

**SUSTAINABILITY OF POST-AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN NIGER DELTA,  
NIGERIA: USING PUBLIC RELATIONS PROACTIVE STRATEGY**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Niger Delta has for some years been the site of major confrontations between the people and the Nigerian government's security forces, resulting in extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, and draconian restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Since government underutilizes Public Relations in the act of governance, that made minor conflict to escalate to crisis. To proffer solution, Federal government came up with Post-amnesty Programme. Based on this, the study sought to: (i) determine the Public Relations tools and strategies that will be most effective in managing the Amnesty programme, (ii) determine how Public Relations can be used to effectively sustain Post Amnesty in Nigeria. The research design was descriptive survey method. The population of the study was 4,798,519 million youths [15-39years][last Census2006] in Delta State, Bayelsa State and Rivers State. The study made use of qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The sample size was 400 using Taro Yamane formula. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents in each of the states. A pilot study was conducted using split-half method and tested with Spearman Brown. Validity of instruments was measured using content validity, hypothesis two was tested using Friedman Chi-Square, hypothesis three was tested using two-related samples (wilcoxon signed ranks) Z test and hypothesis four was tested using One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z) test. Public Relations dialogue method in form of public involvement is the most effective PR tool that will significantly manage the Post Amnesty Programme in Nigeria ( $Z_{cal} = 3.885 > Z_{critical} = 1.96, p < 0.05$ ). Public Relations evaluation method significantly maintains the Post Amnesty Programme in Nigeria ( $X^2_{(friedman)cal} = 137.098 > X^2_{calculated} = 5.9915, p < 0.05$ ). Public relations would sustain the Niger Delta peace agreement [treaties] beyond Post Amnesty Programme ( $Z_{cal} = 9.232 > Z_{critical} = 1.96, p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded by establishing that a combination of the use of public initiative, third-party involvement and conference as forms of Public relations dialogue as well as Public relations evaluation method can enhance and sustain the Post-amnesty Programme. And it recommends the adoption of public relations' modified multi-track approach which involves all the major parties in the conflict such as the Federal governments, militant groups, State governments, MNOCs, Traditional rulers, Religious leaders, and host communities to work as partners in the peace process.*

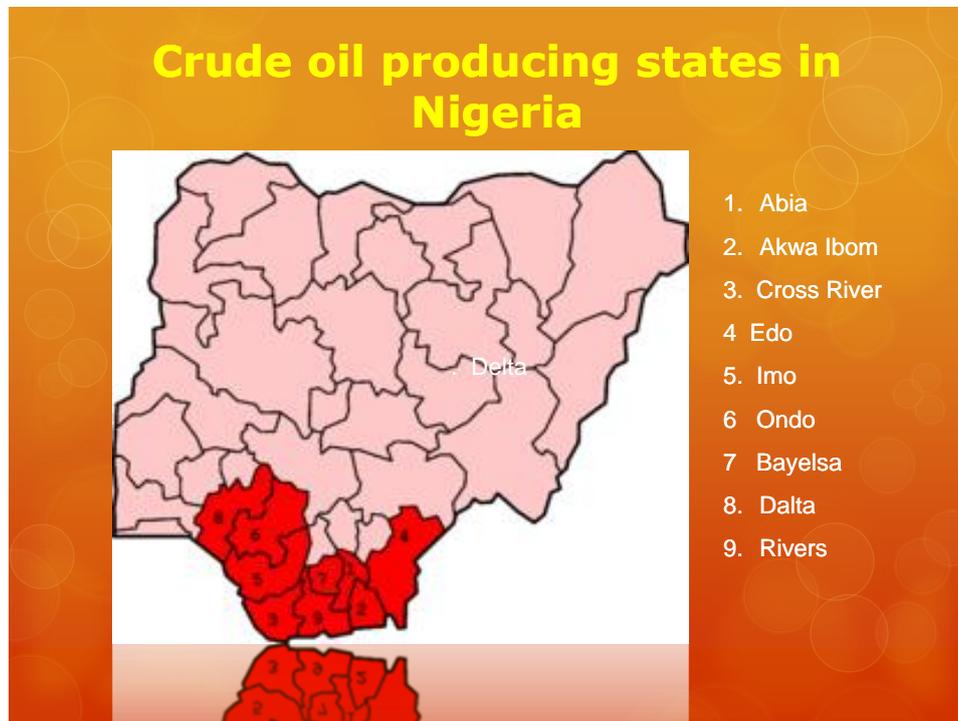
**KEYWORDS:** Post-Amnesty, Public Relations, Proactive Strategy, Amnesty Programme

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Niger Delta is a region that spreads out to cover the South-eastern part of Nigeria in West Africa. It is also referred to as the South-South geopolitical zone in the current six geo-political structure of the country. Niger Delta is an area of dense mangrove rainforest in the southern tip of Nigeria comprising nine states out of the thirty six, including the FCT that make up the entity called Nigeria.

The present day Niger Delta was estimated from the result of the last census having total population of about 20 million people, living in 1600 communities that spread over about 70,000 square kilometers that made up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass [Wikipedia 2010] Historically, it was made up of Bayelsa, Delta and River state. In 2000, Obasanjo's regime expanded its definition to include:



The region alone takes 25% of the total number of the states in Nigeria. It is the nucleus of Nigeria's wealth and one of the world's energy sources because it is rich in oil and gas resources, which directly supports the country's economy.

The region accounts for more than 20% of Gross Domestic Product [GDP], more than 97% of total export earnings and over 70% of all government revenues, and is a region responsible for producing the country's major source of revenue in Nigeria, [Aliyu, 2009]. Ironically, the region progresses backwards due to: poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, deprivation etc which in turn open the gate for psychological imbalance of the State and her people.

The Niger Delta has for some years been the site of major confrontations between the people and the Nigerian government's security forces, resulting in extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, and draconian restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly. These violations of civil and political rights have been committed principally in response to protest about the activities of the multinational companies that produce Nigeria's oil, and the use made of the oil revenue by the Nigerian government. The crux of the Niger Delta crisis has always been the concentration of power and resources in the hands of the centre through decrees and constitutions, and the people are denied access to the oil wealth, as well as the Land Use Act of 1978 inter alia: All lands and mineral belong to the Federal Government.

In Nigeria, the Federal government is both a key player and a referee in oil and gas leasing/mining. It collects all revenues generated in the country and disburses a maximum of

13%, or as it pleases, to the states from which the resources are derived. By the recent supreme court decision on offshore lands, the Federal government now takes everything while the coastal states are entitled to nothing, not to talk of ecological impact, infrastructural wear-and-tear, coastal communities development which constitutes the major causes of crises in Niger Delta.

Aja [2007] opines that Niger Delta crisis is anchored on the logic that despite the vast wealth produced in the area, plus the negative impacts of the oil industry, the people remain poorer than the national average. Youths who are denied meaningful education and employment now indulge in conflicts including: militancy, hostage taking, prostitution, armed-robbery, drug trafficking, etc as strategies to escape poverty and deprivation. Substantial evidence abound that oil exploration by the multinational corporations has resulted into air, land and sea pollution. The land in many places now yields little or no harvest; plants shrink and fade away because of gas flaring. Medical and environmental experts explain that gas flaring alone contains about 250 toxins. Such toxins lead to respiratory problems among other dangers to human, environmental and animal life. Unfortunately the gas flaring is carried out in some parts of the Niger Delta 24 hours daily. This constitutes serious health hazard in the region.

The fact that public relations is not earlier seen as a veritable tool to handle the situation worsened the crises. Public relations as the best crisis management is neglected and not properly utilized at the level where and when conflict could have been controlled, and thus led to the current level of escalation. Some experts are of the view that the absence of effective public relations actually escalates the crises. This is because good pre-crisis planning could have involved communication in preventing the crisis. It is also argued that since government ineffectively or underutilizes Public relations in the act of governance, made some of the controllable problems metamorphosed into full-blown crises.

However, for the Federal government to proffer solution came up with Post-amnesty Programme. Questions are being asked as to whether the grant of Amnesty is the best option for the Niger Delta considering all the violence committed in the region. Another issue is “how reliable is the content of the Amnesty”. It is not established whether there are mechanisms set up to evaluate and assess the Amnesty programme and its contents; whether there was adequate dialogue among the stakeholders in the crisis before granting the Amnesty. Okoko and Peterside [2009] argued that the Amnesty lacks transparency; it is inadequately planned and has no clear cut time frame. Based on these the study sought to:

- Determine the Public relations tools and strategies that will be most effective in managing the Amnesty programme;
- Determine how Public relations can be used to effectively sustain the Niger Delta Peace Agreement (treaties) beyond Post-amnesty in Nigeria; and

### **Research Hypotheses**

- Public relations dialogue method in form of public involvement is not the most effective PR tool that will significantly manage the Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria
- Public relations evaluation method does not significantly maintain the Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria
- Public relations would not sustain the Niger Delta peace agreement [treaties] beyond Post- amnesty programme

**METHODOLOGY**

The population of the study comprised of the major stakeholder involved in Niger Delta crisis: Youths aged 15-39 years old from the three selected states that include: Bayelsa State, Rivers State and Delta State.

**Population Size of each of State (15-39 YRS)**

STATE	POPULATION
Bayelsa	27,375
Rivers	2,322,642
Delta	1,748,502
Total	4,798,519

*Source: Population and Housing census on Federal Republic of Nigeria (2006). Priority table 1 NPC Abuja]*

These States were chosen based on the fact that they were the most crisis and militancy ridden states in the region. Therefore, the population size of the youths in all the states was 4,798,519. [Based on the last census of 2006]. The sample size was 400 using Taro Yamane formula 1976. The research design employed for this study was descriptive survey design research method. While, stratified random sampling, in order to determine the population quota of each of the States, and purposive sample technique for choosing the actual respondents in each State.

**Concept Analysis, Discussion and Explanations****The concept Public Relations:**

Nwosu [2004], opines that Public Relations is the profession that influences public opinion or attitude in such a positive direction, understanding and acceptance; it establishes a two-way communication to ensure mutual understanding, resolve conflicts of interest between individuals, organizations and its publics. Sam Black [2005] says that the purpose of Public relations practice is to establish a two-way communication channel seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and adequate information. Public Relations principles recognize that a pro-active approach is the best philosophy for addressing issues that lead to conflict or crisis. Supporting this view, Akinyemi, [1993:99], asserts that “the best tool for managing crisis is making sure that crises do not arise, by using the regular Public relations strategy of a planned and sustained programme of communication.

Nkwocha [1999] advises that it is profitable to employ ‘Crisis Management’ rather than management of crisis, which means taking appropriate measures to prevent crisis before it occurs”. Public Relations as a communication process, is mostly needed when the issue of campaign needs aggressive mobilization. However, Public Relations has the capability and ability in creating conscious awareness in the minds of the populace through Agenda Setting theory, principles of proactive approach, effective two-way communication and persuasion which are pre-requisite for effective crisis management.

Public relations is about communication; it is about persuading people to accept ideas and take action along a specific line, and it is about creating a conducive environment or condition for

national growth and development. Salu [2008] opines that wherever man exists, communication must take place and the communication must be planned. It must be orderly to be effective, and it helps understanding and cooperation. It is to be understood that the aim of Public relations in any country is to ensure that all concerned [internal and external publics] have a better understanding of the institution's policies and the "modus operandi" of executing such policies.

**Lattimore [2004:5] posits that Public relations, as a management functions encompasses the following:**

- Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues which might impact for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public consequences, and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.
- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programmes of action and communication to achieve informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims. These include marketing, financial, fund-raising, employee, community or government relations, and other programmes.
- Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy
- Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, and developing facilities- in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

**Black [2005:2-3] opines that Public relations practitioners may play the role of:**

- Counseling based on an understanding of human behavior
- Analyzing future trends and predicting their consequences
- Research into public opinion, attitudes and expectations and advising on necessary action
- Establishing and maintaining two-way communication based on truth and full information
- Preventing conflict and misunderstandings
- Promoting mutual respect and social responsibility
- Harmonizing the private and the public interest
- Promoting good-will with staff, suppliers and customers
- Improving industrial relations
- Attracting good personnel and reducing labor turnover
- Promotion of products or services
- Projecting a corporate identity.

**What is Amnesty?**

Amnesty was defined by Encarta [2009] as an international law and an act of effacing and forgetting past offences granted by the government to person [s] who have been guilty of crime and rebellion against the state. Goldman [2002] is a general pardon of offence by government, a deliberate overlooking of offences against a government. Weisman [1972 sees it as an act of sovereign power designed to apply the principle of "tabula rasa" to past offences usually

committed against the state. He noted that the offences which amnesty generally applies include political depicts, such as treason, sedition or rebellion...

The term is applied to rebellious acts against the state. Amnesty differs from pardon in that amnesty causes the crime to be forgotten, whereas pardon, given after a conviction, exempts the criminal from further punishment. Amnesty is usually granted to a class of criminals or group of persons who may have committed a crime and is offered in order to restore tranquility in the state.

Some examples of amnesty in United States history were those granted by President Andrew Johnson after the American Civil War and those given to certain wartime offenders after World Wars 1 and II. Amnesty may be conditioned upon fulfillment of certain obligations within a specified period. In 1974 President Gerald Ford instituted a programme for Vietnam War deserters, and draft evaders requiring them to spend two years doing public service work as the condition for amnesty. Few people took advantage of these terms within the time allowed for the programme (Encarta@, 2009).

**The Programmes for the Post-amnesty offer include the following:** Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Re-integration; Oil and Gas Asset Protection; Infrastructural Development and Environmental Clean-up; Remediation, skills and acquisition programmes. The Amnesty programme is a part of the Federal government determination and desire to put an end to the agitations and violence in the region, with the aim of disarming, rehabilitating and reintegrating militants into their communities as a means to tackle the challenges facing the region. Amnesty programme was a huge success as the militants accepted the offer and began coming out of hiding to hand over their arms and ammunition to the government through the peace committee set up to coordinate the programme.

In order to sustain the emerging peace in the region and to support the Post-amnesty agenda, Public relations has an important role to play if the country is to witness lasting peace and development in this volatile region. The public relations expertise is inevitable in the challenge of how to ensure that government institutions and agencies saddled with the responsibility of rehabilitating the youths, infrastructural development of the area and provision of social amenities are been carried out without compromising moral integrity and honesty. This will include the operations of the Niger Delta Ministry and the Committees handling the rehabilitation programme to ensure compliance to the objectives of the Post-amnesty in Nigeria. With the Amnesty declared a success and to be sustained is the efforts and determination of the government to achieve these objectives

**Management:** Onabajo (2002) asserts that management as a concept is the 'harnessing of all necessary resources, by which an organization can be run effectively to meet the set objectives for which the organization is founded'. This study uses management to mean skillful treatment of an issue or skillful handling of Niger Delta crises for national development.

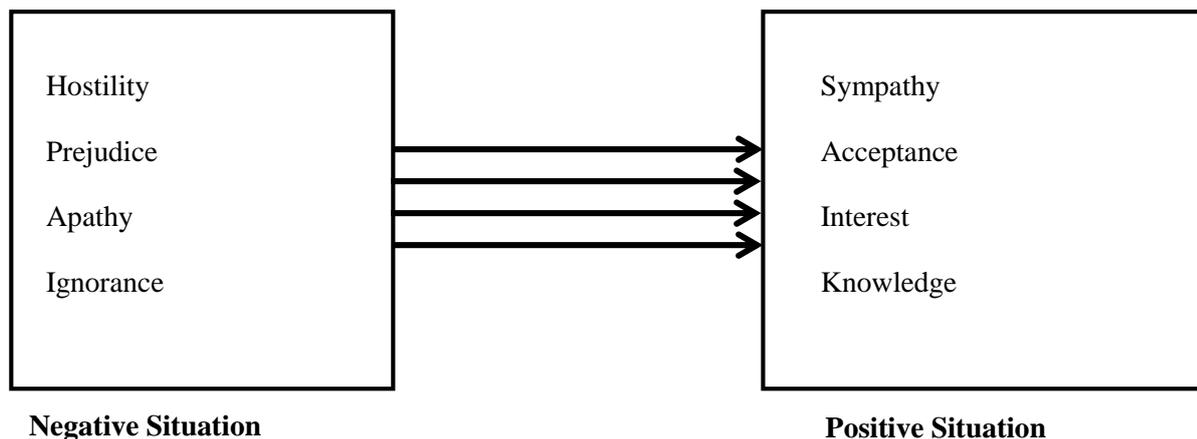
**Niger Delta:** Wikipedia [2010] opines that Niger Delta is a densely populated region having a total population of about 20 million people, living in 1600 communities that spread over about 70,000 square kilometers that made up of 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. But in this study, Niger Delta is synonymous with oil producing states or a region with youth restiveness and militancy. It comprises of nine states at 2011 which include: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers.

**Militant:** Encarta dictionary, defines militant as aggressive-extreme action in the defense or support of a cause. Smith [2011] sees a militant as someone who is not afraid to use verbal or physical violence to further a cause. For this study, militant means restive youths that take laws into their hands in Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.

### Public Relations Proactive Conflict Management Strategies and Models:

#### Effective Communication

Sam Black [2005] contends that the major cause of conflict is misunderstanding. So, to resolve conflict, is to achieve an understanding. The achievement of understanding is largely dependent on information, education and communication. Therefore, communication is at the root of resolving conflict situation. From the above assertions, a Public relations being a management function, communication process and adjunct of mass media is the ultimate organ in managing Post Amnesty program in Niger Delta. Based on these, the study advocates for urgent need of public relations efforts and strategies in managing and sustaining Post Amnesty programme in Niger Delta region.



**Figure 2.5 Frank Jefkins Public Relations Transfer Process**

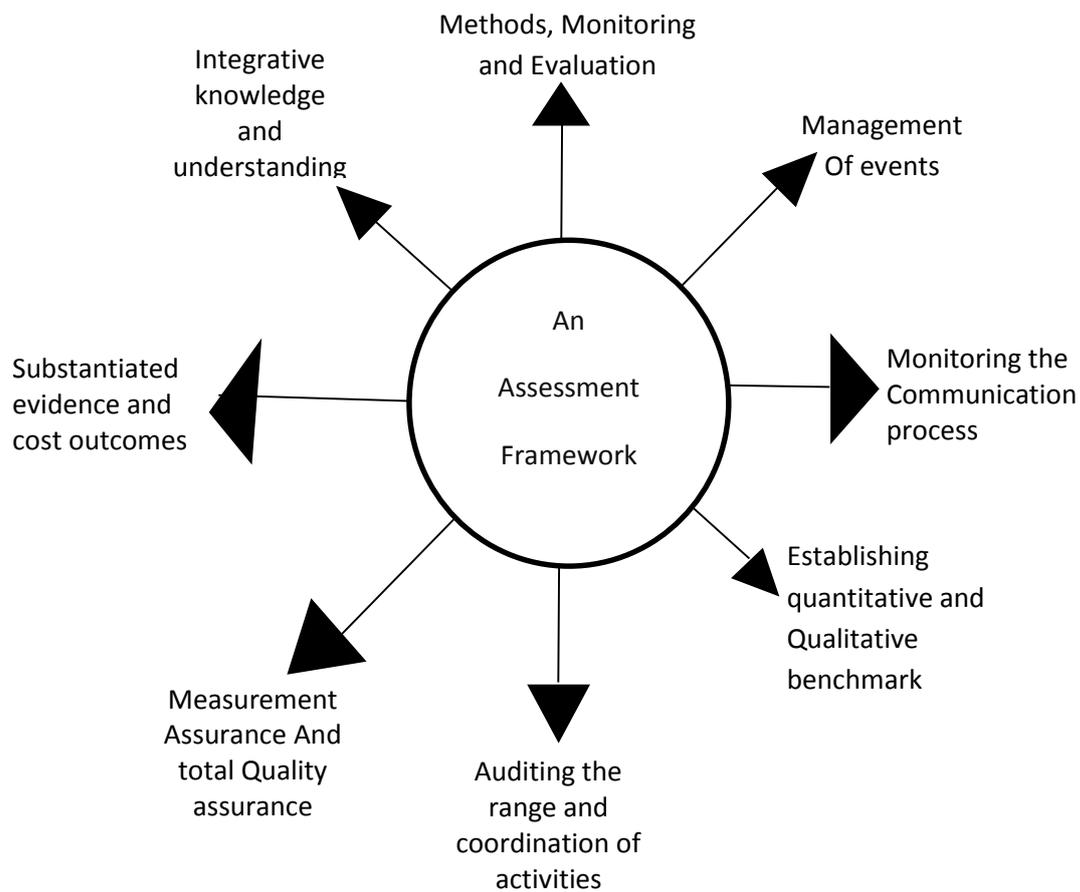
*Source: Frank Jefkins [1998]: Public Relations, London: 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Pearson Education Ltd. Pp41*

Jefkins [1998:40-41] asserts that when the 'negative situation is converted into achievement through knowledge; the result is the primary objective of Public relations [PR] which is "understanding", because knowledge creates understanding'. Jefkins expects practitioners to use PR tools to win sympathy where there is hostility, acceptance where there is prejudice, develop interest where there is apathy and communicate to achieve knowledge where there is ignorance. Tolerance may be an admirable second PR objective, but it is difficult to tolerate something which is improperly understood. This is at the heart of RACE Relations PR.

#### In RACE model:

- R =stands for Research
- A= stands for Action
- C=stands for Communication
- E=stands for Evaluation

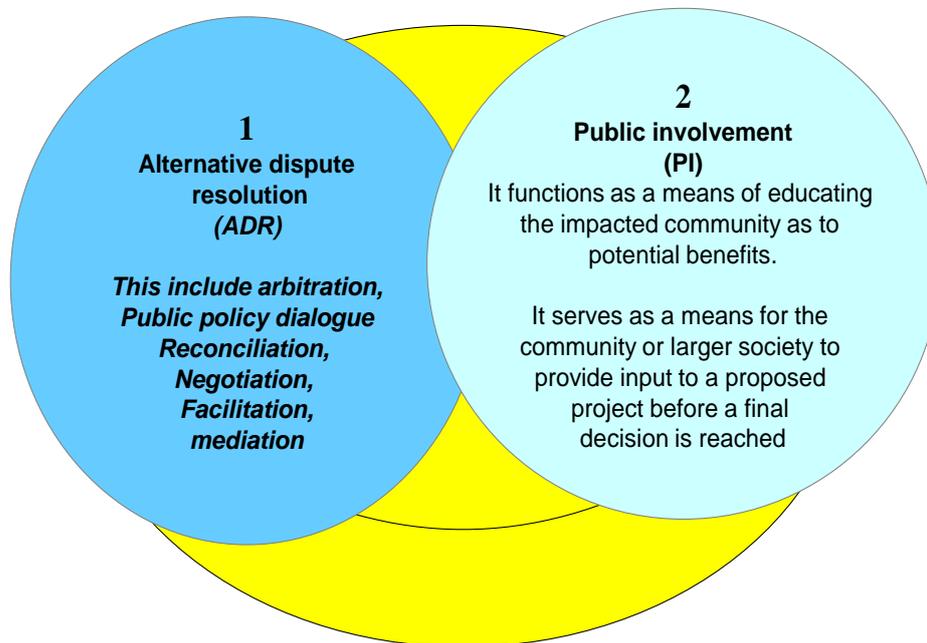
This model is crucially needed among the stakeholders in peace building in the Niger Delta crises. With this, one can see the inevitability of Public Relations to be the brain behind the management of Post Amnesty programme. Public relations practitioner is knowledgeable on how to develop a platform to assess the extent of the enmity that exists among the stakeholders in the crisis, the form it has taken and how it can be overcome by use of **Eight-Factor Model**:



### Public Relations Synergistic Communication Model

The term 'synergy' is gotten from the Greek word 'synergia', which means 'work together'. In other words it is the working together of two or more people, organizations or things especially when the result is greater than the sum of their individual effects or capabilities. The public relations synergistic communication strategies can be used in organizations as their management principles. They are guided by the principle that the whole is greater than its various parts and units. It prompts its communication to be selfless, empathetic, less defensive, less judgmental and legalistic and be more caring, friendly, altruistic and welcoming.

### Alternative Dispute Resolution Model



**Figure 2.11 Alternative Dispute Resolution Model**

*Source: Olugbenga, A.E. [2010]. “The Way Forward in Conflict Resolution: Environment and Social Sustainability”; Unpublished Paper Presented at World Peace Conference at Abuja*

Alternative dispute resolution [ADR] is an increasingly popular trend that allows people to solve disputes outside court in a cooperative manner rather than through litigation. It can be cheaper than litigation because the parties settle out of court; expenses for depositions, clerical costs may be substantially reduced. It can also be faster because there is little or no waiting for trial dates and in arbitral proceedings. For example, most of the disputes are resolved on documentary evidence and since the provisions of the Evidence Act of Nigeria are not applicable in real sense of it.

The use of ADR also can improve client satisfaction with the way disputes are resolved. ADR involves the preservation of good business and personal relation, and its proceeding is a relatively friendly one. ADR is divorced from the technicalities of the law in that its proceedings are very flexible and informal. ADR may involve the use of mediation, arbitration, mediation-arbitration, conciliation, mini-trials, or summary jury trials instead of litigation and other formal adversarial proceedings. Dispute resolution processes can be voluntary, mandatory, binding, or advisory. Public relations experts make use of ADR techniques in resolving issues and they are PR major tools in managing crises. This is one of the reasons why this study advocates for the urgent call for Public Relations to be the brain behind Post Amnesty programme for its sustainability.

#### **Issues Management**

Issues Management is a method of controlling different variables that impinges on the organization to avoid the occurrence of conflict or successfully reduce its impacts before it

spread like the wild fire. Public relations practitioners have discovered from research and experience that a fire brigade approach means wait until it occurs and we'll fight it, is not only expensive, it is also a dangerous method of conflict management. Nwosu [2004] contents that issues management involves tracking, analyzing, collating, presentation of data and making practical recommendation to the management on issues and problems that may have negative or positive impact on the growth and survival of the organization.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Research Questions Analyses

In addressing research questions of the study, data was obtained via the responses of the sampled respondents to the research instrument. These are presented in tables 1 to 6 and discussed.

#### Research Question 1

**What are the Public Relations Tools that would be best used in Managing Post-amnesty Programme?**

**Table 1: Dialogue (Tool of Public Relations) as the Best Strategy to Resolve the Niger Delta Crisis**

State	Agree (%)	Strong Agree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Bayelsa	25 (48.1)	22 (42.3)	2 (3.8)	3 (5.8)		52 (100.0)
Delta	72 (64.9)	30 (27.0)	5 (4.5)	3 (2.7)	1(0.9)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	79 (53.7)	46 (31.3)	9 (6.1)	7 (4.8)	6(4.1)	147 (100.0)
Total	176 (56.8)	98 (31.6)	16 (5.2)	13 (4.2)	7(2.3)	310 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 1 reveals that 176 respondents (56.8%), 98 respondents (31.6%), 16 respondents (5.2%), 13 respondents (4.2%) agreed and strongly agreed, indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed that dialogue as a Public relations tool is the best strategy to resolve the Niger Delta crisis. This is further reflected in the responses of 25 respondents (48.1%) and 22 respondents (42.3%) from Bayelsa state who agreed and strongly agreed respectively, 72 respondents (64.9%) and 30 respondents (27%) from Delta State who agreed and strongly agreed respectively and 79 respondents (53.7%) and 46 respondents (31.3%) from Rivers State who agreed and strongly agreed respectively. Based on the study, dialogue as a Public relations tool is the best strategy to resolve the Niger Delta crisis.

**Table 2: PR Tools Best Suited for Post-amnesty Programme**

State	public involvement	Third - party involvement	Bargaining and negotiation	Conference	Dialogue	Total
Bayelsa	15 (28.8)	13 (25.0)	4 (7.7)	10 (19.2)	10 (19.2)	52 (100.0)
Delta	33 (29.7)	35 (31.5)	6 (5.4)	25 (22.5)	12 (10.8)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	36 (24.5)	29 (19.7)	10 (6.8)	48 (32.7)	24 (16.3)	147 (100.0)
Total	84 (27.1)	77 (24.8)	20 (6.5)	83 (26.8)	46 (14.8)	310 (100.0)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 2 shows that the respondents are varied in their opinion of the best Public relations tool that can be best employed for the Post-amnesty Programme. However, higher frequencies show that 27.1% indicated public involvement, 24.8% indicated third-party involvement and 26.8% indicated conference. This shows that a higher percentage of the respondents believed that public involvement is the best Public relations tool that can be best employed for the Post-amnesty Programme.

**Table 3: Effective Evaluation Method as a Management Technique can be used for the Sustainability of the Post-amnesty**

State	Agree (%)	Strong Agree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Disagree (%)	Strong Disagree	Total (%)
Bayelsa	29 (55.8)	13 (25.0)	6 (11.5)	1 (1.9)	3(5.8)	52 (100.0)
Delta	65 (58.6)	26 (23.4)	10 (9.0)	6 (5.4)	4(3.6)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	84 (57.1)	39 (26.5)	5 (3.4)	11 (7.5)	8(5.4)	147 (100.0)
Total	178 (57.4)	78 (25.2)	21 (6.8)	18 (5.8)	15(4.8)	310 (100.0)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 3 reveals that the respondents are of the view that effective evaluation method is a management technique that can be used for the sustainability of the Post-amnesty. This is reflective in the frequency responses of 178 respondents (57.4%) and 78 respondents (25.2%), 21 respondents (6.8%), 18 respondents (5.8%) and 15 respondents (4.87%) who agreed and strongly agreed, are indifferent, disagreed, strongly disagreed respectively. Based on the study, effective evaluation method is a management technique that can be used for the sustainability of the Post-amnesty.

**Table 4: The Post-amnesty Programme Objective Achievable Through the Use of Evaluation and Assessment Techniques**

State	Agree (%)	Strong Agree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Disagree (%)	Strong Disagree	Total (%)
Bayelsa	30 (57.7)	16 (30.8)	5 (9.6)	1 (1.9)	0	52 (100.0)
Delta	61 (55.0)	32 (28.8)	12 (10.8)	4 (3.6)	2(1.8)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	84 (57.1)	31 (21.1)	28 (19.0)	4 (2.7)	0	147 (100.0)
Total	175 (56.5)	79 (25.5)	45 (14.5)	9 (2.9)	2(0.6)	310 (100.0)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 4 shows that 175 respondents (56.5%) and 79 respondents (25.5%), 45 respondents (14.5%), 9 respondents of (2.9%) and 2 respondents (0.6%) agreed, strongly agreed, indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed that the objective of the Post-amnesty Programme can be achieved through the use of evaluation and assessment techniques. This is the view of the respondents from the individual sampled states. Therefore, in regards to the study, Post-amnesty Programme objective can be achieved with the use of effective evaluation and assessment techniques

## Research Question 2

**How can Public Relations be used to effectively sustain Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria?**

**Table 5: The Involvement of Public Relations can sustain the Niger-Delta Peace Agreement beyond the Post-amnesty Programme**

State	Agree (%)	Strong Agree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Disagree (%)	Strong Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Bayelsa	17 (32.7)	8 (15.4)	23 (44.2)	4 (7.7)	0	52 (100.0)
Delta	54 (48.6)	16 (14.4)	37 (33.3)	2 (1.8)	2 (1.8)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	53 (36.1)	24 (16.3)	53 (36.1)	8(5.4)	9(6.1)	147 (100.0)
Total	124 (40.0)	48 (15.5)	113 (36.5)	14 (4.5)	11(3.5)	310 (100.0)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

As presented in table 5 with 124 respondents (40.0%) and 48 respondents (15.5%), 113 respondents (36.5%), 14 respondents (4.5%) and 11 respondents (3.5%) agreeing and strongly agreeing, indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed, a higher percentage of the respondents feel that the involvement of Public relations can sustain the Niger-Delta peace agreement beyond the Post-amnesty Programme. However the responses from the various sampled states vary, as fewer percentages of respondents (44.2%) from Bayelsa state either agreed or strongly agreed while a higher percentage of the respondents (51.9%) are indifferent or undecided.

**Table 6: The Involvement of Public Relations in the Amnesty Programme is a Sheer Waste of National Resources**

State	Agree (%)	Strong Agree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Disagree (%)	Strong Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Bayelsa	11 (21.2)	6 (11.5)	7 (13.5)	21 (40.4)	7(13.5)	52 (100.0)
Delta	22 (19.8)	4 (3.6)	14 (12.6)	50 (45.0)	21(18.9)	111 (100.0)
Rivers	35 (23.8)	14 (9.5)	17 (11.6)	43 (29.3)	38(25.9)	147 (100.0)
Total	68 (21.9)	24 (7.7)	38 (12.3)	114 (36.8)	66(21.3)	310 (100.0)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 6 shows that only 68 respondents (21.9%) and 24 respondents (7.7%) agreed and strongly agreed that the involvement of Public relations in the Amnesty programme is a sheer waste of national resources. With 180 respondents (58.1%) disagreeing and more than 50% of the respondents from each of the sampled states disagreeing, it is instructive to note that the

involvement of Public relations in the Amnesty programme is not sheer waste of national resources.

### **Test of Hypothesis One**

#### **Public relations dialogue method in form of public involvement is not the most effective PR tool that will significantly manage the Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria**

In testing this hypothesis, data presented in table 1 above was used. This was tested using the **One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z)**.

#### **Decision Rule**

If  $Z_{\text{calculated}} > Z_{\text{critical}}$  or  $-Z_{\text{calculated}} < -Z_{\text{critical}}$ , reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

#### **Decision**

As presented in table above the calculated Z-value is 3.885. This is less than the critical Z-value of 1.96 i.e.  $Z_{\text{calculated}} (3.885) > Z_{\text{critical}} (1.960)$ . This result is significant as p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted accordingly. Hence, Public relations dialogue method in form of public involvement is the most effective PR tool that will significantly manage the Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria.

### **Test of Hypothesis Two**

#### **Public relations evaluation method does not significantly maintain the Post-amnesty programme in Nigeria**

In testing this hypothesis data presented in tables 3 above was used. This was tested using the Friedman Chi-Square test statistics.

#### **Decision Rule**

If  $X^2_{\text{calculated}} > X^2_{\text{critical}}$ , reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

#### **Decision**

As presented in table above the calculated Friedman chi-square value is 137.098. This is greater than the critical chi-square value of 5.9915 i.e.  $X^2_{\text{(friedman)calculated}} (137.098) > X^2_{\text{critical}} (5.9915)$ . This result is significant as p-value of  $0.00 < 0.05$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted accordingly. Hence, Public relations evaluation method significantly maintains the Post-amnesty Programme in Nigeria

### **Test of Hypothesis Three**

#### **Public relations would not sustain the Niger Delta peace agreement [treaties] beyond Post- amnesty Programme**

In testing this hypothesis data presented in tables 5 and 6 below were used. These were tested using the Two-Related Samples (Wilcoxon Signed Ranks – Z) test.

#### **Decision Rule**

If  $Z_{\text{calculated}} > Z_{\text{critical}}$  or  $-Z_{\text{calculated}} < -Z_{\text{critical}}$ , reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

### Decision

As presented in tables above the calculated Z-value is -9.232. This is less than the critical Z-value of -1.96 (at 95% level of significance) i.e.  $Z_{\text{calculated}} (-9.232) < Z_{\text{critical}} (-1.96)$ . This result is significant as p-value of  $0.00 < 0.05$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted accordingly. Hence, Public relations would sustain the Niger Delta peace agreement [treaties] beyond Post-amnesty Programme.

### CONCLUSION

Having established the need for sustainability of the Niger Delta Peace Agreement, it is vital that the right machinery is put in place to ensure that the process of sustainability is successful. Having also established the fact that a combination of the use of public initiative, third-party involvement and conference as forms of Public relations dialogue as well as Public relations evaluation method can enhance and sustain the Post-amnesty Programme, it leaves no doubt that Public relations plays a vital role in the sustainability of the Post-amnesty Programme.

Public relations dialogue as a tool is multifaceted. This is to say that there are various components of dialogue; one of this is public involvement. In the implementation of the Post-amnesty programme, while utilizing the weapon of dialogue in conflict resolution, the study sought to establish the importance of public involvement. Dialogue can be represented in the forms of public involvement, third party involvement, bargaining and negotiation, conferencing and face-to-face interaction (dialogue). A combination of all these representations makes dialogue complete and the absence of one or more hinders its effectiveness. The study exposes that public involvement is a veritable aspect of dialogue; therefore, it plays a vital role in entrenchment of dialogue as a weapon of conflict resolution. This cannot be overemphasized because its absence can lead to mistrust among stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme. For continuous and relative peace to be sustained in the Niger Delta area, the active participation of programme beneficiaries and stakeholders is of utmost importance.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Petroleum extraction in the Niger Delta is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. Petroleum has since its production in the Niger Delta been considered exclusively a state property. The right approach should be made to ensure that the conflict is stopped and the areas affected developed so as to foster peace and growth in the communities. The Niger Delta crisis is multifaceted. The root of the Niger Delta crisis is the collective failure of the Nigerian state, the Niger Delta State governments and the multinational oil corporations to bring about rapid socio-economic development to the region over decades since oil and gas were found in the region prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960. There is need for the adoption of public relations' modified multi-track approach which involves all the major parties in the conflict such as the Federal governments, militant groups, State governments, MNOCs, Traditional rulers, Religious leaders, and host communities to work as partners in the peace process. Legal structures should be placed on all stakeholders and disputants not to renege on consensus/peace

documents as this may disrupt the entire process. The State and Federal Governments should muster the political will and zeal to prosecute individuals and corporate organizations who perpetrate conflicts in the communities. This will serve as deterrence to all groups.

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