flows is particularly relevant to the second stage of the transition which also talks about mortality. Studies have consistently shown that maternal mortality is high in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa at large (Nwokocha 2007; Isiugo-Abanihe & Nwokocha 2008). Some of these deaths relate to short interval birth spacing, poverty and lack of access to maternal health facilities among others (Nwokocha 2006). Table 1 shows stages of demographic transition in the Niger Delta following innovation and rebellion against perceived marginalisation.

Table 1: showing transition of the Niger Delta & projections for post-restive era

Stage	Description	Fertility	Mortality	In-migration	out-migration
1st	Prior to innovation/rebellion	high	low	high	low
2nd	Class consciousness/beginning of innovation/rebellion	low	high	low	high
3rd	Post-restive Niger Delta	high	low	high	low

Source: Nwokocha 2010

Table 1 shows stages of Demographic transition in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. It is an improvement on the conventional DTT which ignored the migration aspect of population dynamics in explaining change in society. The Table enables us examine the population implications of the Niger Delta situation from issues related to three broad variables: fertility, mortality and migration. Prior to innovation and rebellion, fertility and in-migration to the region were high, while mortality and out-migration remained relatively low; residents of the

communities hardly relocated to other areas. As the Niger Delta transited to uncertainty, rebellious insecurity and ungovernable state there was a corresponding reverse in the people's demography. Figure 1, is a diagrammatic representation of the demographic transition in the Niger Delta including migration.
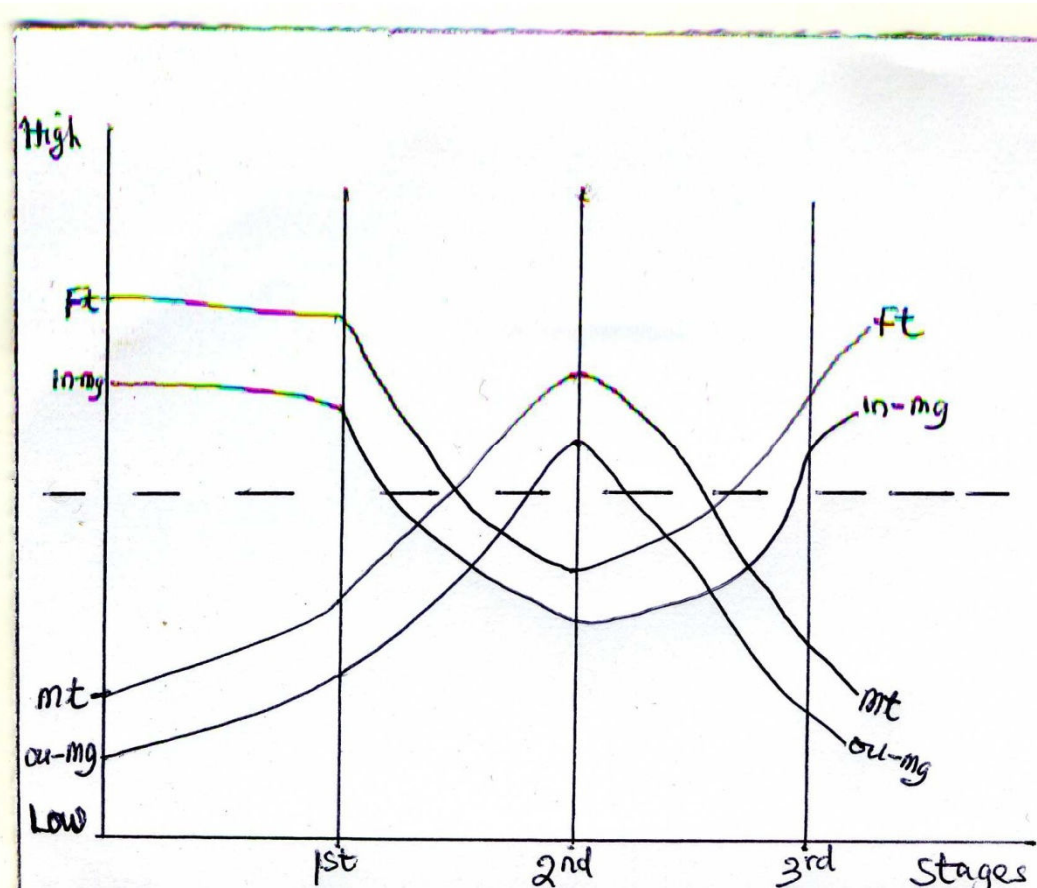

Figure 1: Graph showing Demographic Transition in Niger Delta

At the macro-variable level, insecurity has implications for fertility, mortality and migration. In the Niger Delta for instance, the high incidence of militancy, thuggery and kidnapping and the attendant insecurity could have discourage both endogamous and exogamous marriages. In the latter sense, people from other cultures would likely perceive the norms and values of the Niger Delta as those that thrive in restiveness, anxiety and insecurity which individuals from the area are likely to exhibit within marriage. Although such a perception may be erroneous and misleading, it may impinge on marital status among the peoples and a prolonged age at marriage in relevant communities. Delay in reproductive behaviour is usually associated with late marriage which in turn affects the occurrence of pregnancy.

Research shows that the risk of pregnancy is higher at extreme ages. For instance, Arkutu (1995) had specifically noted that adolescents under 17 years and women who are

older (aged over 35 and particularly over 40) are more likely to have complications during pregnancy. Beyond the fact that it is biologically challenging for older women to undergo pregnancy, some get involved in repeated child-bearing at very short intervals to make up for perceived lost time. The cumulative effects of the above scenario are a reverse-transition from high to lowering fertility and a high maternal mortality rate. Nwokocha (2006) and Arkutu (1995) have observed that maternal mortality results mainly from attempts to bear children under life-threatening circumstances including those related to short-birth spacing.

Apart from high maternal mortality, the region is experiencing other forms of death resulting from restiveness, frustration and aggression due to the high rate of unemployment, poverty, diseases related to pollution and environmental degradation (CLO, 1996). In terms of migration, recent events in the Niger Delta reveal that insecurity and uncertainty are pushing people of all ages away from the area; its economic capacity represented by oil wealth, which was hitherto a sufficient pull factor, has lost its power of attraction for most individuals and groups. Amaechi (2009:37) described the implications of lawlessness and insecurity thus:

> If you live in an environment where laws are not implemented, which means that anybody can just wake up and start killing people and nothing will happen. The result will be that most of the people who live in that society will leave that environment. With the security situation at the time, people began to relocate from Rivers State in groups to Lagos and Abuja. And our economy which is the oil economy began to transfer to Lagos.

This paper argues that the risk of death occasioned by militancy and kidnapping outweighs, by far, the quest for employment among prospective employees. Out-migration is rather more prevalent in these cities that hitherto were in-migrants' dreamlands. Events indicate that the summary of demographic transition in the Niger Delta is such that the main elements of population change are currently in reverse order compared with their direction before the proliferation of militancy, kidnapping and general insecurity. The region has become a theatre of woes and threnody, making refugees and displaced persons out of some of its former residents in other lands. The consequences of spontaneous migration in a non-regulatory system such as Nigeria has already been highlighted, by Nwokocha (2007), to include dislocating the political economy of receiving communities and families, infrastructural decay, housing challenges, maladjustment and de-population/loss of manpower for the origin location.

Framework for explaining the Niger Delta situation

Three theoretical perspectives are adopted in explaining the restive situation, and its allied effects, in the Niger Delta – Conflict Theory, Ethno-methodology and Demographic Transition Theory (DTT). The conflict theory views activism, militancy, thuggery and kidnapping as products of audacious capitalism and overt selfishness that manifest in subjugation and alienation at both micro-individual and macro-society levels leading to surplus value for governments and agencies, including oil companies such as Shell, Chevron, and Mobil on one hand and poverty and powerlessness among individuals and communities of the Niger Delta on the other. As studies (Ikporukpo, 2002; Gbadegesin, 2001; Durotoye, 2000; Osuntokun, 2000; Petters, 2000) have demonstrated, the economic strangulation of the people of the area occasioned by environmental degradation and depletion explains the rediscovery and renewed consciousness away from being a 'class in-itself' to a 'class for it-self'. Haralambos and Holborn (2004:948) have noted:

> …a class only becomes a 'class for itself' when its members are fully conscious of the true nature of their situation; when they are fully aware of their common interests and common enemy; when they realize that only by concerted action can they overthrow their oppressors; and when they unite and take positive, practical steps to do so. When a class becomes a class for itself, the contradiction between the consciousness of its members and the reality of their situation is ended.

This, often, sudden realization of the true nature of a negative situation, precipitates dialectical relationships which characterize a struggle of opposites, a conflict of contradictions (Ritzer 2008). In Marx's view, conflict, which presupposes tension between incompatible forces, provides the source of change which is realizable through unity of purpose. The intensity of such incompatibility could reach a point where the forces collide as is the case of the Niger Delta. In the preceding context, awareness of seeming exploitation and the formation of class for itself progressed from liberal activism to radical Protestantism. Consequently, as one restive era, beginning with the abandonment of legitimate means of protest, withered away a succeeding restive-regime created a new set of forces quite different from the preceding ones.

This has been demonstrated in the evolution of restiveness in the region progressing from activism, militancy, political thuggery to kidnapping. In the Niger Delta, obscurity rather than the obliteration of the features of preceding regimes was recorded mainly because some characteristics of a waning protest-regime were present in the incoming, and even in some instances intertwine with them. In the latter sense, the dialectics and contradictions are not absolute. Adoption of some of these anti-normative mechanisms of addressing perceived structural and institutional inequity and marginalization is similar to R.K. Merton's Theory of

Anomie which locates the ability of individuals to adapt to socially structured strain within five behaviour domains (Opara 1998). Clearly, two of these adaptation approaches, innovation and rebellion, explain attitudes and behaviour of relevant individuals and groups in the region. In this case, both pathways in seeking reformation of the social structure incidentally challenge it and its norms thereby introducing a new kind of social order.

Ethnomethodology was adopted to complement the conflict perspective. It could be argued that restiveness and disorder in the Niger Delta are products of ethnomethodology, equated with common sense strategy, wherein actors perceive their actions as central to overcoming real or imagined threats. Like the conflict approach, the latter perspective deals with the perception of individuals in a given context and their ability to act as agents of change born out of a conviction on the desirability of an action or a catalogue of actions necessary to catalyze change of the status quo.

The perspective in explaining restiveness in the Niger Delta supposes that individual actors and groups are rational in seeking to maximize benefits while, at the same time, minimizing cost; a kind of Change Belief Model (CBM) that weighs the implications of intended actions and the processes of these actions. As such, involvement of people of the area in activism, militancy, thuggery and kidnapping is explained within the context of a common-sense strategy, aimed at overcoming powerlessness, irrespective of whether these perpetrators prioritize the collective aspirations of the people as the last two activities (thuggery and kidnapping) suggest. This study argues quite strongly that inasmuch as individuals are free to adapt to or reconstruct a particular negative situation in the quest to improve their lives, such adaptation or reconstruction should emphasize societal norms and values. Our view is that involvement in political thuggery and kidnapping contradicts the principles of ethnomethodology and, in turn, undermines the development of the Niger Delta region.

Intervention strategies: can the code be broken?

Answering the above question is particularly necessary but peculiarly difficult considering that, to date, all the programmes introduced by the state to address the Niger Delta question have failed to solve the problems; some have even worsened the people's conditions. Part of the reason for such failures is that the interventions were neither people oriented nor context-specific. They were at best embedded in intuition and unguided conjecture primarily situated to favour political loyalists or other individuals and groups (Tamunonengi, 2008). For as we note, the goal of intervention programmes was dislocated

from the outset as an adequate and insightful needs assessment of the situation was usually not undertaken prior to project development and implementation.

For the purposes of policy, such assessment should not conceive the Niger Delta as a comity of people whose desires and aspirations could be lumped into an indivisible whole. We note here that in the governance of Nigeria, states in the area were clustered into a unit for administrative convenience. In reality, the region comprises different peoples and cultures with varying beliefs, traditions, aspirations and challenges. As such effective needs assessments must constitute in contextualising the specificities communities and groups in the region.

Consistent failure among different agencies created to address the Niger Delta challenge explains the people's scepticism about the relevance of subsequent programmes even from inception. For instance, the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was set up in the 1960s, while the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Committee (OMPADEC) was created in 1989 when it became clear that the characteristic poverty of the area had not been improved by the earlier commissions (Banigo, 2005). This paper argues that the latter agency did not succeed, either, given that the area's human, socio-economic and infrastructural underdevelopment continued to deepen. The worsening situation gave impetus to further activism and militancy which played out in protests, rallies, continuous restiveness and community agitations. As with other commissions before it, OMPADEC dwindled into insignificance until its eventual predictable demise.

The creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, which followed the same old pattern of haphazardness, has not shown any capacity at breaking the jinx of retrogression in the region. Consequently, scepticism, distrust and restiveness are still part of the Niger Delta dilemma for which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was constituted. It is noted here that the latter commission appears to be a genuine preliminary step at addressing the issues, as aggrieved persons and groups had the opportunity of stating their grievances. The quest to find a lasting solution to the problems of the region led to the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry, by the Federal Government of Nigeria in October 2008. It is pertinent to ask at this point whether that ministry is all that is needed to ensure lasting peace and equity in the region.

While this paper subscribes to the inherent necessity of such a ministry whose functions and responsibilities are meant to be entirely spatially specific to the region, it argues that its success will depend largely on how far it is able to take into account the micro-level idiosyncrasies of ethnic groups and communities in the Niger Delta. The point of

incursion and strategy for disentangling the dilemma should be at increasing the confidence levels of the people of the area by adopting the participatory approach wherein they really become part of the entire re-situation process from the very beginning. In this way, the actual needs of the people, at each point in time, can be ascertained and sufficiently addressed.

This paper considers the amnesty extended to militants in the area as one of the necessary steps towards resolving the protracted restiveness in the area. It is important to also state that beyond amnesty, the core issues of underdevelopment, notably mass poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and lack of basic amenities, should be directly addressed to forestall a reoccurrence of militancy and its concomitant variants. With sustained peace in the region occasioned by a positive transformation, the code of restiveness, insecurity and unpredictability would be broken, to the extent that sustainable peace and development could be achieved with minimal efforts since resources are already in abundance.

Conclusion

This paper has shown clearly that the Niger Delta region is the epitome of avoidable contradictions and dangerous demographic transition. With its abundant natural resources and particularly its oil deposits, which have made Nigeria the sixth largest producer of oil in the world, the area and its people are still embedded in pervasive and extreme poverty. The people's frustration kept increasing as the dividends of governance continue to elude them even when it is evident that some other communities outside the region are making appreciable developmental strides mainly from the resources accruing from the Niger Delta. Perceived government insensitivity and neglect gave impetus to individuals and groups to device illegitimate mechanisms in showcasing their grievances occasioned by marginalization in the midst of plenty. The people's agony was exacerbated by periodic formation of widely perceived deceptive agencies whose modus operandi was, *ab initio,* enmeshed in haphazardness that further amplified inequity among these communities relative to most others.

Initially designed as palliative measures against revolutionary tendencies of the people, these agencies and their inherent delusiveness, instead, triggered-off contradictions that made their failure, soon after they were established, inevitable. Consequently, restiveness became a part of the people's existence. Such negative reorientation explains the dilemma and uncertainty inherent in the region and the evolution of illegitimacies such as militancy, political *thuggery* and kidnapping as part of survival mechanisms. However, the contradiction

of these nouveau strategies lies in the fact that they constitute in themselves antithesis to the survival of the region at individual and macro levels.

We conclude that the country is, perhaps, on the verge of finding a lasting solution to the Niger Delta problem through the introduction of a ministry whose sole responsibility is to address the concerns of the region. However, it needs to be stated that the benefits of the Niger Delta ministry will only be realizable in an atmosphere of sincerity among stakeholders who must be genuinely committed to bringing about the desired change. The amnesty granted to Niger Delta militants is essential for achieving peace in the region; an atmosphere necessary to guarantee meaningful planning and implementation of development projects. It is hoped that this gesture by the government will ultimately translate into a kind of W.W. Rostow's precondition for takeoff that will ultimately impinge positively on the peoples and communities of the Niger Delta. This would eventually reverse the demographic profile of the area which has for some time been characterized by high rates of morbidity, mortality, and out-migration.

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