

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP IN POST-CONFLICT NIGER DELTA OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Using strategic partnership framework, the purpose of this paper is to explore how to build sustainable future in post-conflict Niger delta of Nigeria given previous attempts by past administrations that failed to bring lasting peace and sustainability in the region. Partnership working amongst governments, businesses and voluntary groups or civil society premised on sharing the burdens of governance for sustainability as well as to defuse conflict or oil complex is the approach taken in the paper. Despite extant scholarship on the Niger delta, none has used the framework of partnership to articulate sustainable future in the amnesty era, which is gradually slipping into a fresh wave of conflict in the wake of distrust by stakeholders. As shall be argued there is a positive correlation between strategic partnership and sustainable future in the region. Thus, in transcending the drawn-out conflict in the Niger delta, strategic partnership is required particularly since stakeholder engagement is necessary for credibility and trust in the structure of the post-conflict peace initiative (Amnesty Deal). This approach will engender trust, credibility and legitimacy as key stakeholders in the region will be involved via partnership working.

Keywords: Amnesty deal, Partnership, Sustainable Future, Post-conflict Niger delta; Oil Complex.

1. INTRODUCTION: The Niger Delta, Partnership and Oil Complex

The Niger delta encompasses the oil producing states of Nigeria. The Niger delta is a social space at two extremes. It embodies both huge economic potential and unpleasant betrayal of its people and environment by the Nigerian political operators. Essentially, what has given rise to this landscape is the discovery of oil in Nembe Oloibiri in 1956 (present Bayelsa State), as well as the quest for distribution of immense wealth from oil, which has thrown the nation into deepening paradox. This paradox finds expression in oil-induced violence, inept political leadership and environmental dissonance (LaMonica, 2011; Kew and Phillips, 2007; Ibaba, 2012; Nwagbara, 2010).

In this direction, in his *Crude World: The Violent Twilight of Oil*, Peter Maass captured poignantly the Niger delta's sorry state:

Communities in the Niger delta, where most of Nigeria's oil was found, received little more than token payments after significant extraction got under way in the 1960's, and this accelerated a process of national breakdown. Foreign companies fed the conflict by providing funds to both sides: the military was paid to protect wells; the militias were paid not to attack them. The combatants were incentivised for combat. I visited Nigeria to learn how oil had turned a once healthy country, and the people who lived there, into a specimen of rot (2008, pp.53-4).

The Niger delta region, known as the goose that lays the golden eggs, the black gold, is made of nine states. They are as thus: Abia, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo State. With over \$50 billion yearly in oil proceeds at more than 2.4 million barrels per day, "the jewel in the Gulf of the Guinea crown" (Watts, 2008, p. 34) is entangled in poverty, conflict, stakeholder agitation and a plethora of issues that characterise oil complex nations (Watts, 2008; Agbiboa, 2012).

The phenomenon of oil complex deals with the reshaping of the political economy of the world with regard to developing countries given global demand of oil and gas; it is about the dynamics of oil-states with reference to the relations between oil, politics and modus operandi of governance. In this regard, oil complex is about the arrangement of social, political and economic forces that fashion the political economy of petro-states. Apart from Dutch disease that oil complex makes possible, it also engenders in developing countries, the need for partnership to rise above socio-economic and ecological dilemma as well as unsustainable practice as the state retreats (Ite, 2004; Maass, 2008). Accordingly,

[I]t is becoming clear that partnership has been touted as a more efficient way for business to contribute to sustainable development. This stems from the argument that conventional ways of ameliorating the negative impacts and implementing social investment programmes (e.g. through company foundations) have been bogged down by an emphasis on the quantity, not quality of such programmes (Ite, 2007, p. 217).

Thus, for about two decades, there has been an upsurge in partnership working as well as renewed call for collaboration across groups for better delivery of services, policies and initiatives.

2. DEFINING PARTNERSHIP

According to Teisman & Klijin (2000, p. 85-6), partnership is "joint decision making and production". In their book, *Working across Boundaries: Collaboration in Public Service* (2002), Sullivan & Skelcher stated that "partners share responsibility for assessing the need for action, determining the type of action to be taken and agreeing the means of implementation". Accordingly, partnership entails a long-

term commitment and reflects a condition of mutual dependency ... Partnership is a set of normative rules determining what behaviour is permissible and what constitutes a violation of trust. The rules are designed to facilitate exchange in a situation otherwise open to exploitation (Lorenz, 1991, p. 189-90).

To this end, partnership involves three or more organisations (entities) representing the public, private and voluntary groups or sectors that act together in a well-defined way through contributing their various resources to increase value, common objectives and vision.

Theoretical Framework – Towards a Theory of Strategic Partnership

In governance, leadership and service delivery, we have seen lately the word partnership, taking centre stage in the economic, political, social and public policy spheres (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Idemudia, 2007, 2009). For example, in Nigeria, there are partnerships around corporate social responsibility, community capacity building, environmental activism and consolidating peace in post-conflict Niger delta, among others. The Niger delta has for upwards of five decades witnessed prolonged conflict and stakeholder agitation. The region has gone through different twists of leadership crisis and marginalisation of stakeholders, as well as highly centralised political governance in which the federal government has exercised arbitrary powers in all sectors thereby excluding other stakeholders from making contribution to governance structure in the region (Ojajoroto, 20008; Nwagbara, 2010; Obi, 2010; LaMonica, 2011; Agbibia, 2012). In order to rise above this landscape, this paper suggests partnership as a vehicle to achieve this. It is within these parameters that we articulate reasons for partnership:

- The concept of enabling state proceeds largely from other power players; so, other sectors should be involved in decision-making as well as delivery of services in order to pursue collective goals.
- The realisation that issues concerning groups and communities particularly the marginalised people of the Niger Delta region require integrated, composite approach
- The realisation that people directly concerned should be part of framing policies and strategies to deal with problems in the Niger delta area – without which, issues addressed will be rather cosmetic
- The concept of pooling expertise and resources for effective, innovative intervention
- The need to avoid duplication of services – by streamlining, as well as co-coordinating approaches

- The idea that governmental institutions have over-reached themselves and are struggling with unilateral service delivery.

To this end, partnership is conceived to be a solution to the above highlighted issues around inter-sectorial engagement. This will among other things, reduce overloading government and other institutions (Richard & Jervis, 1997).

The central claim of this paper is: partnership is a facilitator of synergy derived from combining competences and skills necessary for dealing with intractable issues in the Niger delta. Also, through partnership, relational rents are created via relation-specific assets, complementary resource endowments and knowledge-sharing exercises for effective governance and ultimately sustainable future.

This study is based on partnership as a precondition for transcending burdens of governance, as well as a framework to galvanise needed energy for sustainable futures. Therefore, a tri-sector partnership amongst business, government and civil society represents a better strategy for enhancing good governance and sustainability in the Niger delta (Ite, 2007).

For government, individuals or civil society and businesses, partnership can be a policy strategy that synergises efforts geared towards societal change and development. To this end, we unfold strategic partnership (SP) as our conceptual framework for better engagement amongst stakeholders and for community capacity building and development.

In confronting reputation problems that MNCs experience and to avoid seeing social investing as a mere philanthropic venture, strategic partnership, builds trust amongst stakeholders as diverse competences and opinions are sought in this regard (Waddell, 1997). To this end, strategic partnership is informed by a desire to evolve and promote multilateral institutions that will synergise efforts towards developing communities and to reduce business-community wrangling (Ashman, 2001).

Strategic partnership or business-community partnership is oftentimes enmeshed in competing definitions (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Lee, 20011, p. 30).

This type of partnership is related to “social alliance” (Berger et al, 2004), “business-community partnership” (Lee, 2011), “social partnership” (Waddock, 1991), “strategic alliances” (Idemudia, 2009, p. 96; Ashman, 2001), and “sustainable development partnership” (Murphy & Bendell, 1999).

The concept of strategic partnership is predicated upon developing joint ventures that can successfully produce more results in terms of service delivery, as well as bring social change by collaborating with

other stakeholders. Through this interactive network of actors, synergy is generated via complementary skills, competencies and power for community development (Orsato, 2009, p. 84). Also, synergy, which partnership brings via joint efforts by partners is aimed at bringing to fruition mutually agreed changes in a given social or community setting. The sense of community articulated here revolves around three dominant features of community – being defined in terms of geography, interest or identity.

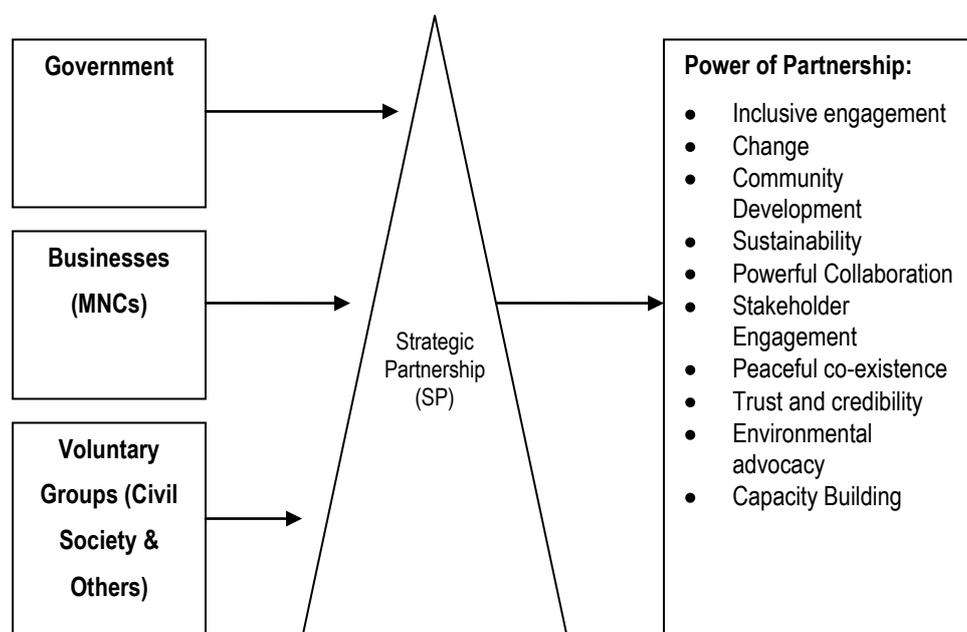
In the Niger delta region of Nigeria, where issues of sustainability, community development and stakeholder agitation plague the region, strategic partnership will help facilitate debates and issues necessary in rethinking sustainable futures particularly in the post-conflict era (amnesty deal period), when it is imperative to rise above the odds that precipitated the amnesty deal, which was brokered by the late President, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua in 2009.

Given the incidents that have taken places since the amnesty deal (peace initiative) was brokered, there is growing debate that the government is not living up to its billing in bringing the promises of the amnesty deal (peace initiative) to fruition. Similar criticism has been levelled against the MNCs by the communities as well as other stakeholders – the media, civil society and others.

Thus, in confronting this poor landscape, strategic partnership (SP) is ideal because it will help foster trust, synergy and transparency that are cardinal for lasting peace and sustainability.

In corroborating this, Eweje (2007) stated that strategic partnerships are thought to differ from past forms of relationships between the sectors in very important ways. They are neither philanthropic relationships in which businesses simply donate funds to CSOs, nor adversarial relationships based on CSO protest ... strategic partnerships are 'win-win' relationships based on mutual gain to the partners in areas of their strategic interests (p. 20).

Figure 1 graphically illustrates SP. In the Niger delta, partnerships have been formed amongst the MNCs, government and civil society to bring sustainable future in the region. Some of these partnerships include the following: SPDC/NDDC strategic alliance in Bayelsa and Rivers State, Ibom Rice Project in Akwa Ibom State, EPNL/Rivers State Government Partnership in Rivers State, Eastern Obolo Community Development Foundation in Akwa Ibom State, Akassa Project in Bayelsa State and Ogbia-Nember Road in Bayelsa State. Apart from filling the void when government or MNCs fail to address CSR issues or related phenomena, these partnerships help communities to “access funds and technical resources” (Lee, 2001, p. 31) for community development.



Source - The Authors, Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Future

In figure 1 (Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Future) above, there is triangulation of three networks of partners, which is, the government, businesses and voluntary groups (civil society). The coming together of these sectors for mutual interest and to effect change is the hallmark of partnership. To this end, in the process of partnering, synergy is created, which results in better engagement, powerful coalition, CCB and social transformation.

Given recent pressures on government, as well as issues of reputation management and maximising ROI, organisations engage in partnerships in order to widen their business opportunities, and to leverage on competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). It is in this framing that partnering is essential in the way the public as well as other stakeholders in the Niger delta region perceive institutions. Organisations that help bring development and sustainable environmental initiatives are lauded by communities. This goes a long way to strengthen corporate-community relation, as well as deflect stakeholder criticism (Idemudia, 2009). Partnership is an important strategic mechanism that organisations and sectors need when social and environmental issues pose a threat to community wellbeing. It is also a veritable strategy to drive sustainability. Thus, knowing the current scenario and the nature of problems that confront us as a community of nations and peoples, we are now more than ever, bound together by a common destiny that requires a synergistic approach linking the international to regional and regional and local implementation platforms. These can be achieved through different ways including (and not limited to) campaigning networks, communities of practice, knowledge

networks, public- private partnerships, multi-stakeholder partnership and strategic alliance (Sanusi & Khelghat-Doost, 2008, p. 488).

Motivation for Partnership: The Power of Partnership for Sustainable Future

In recent time, Our Common Future (1987), which is also known as the Brundtland Report, prepared by World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), set the tone for sustainability. However, John Elkington's sustainability paradigm brought to the fore the urgency of sustainability particularly in managing community relations regarding social and environmental factors. This same point is echoed in Vice President Al Gore's award-winning work, An Inconvenient Truth (2006), which was presaged by Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962). Within this framing, the issue of sustainability is based on what has been described as the three P's – people, place and planet or the three E's – economy, environment and equity. In John Elkington's (1987) triple bottom line (3BL or TBL) model, the "three pillars" issue are vital in dealing with social auditing for sustainable business. Broadly, sustainability means a business culture in which business (CSR) issues are carried out in a way that supports long-term viability. This entails a firm's commitment to improve societal wellbeing and environmental condition through discretionary corporate/business practices that take from corporations' resources to positively impact society (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010; Amaeshi et al, 2006). The rationale for sustainability rests on three-fold factors: the economic, environmental and social as stated by John Elkington in his important work, Cannibals with Fork: The Triple Bottom Line of the 21st Century (1997).

Following from the above, there is a new form of consciousness within groups, communities and governments to collaborate for societal renewal and development, as well as to actualise CSR initiatives in the age characterised as "false dawn" (Gray, 1998) in achieving sustainability. Partnership can bring a lot of opportunities and strength for a community as it synergises efforts in dealing with pressing social, environmental and developmental needs (Googins & Rochin, 2000). Thus, diverse imperatives to partner are matched by issues at hand. These partnerships include policy networks, public-private initiatives, principal-agent partnerships, social networks, strategic alliances, voluntary sector compacts and joint ventures, among others (Osborne, 2000; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). The motivation and rationale for partnership are articulated below.

Business-Community Relations

Business-community relationships involve private business organisations and non-profit community organisations that are formed essentially to address common social issues. Thus, partnership brings together businesses and communities into good relationship as scepticism becomes less. This is

because stakeholders being part of decision-making as well as getting involved through partnership consider themselves as part of the process of value delivery (Freeman, 1984). This helps to build business-community relations, a platform for advancing a company's CSR initiatives for sustainable practice. To this end, in her article "Business-community Partnership: Understanding the Nature of Partnership", published in Corporate Governance, Louise Lee argued that business-community partnerships are promoted in the belief that co-operative relationships provide the potential to achieve significant social benefits through joint venture in addition to tackling pressing community issues (2008, p. 29).

Innovation

According to Drucker (1986), innovation deals with creative destruction, which inheres in realigning the old to fit into present realities. This is a strategic tool for change. Partnership is a way of achieving innovation as different sectors collaborate to find new set of skills and capabilities that can help drive change or synergy capable of transcending stakeholder gridlock. Thus, "corporations, NGOs, citizen groups and residents are partnering innovatively to address local and global issues" (Motlock, Pacheco & Vann, 2007, p. 185). This is in consonance with Taatila, Suomala & Keskinen's argument here:

We live today in a so-called network society, in which organisational knowledge, individual creativity and capacity to learn are pushing aside labour and capital as the source of values. The combination of knowledge and creativity in a favourable environment may lead innovation, the creation of which is playing an ever more central role in business or organisations and national economies (2006, p. 312).

Community Development and Empowerment

Partnership enhances Community development as well as empowers community members as they are given voice through collaboration. Thus, community organisations perceive partnership as a significant institutional action mechanism. This is because community groups and organisations need wide support and incentive to influence social change, increase political participation, influence business leaders and be empowered (Teegan & Doh, 2003). The issue of empowerment denotes giving voice to communities in the Niger delta, which have been in the shadow of oil exploration (Nwagbara, 2010; Amaeshi et al, 2006). The role of partnership in this instance is about empowering the deltans politically as partnership galvanises political muscle that can influence the political or leadership process. This will better the lots of the communities in the delta, which has witnessed marginalisation, socio-economic woes and environmental devastation as a result of weak stakeholder engagement and oil exploration.

Value Creation

Strategic partnership is a hotbed of value creation as it is an opportunity for sectors to brew strategic plans to drive change and better results. This process is analogous to wealth creation. Value creation is one of the ways organisations can create wealth (Porter, 1985; Amit & Zott, 2001; Hansen & Birkinshaw, 2007) by doing the unusual: the unusual deals with tapping into the energies of the external through collaboration. The concept was popularised by the Harvard management professor, Michael Porter in his important book, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (1985). Porter outlines five steps to create wealth, which organisations could take advantage of. The multinationals as well as other sectors in the Niger delta can leverage on their resources by creating wealth (value) via this means.

Creativity and Green Knowledge Management

In her article, "How to Kill Creativity" (1998) published in *Harvard Business Review*, Teresa Amabile argues that creativity is value created via new ideas; this means that creativity deals essentially with creating fresh ideas that if well appropriated could lead to innovation (Reid & Oliver, 2009, p. 2). This strategy has business value as some organisations become ahead of others in the marketplace. When different sectors collaborate, thereby creating new ideas that come with such synergy, new knowledge for competitive advantage is created. So, partnership brings knowledge sharing, which resonates with green management (Cheng, Yeh & Tu, 2008, p. 284). This is important for business success in the era of "environmental information" (Polonsky, Garma & Grau, 2011, p. 587) for managing CSR issues and community development. To this end, green management enables companies to change roles to reap the first-mover advantages in the market. Adopting green management can not only force companies to develop green products or processes which can create high entry barrier but also helps them get support from external institutions and stakeholders which can obtain more legitimacy ... (Chang & Chen, 2012, p. 77).

Social Capital, Synergy and Sense of Belonging

Partnership creates sense of belonging as diverse collaborators get involved knowing that their views are being considered. This helps to build cohesion and social capital that is critical for sustainability. Thus, "pervasive disconnect" (Quinn, 1995) and resulting local, institutional and global breakdown are feeding the need to partner. While partnership is needed in established markets, it is even more crucial in post-conflict Niger delta, where erosion of trust resulting from decades of relationship breakdown

between the government and the people exacerbates this (Nwagbara, 2010). In the era of amnesty deal, partnership can help strengthen the locals' confidence that government is really serious to bring development and empowerment in the region following failures of similar projects in the past, which did not get the people involved (Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012; Ibaba, 2012). As social capital is advanced via partnership, this will engender sense of belonging in people that the government is interested in embracing their views as part of solution to the region's problems (Pralhad & Hart, 2002).

Social Enterprise Development and Funding

As Pauli (1988) outlined, institutions, people, groups and organisations seek partnership to identify solutions to the following:

1. To improve living standards;
2. To avoid social and environmental conflict; and
3. To facilitate local context-based employment

The above issues and more are what social enterprises do through for-profit or non-profit enterprises that are geared towards enhancing human conditions as well as environmental wellbeing. As Teagarden (2012, p. 1) notes "the world's big problems – hunger, poverty, disease, and natural disaster – are often seen as overwhelming, and even unsolvable", but through social ventures and entrepreneurships, the locals in the Niger delta can be lifted from poverty, environmental degradation, funding issues and social exclusion. For example, through social enterprises such as PIND – The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta, which was founded by Chevron to empower as well as develop the nine Niger delta states in Nigeria in the areas of economic development, capacity building, peace-building and advocacy; issues around poverty and environmental neglect are being advanced (Pindfoundation, 2012). PIND is a partnership group involving networks such as Chevron, private donors and local institutions for bettering the lots of Niger delta states in terms of providing jobs, environmental protection, education, healthcare and peace-building, which are crucially needed in the era of amnesty deal. Another social enterprise in Nigeria's Niger delta is Crown Agents, which is partnering with the PIND to develop as well as deliver civil society or social enterprises that can foster training programmes/initiatives (the CAPABLE Programme) that is aimed at equipping stakeholders with needed skills in to deal with issues in the area (Crownagent, 2012).

Distributed Leadership and Transformation

As has been noted in management literature, virtually all facets of human, organisational and institutional life, leaders cast a shadow on the leader-follower dynamics, which is important for shared, distributed leadership (Conger, 1990: 291). Distributed leadership is a harbinger of “shared meaning” (Manion, 1988, p. 58) that brings what John Kotter in his book, *A Force for Change* (1990) tagged “energy surge”, a correlate of partnership. The energy surge consequent upon partnership brings transformational leadership, a kind of leadership that facilitates community development and human capacity building. In the amnesty deal era, the Niger delta region needs the right kind of leadership that will facilitate change in the right direction as opposed to the nature of business-as-usual in the past that has rather deepened conflict and violence. Since partnership is largely dependent on networks for impact, distributed leadership will help bring this to fruition as diverse partners participate in a collegial manner to change the leadership landscape. Thus, in strengthening peace in the region in the wake of the amnesty deal, distributed leadership is essential as it brings inputs from disparate units through partnership formations. Thus for a reinvented Niger delta, there is need to rethink the framing of leadership along the axis of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is seen as collegial leadership, community of leaders, partnership-leadership, shared leadership, connected leadership, post-heroic leadership, and horizontal leadership (Moxley, 2000; Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

Social Innovation and “Creative Capitalism”

Social innovation deals with creating new strategies, ideas and knowledge that foster social needs in community (Kong, 2010, p. 158). According to Pot & Vaas (2010), social innovation includes such things as dynamic management, flexible working smarter, development of skills and competencies, networking between organisations. It is seen as complementary to technological innovation. Social innovation is part of process innovation as well as product and it includes also the modernisation of industrial relations and human resource management (p. 468).

Social entrepreneurship is related to social innovation; hence, it brings about engaging in ways that facilitate positive change to communities' social concerns by creating ideas and ventures that advance this process. This usually takes place when companies dedicate a part of their resources to foster community development and human capacity building. This is in congruence with what Bill Gates' meant by “creative capitalism” in his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in September 2008. In this regard, creative capitalism is “an approach where governments, businesses, and non-profits work together ... doing work that eases the world's inequalities (Kingsley, 2009, p. 10).

The Amnesty Deal and “Modern” Niger Delta: Contextualising Partnership

Given that policies in the past to bring sustainable peace in the conflict-prone Niger delta failed (Egwemi, 2010) Yar'Adua government was poised to heal the region's drawn-out conflict, environmental despoliation and socio-economic woes. This leadership commitment materialised in the creation of Amnesty Deal, a peace programme that promised pardoning ex-militia members in return for surrendering their arms and ammunition. In trading arms for state pardon, the ex-militia members received cash donations, job opportunities, training and other means of improving their lots for community development as well as for lasting peace in the region. Previous efforts in the past to bring peace include the establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) – established 1960; Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) – established 1992; and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) – established in 2000.

Nevertheless, it has been noted that most policies in Nigeria are wonderful, but ultimately summersault, abandonment or failure awaits them.

Nigeria is replete with brilliant, impeccable and well written policies. The problem is implementation. The logical and expensively produced policies often end there as policies. Weak efforts at implementation often rubbish them through corruption (Eneh, 2011, p. 66).

The above development gave rise to the establishment of the amnesty deal: In his determination to overcome the crisis of the Niger delta, which President Yar'Adua has described as a night-mare... he set up a Niger Delta Ministry. In the same vein, the Yar'Adua government also set up the Niger Delta Technical Committee, which has already submitted its report Thus, in terms of government policies and programmes a lot is being done to tackle the problems of the Niger delta (Egwemi, 2010 p. 137). Yar'Adua's commitment to bring peace to the region runs along the axis of his famous 7-point agenda for sustainable development and co-existence in the Niger delta.

Yar'Adua's 7-Point Agenda metamorphosed from one form to another in search of appropriate blueprint to bring lasting peace in the Niger delta. The vacillation eventually culminated into the following:

1. Electoral reform
2. Rule of law
3. The Niger delta question
4. Power and energy

5. Human capital development
6. Acceleration of economic reform
7. Security issues

In another light, according to the Federal Ministry of Information and Communications (Apan & Ering, 2010), Yar'Adua's seven point agenda constitute the following: critical infrastructure, Niger delta, food security, human capital development, land tenure and home ownership, national security and intelligence and wealth creation.

Since the amnesty deal was brokered by the late President Musa Yar'Adua in August 2009 much has not been done to bring the ideals of this peace initiative to fruition (Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012). The main issues that have de-toured the ideals of the amnesty deal are the failure of Disarmament, Demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) framework to follow through the amnesty plan; the DDR was created by the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), a body charged with the responsibilities to plan strategies to bring peace in the region. Another point that has been raised is the "non-inclusion of specific strategies for addressing the roots of militancy in the amnesty programme" (Davidheiser & Kiale, 2010, p. 1); lack of trust in the intermediaries dealing with paying as well as creating jobs for the ex-militants/combatants; and lastly another point is that the amnesty deal does not take into consideration views from other stakeholders and groups. This is where the issue of partnership is crucial for change. So, the place of partnership to help foster the ideals of the amnesty deal in the post-conflict Niger delta is essential in order to galvanise the required energy for smooth delivery of the tenets of the amnesty programme particularly as there is resuscitated stakeholder agitation (Ibaba, 2012) following disappointment from local leaders and intermediaries, who are rather feathering their own nests rather than considering the welfare of the community people. So, in avoiding a rehash of events that led to the amnesty deal, partnership is a sine qua non.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In concluding, in many researches to date dealing with partnership, emphasis is being placed on the power of partnership to advance the ideals of sustainability, stakeholder engagement and peace-building as well as to transcend the maladies of oil complex. However, none of these researches has taken a strategic view of partnership working as this paper argues in order to confront lingering crisis in the Niger delta. Since the Amnesty Deal was brokered, this is the first work that looks at evolving peace and sustainability in the region via the lens of strategic partnership as the region begins to witness a

fresh form of violence and stakeholder dilemma. By focusing on collective bargaining as well as de-emphasising self-interest amongst stakeholders in the Niger delta, strategic partnership, as this paper proposes will be a potent instrument to consolidate peace in post-conflict Niger delta – during the Amnesty Deal era. Issues dealt with in this paper ranging from motivation for partnership, gains of partnership, and sustainable future point to using partnership as a bridge by stakeholders to walk across the conflict-prone path of the Niger delta Nigeria in the wake of the amnesty deal, which promises to bring lasting peace to the region and Nigeria by extension. Thus, following failure of similar programmes in the past formulated by previous governments to bring lasting peace in the region, strategic partnership can help actualise peaceful post-conflict Niger delta for a more sustainable future as well as better business-community relation. Finally, for business managers both local and international, strategic approach to partnership will bring better business decisions given the synergy, trust and energies this approach outlines.

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