

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration: Analysing the Outcomes of Nigeria's Post-Amnesty Programme

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Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programmes are an essential part of most contemporary post-conflict peacebuilding processes, but they are seldom the subject of academic analysis. In this study, we seek to reduce this gap by examining the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP) introduced in Nigeria in 2009. Our analysis shows that the programme contributed to the reduction of small arms and light weapons (SALW), fewer attacks on oil infrastructure and kidnapping of expatriates, and improved human capacity development. However, the programme has been ineffective in reintegrating ex-militants into civilian life because of serious shortcomings in its design as well as the extremely difficult implementation environment. In addition, the programme has proved to be hugely expensive. Despite these serious shortcomings, the Federal Government of Nigeria cannot simply terminate the programme because this will increase the risk that ex-militants enrolled in the programme will reignite the violent insurgency against the Nigerian state and international oil companies. The study concludes by reflecting on how this challenging situation can be resolved.

Introduction

The successful disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants is often argued to be an essential precondition for maintaining post-conflict stability and advancing the prospects of durable peace (Berdal and Ucko 2009; Muggah and O'Donnell 2015; and Paes 2005). Hence, DDR programmes play an essential role in most contemporary post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction interventions funded

by international donors, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union (United Nations 2006; Watson 2009). However, it is unclear to what extent these DDR programmes have contributed to advancing peace and stability in post-conflict countries and which factors determine their success or failure. On the one hand, this research gap is surprising given the widespread implementation of DDR programmes in post-conflict reconstruction processes. On the other, we must acknowledge that peacebuilding has generally received scant attention in policy research.

This study addresses this research gap by analysing Nigeria's DDR programme, which is locally known as the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP). The PAP was established

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in June 2009 by then President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. It appears to be an instructive case for evaluating *how* a DDR programme works (see Caffrey and Munro 2017) for three main reasons. First, in contrast to the vast majority of ongoing DDR programmes, which are usually funded and implemented by international organisations, Nigeria's DDR programme was not only locally designed, but was also funded and implemented by the Nigerian state in collaboration with local communities (Kuku 2012). In that context, we would have expected the PAP to be more successful than programmes designed by third parties. Second, the Nigerian programme has been in place for much longer than most contemporary DDR programmes. While most DDR programmes funded and implemented by the UN typically last between one and three years (Banholzer 2014), Nigeria's PAP has been in place for more than eight years. This comparatively long duration of the programme is another reason why we expected to observe policy success. Third, while Nigeria's DDR programme initially appeared to have had a positive impact on the security situation in the Niger Delta, in recent years, the region has witnessed sporadic, yet impactful, violence and instability involving ex-militants. Despite the programme's failure in ensuring sustained post-conflict stability, Nigerian policy makers have abstained from terminating it.

Following the above, we pose the following research question in this paper: what were the outcomes of Nigeria's PAP and how can they be explained? To address the research question, we rely on a conceptual framework put forth by Banholzer (2014), which differentiates between micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors. In our analysis, we explain how the policy outcomes of PAP compare to other types of public policies.

This research draws on original primary data collected during three field research visits to Nigeria between 2013 and 2017. During those visits, we conducted 75 semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders, including ex-militants and civilians from several villages and communities in Bayelsa

State, government officials responsible for the implementation of Nigeria's PAP, leaders of local civil society organisations (CSOs), and academics at several universities in the Niger Delta region.

This paper is set out as follows: In the first section, we discuss the origins and structure of Nigeria's PAP. This is followed by a section that discusses and analyses the impacts of the PAP on the security situation in the Niger Delta region. The subsequent section contains our analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the PAP. The conclusion discusses potential implications for the future of the PAP and lessons for other conflict settings.

The Origins and Structure of Nigeria's Post-Amnesty Programme

Many observers have praised Nigeria's DDR programme for being designed and implemented by local actors (Kuku 2012; Obi 2014). In this respect, some scholars have argued that externally designed peacebuilding programmes often do not adequately engage with local communities or contexts, and therefore often fail to consider the dynamics and nuances crucial for advancing peacebuilding processes in conflict-affected societies (Autesserre 2010). Moreover, Richmond (2010) argues that peacebuilding programmes implemented by the international community are often shaped by externally determined standards of best practice that may differ from local perceptions of what peacebuilding programmes are expected to achieve. Some scholars therefore argue that peacebuilding programmes should be locally designed and implemented (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; De Coning 2013) and should not adopt Western policy models (MacGinty 2010). In the context of Nigeria, most PAP officials interviewed as part of this research strongly favoured real local ownership. Illustratively, one PAP official noted:

We are blessed with the Nigerian approach. Because usually, at the reintegration phase in other DDR programmes, you start to see the donor

*agencies and external funders trying to remove themselves. They ask local people to do what they called national ownership. However, good for us, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua conceptualised this programme by Nigerians, run by Nigerians, articulated, funded hundred per cent by Nigerians. He went further to choose people from the [Niger Delta] region to champion it.*¹

This view is at the heart of Nigeria's PAP. It was first observed in the negotiations between the armed militant groups and the Nigerian government prior to the proclamation of the amnesty. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the umbrella militant group in the Niger Delta, initially called for the involvement of international organisations in the region's peace process. Several international organisations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), offered to assist Nigeria with the design and implementation of the DDR programme (Ukiwo 2015). However, the Nigerian government established the Presidential Amnesty Committee (PAC) without the involvement of any international organisation (Molloy 2011). The PAC concluded the negotiations with the armed militants and developed the structure of the PAP without international involvement.

The PAP was designed to demobilise, rehabilitate, and subsequently reintegrate ex-militants who had disarmed voluntarily (Nigeria Amnesty Programme 2009). The reintegration process started at the point of demobilisation. The demobilisation programme was characterised by a camping and discharge approach – an approach used in most DDR programmes (Knight and Ozerdem 2004). During the camping phase, which lasted between 6 and 12 months, the Nigerian implementation agency collected essential information on the background and history of ex-militants enrolled in the PAP. The camping phase also included counselling and training for ex-militants in preparation for their reintegration into civilian life (Nigeria Amnesty Programme 2009). The

PAC, as the executive body, initially aimed to help ex-militants acquire and strengthen their vocational skills (ibid.). In addition to receiving training and counselling, ex-militants who participated in the PAP were also given a monthly stipend of ₦65,000, or about US\$400, in 2010 during the reintegration phase.² While the PAP, in particular the reintegration phase, was originally expected to last for a period of five years (2009–2014), it is still in place today (2020).

In order to oversee and run the PAP, Nigeria's President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua appointed a Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, who is responsible for the management of the funds allocated to the programme and serves as the chairman of the PAP. This special adviser is supported by a technical officer who is responsible for managing the process of reintegration. The Reintegration Department is made up of three units: vocational training, education, and post-training and empowerment. The vocational training unit is responsible for the placement of ex-militants in vocational training programmes and the education unit focuses on the enrolment of ex-militants in tertiary education institutions. The post-training and empowerment unit is tasked with helping ex-militants who have completed their training to find employment opportunities.

After the appointment of Kingsley Kuku as Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta in 2011, the programme underwent important changes. Kuku, a former activist and politician in the Niger Delta, transformed the programme into an extensive human-capacity development scheme. Following the changes introduced by Kuku, ex-militants could enrol in long-term training programmes and academic degree programmes overseas. Vocational training could, from that point, also be undertaken in foreign countries. The PAP officials interviewed as part of our field research argued that the initial structure, which focused on short-term (maximum five months) vocational training in Nigeria, limited the opportunities and chances for ex-militants in the

labour market. By allowing ex-militants to enrol in long-term training and educational programmes, both in Nigeria and overseas, it was expected that ex-militants would have better chances of finding employment, which in turn was considered essential for their reintegration into civilian life. Below we examine how effective this reintegration strategy has been.

Outcomes of Nigeria's Post-Amnesty Programme

Policy studies differentiate between policy outputs and policy outcomes. Policy outputs are the direct result of the decision-making process, which usually involves the adoption of a certain programme or legislation. Policy outcomes focus on the way policies induce behavioural change on the side of the targeted actors (Knill and Tosun 2012). The success of public policies depends on whether a policy measure brings about the intended behavioural changes. While a political system's capacity to produce policy outputs is important to ensure its survival and the production of public goods for the population, policy outcomes are even more critical for attaining these goals. Eventually, the performance of a government is not assessed against the number of policies adopted, but in how successful it is in delivering on these policies, and in addressing the underlying societal problems that led to the creation of these policies in the first place. Given the importance of policy outcomes in general and in post-conflict settings in particular, in this study we concentrate on the outcomes of the PAP as implemented in Nigeria.

One immediate impact of the PAP was that it led to a reduction in the number of small and light weapons in circulation in the Niger Delta. The armed groups that participated in the DDR programme surrendered different types of weapons and ammunitions during the disarmament ceremonies that were held across the region (Joab-Peterside et al. 2011). Available, but incomplete, records show that General Africa Camp submitted 70 AK47 rifles, 10 MG rifles, six GPMG rifles, five rocket launchers, 11,705 rounds of 7.62 mm

short live ammunition, 2,851 rounds of 7.62 mm ball ammunition, 2,350 rounds of 5.56 mm live ammunition, and 266 rounds of GPMG live ammunition, among other assorted weapons. Kilke Selky Torughedi, popularly known as General Young Shall Grow Camp, submitted only one AK47 rifle, four machine guns, five submachine guns, and 21 G3 rifles. Torughedi also submitted ammunition, including 2,350 rounds of 7.62 mm (SP) ball, 1,967 rounds of 7.62 mm rim ball, 11,616 rounds of 7.62 mm NATO ball, 155 AK 47 magazines, and 17 G3 magazines (ibid.). This does not cover weapons and ammunitions submitted by other key militant leaders such as High Chief Government Ekpemupolo (also known as Tompolo), Ateke Tom, Farah Dagogo, and Ebikabowei Victor Ben (also known as Boyloaf). Yet, given that there was no audit of the available arms and armaments owned by ex-militants prior to the implementation of the PAP, it is difficult to assess how significant this arms reduction has been. However, this is the case in most DDR programmes, where there is usually scant information about the precise size of rebel groups as well as the number and type of weapons they possess.

Nigeria's PAP also had a noticeable impact on the security situation in Nigeria's oil industry. Attacks against the oil industry infrastructure ceased almost completely and consequently the region's oil production increased considerably. In particular, Nigeria's oil production increased from 2.1 million barrels per day in 2008 to about 2.5 million barrels per day in 2012. This is linked to the cessation of attacks targeting oil transport pipelines following the implementation of the PAP (Ebiede 2017). The kidnapping of expatriates working for the oil industry also largely ceased. The improved security situation led to an increase in oil production that generated more government revenues, which in turn helped improve Nigeria's financial situation.

Another significant outcome of Nigeria's PAP relates to human capacity development in the Niger Delta (Ajibola 2015). As defined by Macfadyen and Huntington (2004: 2),

human capacity development is ‘the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies develop their abilities – both individually and collectively – to set and achieve objectives, perform functions, solve problems and to develop the means and conditions required to enable this process.’ This process, especially the focus on developing individual capacities, was observed in the Niger Delta as a result of the implementation of the PAP. By October 2015, 15,459 of the 30,000 ex-militants registered in the PAP had undergone training in a wide range of fields, including marine technology, heavy-duty operations, welding, diving, agriculture, boat building, oil and gas technology, aviation, fashion design, hotel and catering, cosmetology or hair dressing. Those selected to receive academic training focused on areas such as law, political science, business management, mass communication, international relations, public administration, medicine, engineering, applied sciences, building and construction, and information and communications technology (see **Table 1**). The objective of these training and academic programmes was to ensure that ex-militants had the necessary skills and capabilities to find jobs and hence facilitate their reintegration into their communities.

The PAP came at a high price, however. While at its conception in 2009, the Nigerian government estimated that the entire programme would cost about US\$360 million, it actually cost much more.³ In particular, the changes introduced in 2011 by Kingsley Kuku led to a significant increase in the cost of the programme. Due to this increase, the Nigerian government budgeted US\$2.714 billion for the PAP between 2011 and 2017 (see **Table 2**). The training programmes and the monthly stipend payments have been the main expenses of the PAP budget. Thus, Nigeria’s PAP has been considerably more expensive than initially planned and much more expensive than comparable programmes operated by international institutions (see, for example, Giustozzi 2016).

Table 1: Reintegration Training of Ex-Militants.

| | Area of Specialisation | Number Trained |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Education: | |
| | Nigerian universities | 1,620 |
| | Foreign universities | 1,454 |
| 2 | Welding and fabrication | 5,194 |
| 3 | Entrepreneurship | 2,798 |
| 4 | Maritime | 1,086 |
| 5 | Crane and heavy duty | 1,030 |
| 6 | Pipefitting | 250 |
| 7 | Boat building | 299 |
| 8 | Agriculture | 239 |
| 9 | Automobile | 207 |
| 10 | Electrical installation | 89 |
| 11 | Aviation: | |
| | Engineers | 138 |
| | Pilot (fixed wing) | 71 |
| | Helicopter | 21 |
| | Instructors | 5 |
| 12 | Diving | 230 |
| 13 | Drilling | 197 |
| 14 | Health, safety and environment | 104 |
| 15 | Industry automation | 86 |
| 16 | Entertainment | 60 |
| 17 | Instrumentation | 46 |
| | Total | 15,224 |

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

Despite the ambitious funding allocated to the programme, as well as the initial reduction in violent attacks and hostilities in the region, the positive impact on the security situation has not endured. From 2016, attacks against the oil industry infrastructure

Table 2: Changes in Oil Revenues, PAP Budget and Militant Attacks.

| Year | Value of Oil Export (US\$ Millions) | Oil Price (US\$) | Amnesty Programme (US\$) | Militant Attacks | Oil Production Output (thousands of barrels per day) |
|------|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2011 | 99,878 | 87.04 | 531,720,080 | 0 | 2,550 |
| 2012 | 96,905 | 86.46 | 478,557,496 | 0 | 2,520 |
| 2013 | 97,818 | 91.17 | 407,942,541 | 0 | 2,367 |
| 2014 | 82,586 | 85.60 | 407,942,541 | 0 | 2,423 |
| 2015 | 45,365 | 41.85 | 378,918,705 | 0 | 2,317 |
| 2016 | 34,704 | 36.34 | 280,612,245 | 51 | 2,053 |

Source: Authors' calculations.

in the Niger Delta have again been on the rise. These attacks are being conducted with the specific aim of hampering Nigeria's oil production (Ebiede and Langer 2017). Throughout 2016, there were 51 reported attacks in Nigeria (Global Terrorism Database 2020). These attacks were carried out in four states: Bayelsa Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Delta. As discussed in the section that follows, the attacks were carried out by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), a new militant group that emerged four years after the implementation of Nigeria's PAP. The NDA, made up of former militants from MEND and other groups, protested the suspension of the monthly stipends paid to ordinary ex-militants and government patronage of leaders of former armed groups in the Niger Delta (BBC 2016). As a result, Nigeria's federal government resumed the payment of monthly stipends to ex-militants, while negotiating with former militant leaders through organised interest groups in the Niger Delta (ibid.). This led to the cessation of hostilities.

Thus, while Nigeria's PAP appears to have had a positive impact on the security situation in the Niger Delta in the first years after its implementation, the region saw a spike in attacks in 2016. This puzzle has been observed in the literature on terrorism, which argues that the link between counter-terrorism policies and the reduction of terrorist attacks is not linear but is influenced by several intervening factors (see Gomis

2018). This raises the question of what factors led to that renewed violence and the overall outcomes we just outlined.

Factors Affecting the Outcomes of the Post-Amnesty Programme

Our analysis is theoretically informed by Banholzer's (2014: 4) framework of analysis, which differentiates between three types of factors that can either hamper or support the successful implementation of DDR programmes:

- macro-level factors: contextual, country-specific features such as economic stability or the existence of democratic institutions that impinge on the overall risk of a return to hostilities as well as affect the likelihood of a DDR programme being implemented in the first place;
- meso-level factors: the features of specific DDR programmes such as types of aid offered, or the actors involved; and
- micro-level factors: the combatants' individual characteristics and experiences that affect their willingness and ability to surrender their weapons and reintegrate into civil society.

Micro-level factors

The two main factors at the micro-level that appear to have impeded the reintegration process of ex-militants in the Niger Delta

are related to the prestige and financial reward individuals are receiving from being enrolled in the PAP. With regard to the financial reward, it is important to point out that the monthly stipend of 65,000 Naira – ₦ (US\$ 176) that ex-militants are receiving while enrolled in the PAP is same as the average income received by university graduates in Nigeria (₦64,000 or US\$ 170). This stipend is also considerably higher than Nigeria's minimum wage – which amounts to about US\$82 per month – and much higher than the income ex-militants could normally receive from agricultural or menial jobs available in local communities and cities.

The extremely generous stipend de facto serves as a major disincentive for ex-militants to reintegrate into civilian life because they stand to lose financially if they accept a lower-paying job. A DDR official interviewed as part of this study confirms this observation:

If you look at it, the ₦65,000 (US\$400) is more than the minimum wage. Even for those who have gone through reintegration training, efforts are being made to get them employment. Because some of them are not graduates and the skilled labour can hardly really pay that much, they are not willing to take some of the jobs because the monthly stipend will be paid, so it makes no sense to accept a job that will pay less than the monthly stipend. This is a disincentive for most of them to take up regular employment.⁴

A second micro-level impediment to the reintegration process relates to the prestige ex-militants enjoy from being enrolled in the PAP. The high income ex-militants receive from being enrolled in the PAP places them financially ahead of most villagers in their local communities. Indeed, most people in rural areas in the Niger Delta are generally relatively poor and engaged in subsistence agriculture. Given that ex-militants receive a generous stipend of ₦65,000, this means that

they are much better off than most people in the communities where they live. In this respect it is worth pointing out that material wealth is often considered to be a symbol of success and prestige in these communities. Many ex-militants interviewed as part of this study mentioned that being respected by their peers and enjoying the prestige of being enrolled in the PAP was important to them and they often considered it a non-monetary reward for their participation and sacrifice in the armed insurgency. Thus, besides having clear financial incentives, maintaining their social status constitutes another strong incentive for most ex-militants to remain enrolled in the PAP.

Meso-level factors

A crucial shortcoming of the PAP at the meso-level relates to the unsuitability of the training and educational programmes offered to ex-militants. While it is a standard practice of most DDR programmes to (re)train former combatants in order to prepare them for civilian life and increase their chances of finding employment, it is important that the training programmes offered are contextually appropriate and hence match local labour market demands and employment opportunities. The PAP did not meet these criteria sufficiently. As noted earlier, this is illustrated by the large number of ex-militants receiving training in high-end vocational skills, mostly geared towards employment in Nigeria's oil industry, while others received an academic education. However, it transpired that ex-militants were trained and/or educated for jobs that did not exist in the oil industry in the Niger Delta. The training was not informed by a labour market assessment. Figures released by the PAP administration concerning the number of ex-militants who were able to find employment after their training showed that only about 200 ex-militants were able to find full-time employment between 2010 and 2012 (see Amnesty News 2013). In December 2014, PAP officials announced that an additional 2,072 ex-militants had found gainful employment

(Vanguard 2014). However, this figure compares poorly with the 15,459 ex-militants who completed different vocational training and academic programmes in the period 2010–2014. The situation with ex-militants is not far from the overall condition of youth unemployment in the Niger Delta. For example, youth unemployment in key Niger Delta states such as Bayelsa is 32.6 per cent and Rivers is 36.4 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics 2018). Research has shown that the inability of ex-militants to find work is linked to the disconnect between the training they receive and the available jobs in the private sector in the region (Ebiede 2018). Yet, the unemployment figures in the region show that the challenge is also linked to the lack of jobs in the area. Since 2015, the situation has not improved significantly and hence many ex-militants who were re-educated and/or retrained within the PAP remain unemployed (ibid.). We argue that the inability of ex-militants to find employment is directly related to the fact that the training they received as part of the PAP was largely unsuitable for regional and local job markets.

While Nigeria's PAP trained a good number of ex-militants for jobs in the oil industry (see **Table 1**), everyday operations in that industry do not require a large number of local labourers. Fajana (2005) has estimated that the oil sector only accounts for about 65,000 direct and 250,000 indirect jobs in Nigeria. Therefore, the PAP was training ex-militants without taking into account the limited employment opportunities that exist within the Niger Delta region. Because of the lack of employment opportunities, many ex-militants continue to depend on the monthly stipend payments they receive from the PAP, yet their continued dependence on the stipend payments, as well as their inability to find gainful and appropriate employment, puts ex-militants in a difficult, uncertain, and stressful situation. The following quote by an ex-militant living in Ologbobiri succinctly captures the trying situation in which many ex-militants find themselves:

*I have been in the village since I returned from training. I still receive the ₦65,000 monthly. But that is not enough. I will suffer if the government stop paying this monthly stipend. There are no jobs for us. In this community, where do you see work to do? Everybody is looking for jobs, there is no work. We are just managing.*⁵

Another important shortcoming related to the training offered as part of the PAP is the sub-standard or inadequate design and implementation of a large number of training programmes. Thus, for instance, an ex-militant living in Ologbobiri who was interviewed as part of this study mentioned that he had received training in crane and heavy-duty operations (for example, hammer grabbing). However, the equipment that he and others initially trained with was not the type of machinery generally used in Nigeria, and therefore they needed to be retrained. Many other ex-militants in the Niger Delta have had similar experiences and lodged complaints about the training they received. An ex-militant enrolled in a PAP training programme noted:

The fact is that we are facing some challenges in our training. Firstly, the people that are training us are not giving us good training. We are not working very well. Some days, we will come for training and we will stay here for about 30 minutes and they will dismiss us to go back home. Our training is supposed to be for nine months and we have been here for four months now. In the four months, we have achieved nothing. We have not learnt anything; I can say that the four months have been wasted. (Gist 2013: 78)

Further, because of the way in which the training was organised, there was widespread abuse and malfeasance of PAP funds. Following a needs-based assessment by the reintegration department of the PAP, private

companies and consultants — acting as commissioned contractors — were usually given contracts to organise the actual trainings or find suitable training locations and institutions. The contractors were generally paid by the PAP on the basis of the number of ex-militants being placed into a programme. Many contractors appear to have abused this system by inflating the number of ex-militants that were said to have been enrolled in different training programmes. In some extreme cases, contractors were even paid despite the fact that no training had been provided to ex-militants (Punch 2019). For example, the Foundation for Youth Development, a youth-development consultancy firm owned by Chibudum Nwuche, a politician belonging to the then ruling People's Democratic Party, was given a contract of ₦5.6 billion (US\$22 million) to carry out training programmes for ex-militants in Malaysia (Vanguard 2016). Although the Foundation for Youth Development was fully paid, no training took place (ibid.).

Given the above, it is not surprising that a considerable number of ex-militants have become involved in illegal economic activities after returning to their communities, such as, for example, artisanal refining of oil (Zibima 2015). One community member mentioned:

Things are hard, even these boys (ex-militants) you see, you just see them in the community in the day, but you don't know what they are doing at night, they are the ones going to burn crude oil to make fuel and do several things in the bush, that is how many people survive.⁶

The attraction of these illicit activities is mainly the economic reward. Illicit artisanal refining of oil is reported to be the highest-value form of local employment in rural communities of the Niger Delta (Stakeholder Democracy Network [SDN] 2013). The level of economic reward one gets from this activity depends on the specific task one

performs, with, for example, a driver earning about ₦20,000 (US\$57) each time he transports refined fuel out of the camps where the oil is refined and camp managers earning about ₦100,000 (US\$285) per month (ibid.). This shows that in rural communities, only an illicit activity, such as artisanal refining of crude oil, can pay more than the monthly stipends ex-militants receive from the PAP. However, the involvement in illegal artisanal oil refining does not come without risks. Indeed, the Nigerian government has increasingly undertaken extensive military operations aimed at shutting down these artisanal oil refineries. For example, the Joint Task Force destroyed 32 illegal artisanal refining facilities in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State on 25 July 2013 (Vanguard 2013), seven in the same area on 17 February 2015 (All Africa 2015), and an additional 80 in the following states: Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers in 2017 (*Nigerian Pilot* 2017). These military operations have led to a significant reduction in artisanal refining in local communities. When it persists, artisanal refining of crude oil has become increasingly risky. The military campaign against illicit economic activities has increased the risk faced by ex-militants who are involved in such activities.

The structure and design of Nigeria's PAP not only reduces ex-militants' willingness to accept legal employment outside of the programme, but it also encourages other youths in the region to demand inclusion in the programme. Some of the recent attacks against the oil industry infrastructure have been carried out by youths demanding to be included into the PAP (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016). For example, the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Movement — a recently established militant group from the Urhobo area in Delta State — has issued a statement saying that its attacks were prompted by demands from the youths in Urhobo communities to be included in the PAP (*Thisday* 2016). The attacks by the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Movement started after the Nigerian government began negotiations with the

NDA through the Pan Niger Delta Forum (*Premium Times* 2016). The Pan Niger Delta Forum presented a 16-point list of demands, which included the continuation of the PAP. Hence, the emergence of new militant groups seems to be at least partly driven by the expectation that this would be an effective way of gaining inclusion into the PAP. Paradoxically, this situation not only shows that the economic incentives of the PAP in no small matter serve as a disincentive for ex-militants to reintegrate into civilian life, but it also suggests that the PAP actually incentivises youths to engage in armed militancy as a way of laying claim to the benefits of the PAP.

Macro-level factors

Public expenditure in Nigeria is largely dependent on oil revenues (Iledare and Suberu 2010) and funding for Nigeria's PAP was based on the expectation that those revenues would remain high. In 2009, when the PAP started, the price of oil was about US\$100 per barrel. Data from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) show that Nigeria consistently earned above US\$90 billion annually in the first three years following the implementation of the PAP (see **Table 2**). Hence, it was possible for Nigeria to fund the programme from oil revenues, while also funding other areas of public need. However, this changed in 2015 following the sharp decline of international oil prices to about US\$40–45 per barrel. The sharp drop in oil prices made it increasingly difficult for the Nigerian government to fund the PAP, and hence from 2016 the government was at times unable to pay the stipends of ex-militants in full and on time.

As shown in **Table 2**, there was a significant rise in the number of militant attacks in 2016, which coincided with the sudden fall in oil prices and the reduced value of the budgetary allocations to the PAP. The government admitted in 2016 that payments to ex-militants were delayed due to the country's

precarious economic and financial situation, which was directly related to the decrease in oil prices. This delay was also acknowledged by Paul Boroh, the then coordinator of the PAP, who stated that 'the main challenge the Presidential Amnesty Office has faced is inadequate funds' and that 'inadequate funding has also limited the capacity of the office to empower delegates and exit them from the program' (Owolabi 2017). As a result, at least 1,770 PAP participants were forced to quit their vocational training before completion (*ibid.*). This precarious situation has led to repeated protests by ex-militants (Oyadongha 2015). Indeed, the failure of the Nigerian government to maintain uninterrupted payments to ex-militants has left Nigeria vulnerable to anti-state protests and renewed militancy, and hence threatens the long-term peace and stability of the region.

In addition to the sharp decline in oil prices, the socio-economic environment in the Niger Delta is generally quite precarious and states in this region are known to have low levels of economic development (Francis, LaPin and Rossiasco 2011). Although oil-producing states in the Niger Delta receive 13 per cent derivation from the oil revenues, most of these have been lost to corruption, poor planning and misappropriation (Ebiede 2011). These factors are impeding the economic development of the Niger Delta and consequently there are very few employment opportunities for the youth, both ex-militant and ordinary civilians. The limited economic and employment opportunities in turn increase the risk that youths will join (new) militia groups or organise around violent causes in a bid to be included in Nigeria's PAP.

Nigeria's poor economic fortunes in the last two years and the general precarious state of development of the Niger Delta are two crucial macro-level factors that have negatively affected the impact of the PAP. While there may be other issues that sparked renewed violence in the region in 2016, the

failure of the government to maintain PAP payments has provided a strong incentive for the recruitment of ex-militants into emerging new groups (Moody 2016). Moreover, there are repeated claims that some of the militants belonging to the ranks of the NDA are fighters who have been enrolled in the PAP.⁷ Many of these individuals are said to be particularly aggrieved about the massive curtailment of the PAP budget by approximately 60 per cent by the government of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. Adding to ex-militants' concerns and discontent was the fact that President Buhari publicly stated that he intended to phase out the stipend payments altogether (*The Economist* 2016). This decision was based on the initial plan of the PAP that foresaw an end to this programme in December 2015. However, the failure of the programme to successfully reintegrate ex-militants and the threat that renewed militancy posed to the stability of Nigeria's oil industry made it difficult for the government to end the PAP as originally planned.

These threats materialised when the NDA attacked offshore pipelines located in deep waters off the Nigerian coast (Paraskova 2016). These attacks are believed to have been carried out by individuals who received

training in underwater diving and welding.⁸ The participation of individuals who have undergone PAP training in renewed violence shows that not only has the PAP not led to a durable reintegration of ex-militants enrolled in the PAP, but, perversely, has even given them 'valuable' skills that they can now use to attack and target the oil industry. The continuation of the PAP was one of the conditions given by the NDA to end their attacks against the oil industry (*Premium Times* 2016).

Nigeria's PAP Challenge

Table 3 below summarises the main findings of our empirical analysis. It is clear that Nigeria's PAP has serious shortcomings and faces important challenges at all three levels of analysis. Moreover, it appears that the country faces a major dilemma. Despite the fact that the PAP is an extremely expensive programme and appears to have been ineffective in reintegrating ex-militants into civilian life, the Nigerian government cannot just discontinue the programme because this is likely to reignite the violent insurgency against international oil companies and the Nigerian federal state, which was the reason for introducing the PAP originally.

Table 3: Challenges and Shortcomings of Nigeria's PAP.

| Micro-level | Meso-level | Macro-level |
|---|---|---|
| Strong financial incentives to stay in programme | Training provided is unsuitable for regional and individual context | Funding for PAP is based on oil revenues → volatility of oil prices makes funding insecure and risky |
| Prestige associated with enrolment in the PAP | Corruption and abuse of PAP funds High stipend means very few jobs available that offer the same level of income Stipend payment has set a precedent for other young people (i.e., violence is rewarding) | Socio-economic environment is generally poor – few employment opportunities for both ex-militants and ordinary civilians → risk of joining new militia groups (violence pays) |

Source: Authors.

The dissatisfaction among ex-militants with not being able to find employment following their training and the occasional non-payment of their stipends has not only resulted in anti-government protests but has also led some ex-militants to (re)join (new) armed groups that successfully pressured the government not to terminate the PAP.

The Nigerian government recognises this conundrum. Strikingly, General Paul Boroh, the former Special Adviser on the Niger Delta and Chairman of the PAP, mentioned in this respect that the PAP would continue in its current form until the Nigerian government had developed a new strategy for sustainable reintegration.⁹ The inability of the Nigerian government to simply exit or terminate the PAP despite the programme's overall ineffectiveness to successfully reintegrate ex-militants as well as the very substantial expenses necessary to maintain the programme show the difficult situation faced by the Nigerian government.

Given that the government recognises the limited impact of the PAP, its major challenge is how to bring the programme to an end without a relapse of violence in the Niger Delta. The absence of such a strategy is responsible for the continuity of PAP, long beyond the proposed duration of the programme. This challenge emerges as a result of Nigeria's policy and political environment. Nigeria struggles with the problem of an implementation gap in public policies (Makinde 2005). This persisting public policy challenge is also seen in Nigeria's PAP. While other policies may be terminated with only benign consequences, terminating the PAP is more likely to result in a relapse in violence.

Conclusion

In this study, we posed two research questions: First, which factors explain the performance of Nigeria's DDR programme? We have illustrated the main characteristics of the programme, which is about providing financial support and (re)training opportunities to former militants in return for their demobilisation and reintegration into civilian life. While the PAP appears to have been

relatively successful — at least in the period 2010–2015 — in reducing the number of attacks against the oil industry, the amount of weapons and ammunition in circulation, and the frequency of kidnappings, we have shown that this reduction in violence and instability depends on the continuation of the PAP, which is contrary to the goal of the Nigerian government. In addition, we have also shown that, overall, relatively few ex-militants were able and willing to exit the programme and find legal employment in their communities. Moreover, our systematic analysis of the PAP showed that the programme had serious shortcomings at three different levels: micro, meso, and macro. While the shortcomings at each individual level negatively affected the overall effectiveness of the programme, these shortcomings reinforced each other and resulted in an even poorer performance of the programme. Despite the failure in delivering the intended policy goals in a sustained and cost-efficient manner, discontinuing the programme does not appear to be a feasible political option. Therefore, the best way to respond politically to the outcomes of the evaluation is to *reform* the programme with the aim of ensuring ex-militants have sustainable livelihood beyond government patronage.

At the macro level, our analysis shows that the outcomes of PAP are also conditioned by factors that are external to the programme. At the national level, this factor is Nigeria's overreliance on crude oil revenues. At the regional level, the overall limited demand for labour by the private and public sector is an important factor that has had an impact on the outcome of PAP. Thus, while Nigeria's PAP suffers from poor planning and implementation, the lack of a robust regional economy to absorb the supply of labour that emerges out of the PAP programme and an overreliance on crude oil by the Nigerian government are factors that are beyond the control of the programme.

The outcome of Nigeria's PAP has implications for the understanding of DDR programmes in post-conflict countries. The analysis shows that the economic and policy

environment in post-conflict contexts is an influential factor in determining the termination of DDR programmes. This is especially the case in contexts such as the Niger Delta where the underlying conflict that DDR seeks to address is linked to natural resources and the economy. In such conflict contexts, failed reintegration of ex-militants can lead to hostilities that undermine the economic stability of the society that is recovering from armed conflicts. Nigeria's PAP also shows that as a public policy, DDR programmes need to eliminate the implementation gap between policy intentions and outcomes for short-term security gains to evolve into sustainable peace. DDR programmes that pay attention to this implementation gap are more likely to be successfully terminated within the time frame without resulting in a relapse in violence.

We consider our findings not only relevant for the literature on conflict resolution, but also for policy studies. More specifically, our findings align with the overarching conclusion of studies on policy termination that public policies are difficult to terminate (see Geva-May 2004; Frantz 1997). Likewise, this investigation can benefit from insights yielded by policy studies, especially concerning potential strategies to reform the PAP and reduce the implementation gap. One possibility discussed in policy studies is 'layering,' which is a strategy of adding new elements to an existing program to address the reasons why the policy fails to produce the intended outcomes (Streeck and Thelen 2005). Policy scholars applying this concept to other policy domains have shown that layering can create dynamics that result in lasting reform trajectories (Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2016). Therefore, one possibility to overcome the current situation with unsatisfactory policy outcomes concerning Nigeria's PAP could be to practise layering and to choose the path of gradual but continued reform instead of aiming for policy termination.

Notes

¹ Authors' interview with Nigerian DDR official, Abuja, Nigeria, 11 January 2014.

² In 2010, this amounted to about US\$400. On the basis of the average exchange rate of 2017, however, the equivalent dollar amount had fallen to about US\$163.

³ All figures reflect the exchange rate of the naira to the US dollar in the given financial year. The exchange rate is based on figures provided by www.xe.com.

⁴ Authors' interview with DDR official, Abuja, Nigeria, February 2014.

⁵ Authors' interview with ex-militant, Ologbobiri, Nigeria, December 2013.

⁶ Authors' interview with community member, Ologbobiri, Nigeria, March 2014.

⁷ Authors' telephone interview with community member, Gbaramatu, Nigeria, March 2016.

⁸ Authors' telephone interview with community member, Gbaramatu, Nigeria, March 2016.

⁹ Authors' interview with General Paul Boroh, Abuja, Nigeria, September 2015.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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