
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IN NIGERIA NIGER DELTA REGION: THE NEED FOR A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a critical assessment of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as being pursued by oil multinational corporations, in the wake of environmental problems and social activism that has continued to bedevil the development and economic growth in the Niger Delta Region. The central thesis of this paper argues that the brand of corporate social responsibility that is currently carried out by these oil multinational corporations has done little or nothing in ameliorating the sufferings of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta Region. Rather it has polarized the people into warring groups and has greatly created division among them. This is because the deliberate exemption of environmental related issues likes gas flaring and oil spillage from their corporate social responsibility agenda has been the primary reason why in spite of their dedicated commitment to some infrastructural projects, the problem of conflict and poverty has become intensified. In light of the above this paper recommends that there is a dire need to incorporate environmental related problems into the agenda of these multinationals social responsibility as these will go a long way in addressing the economic and environmental problems of the people of the region and also reduce violence and conflicts which has continue to hamper development in the region.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility, Social Activism, Development*

INTRODUCTION

Among all multinational corporations, the ones that have adversely affected the environment are those related to the oil industry. Apart from the quality of the environment that has been adversely affected, it has also imposed considerable social and economic cost on livelihood and therefore has become serious threat to sustainable development. This is very much the case in Nigeria especially in her Niger Delta region where the bulk of her oil is explored and exploited. Nigeria is basically a monocultural economy (Orubu, 2002) relying solely on petrol-dollars for her budgetary and developmental projections. This is not disregarding the fact that the country is one of the most blessed nations in the world with natural resources, solid minerals and arable lands for agriculture abundantly positioned in all her 36 States but

largely untapped. However, the neglect by the government of these other sectors has led her towards oil rents as it portends the easiest means for the primitive accumulation of wealth. According to Jike (2004), this might not be unconnected with the long gestation period associated with agricultural production and one which the country leaders finds incompatible with their attitude towards governance which again is primordial in nature.

Thus the craze for petrol-dollars and the unrestrained access given to Oil Multinational Corporation in the extraction and exploitation of crude oil has affected adversely the Niger Delta environment and as such affected the livelihood of the inhabitants of the region. Consequently, the Niger Delta region has been engrossed in conflicts and violence that has hampered development, created insecurity, and has generally caused Nigeria daily production output to drop. Consequently, Nigeria loses revenue. Youth restiveness which has metamorphosed into proliferation of arms, emergence of militias, kidnapping, armed robbery, inter and intra community clashes etc. has become obstacle to economic growth and developmental drive pursued by the relevant authorities tasked in providing and ensuring good life for the citizenry. Protests, (which are sometimes violent) have been seen by communities as a major way of attracting attention of the oil companies, government and the general public to their plight. In very recent times, this has become the focal point of addressing their grievances. Before now, especially during the military era, Shell, Mobile, Chevron and others respond to these protests by securing the assistance of the Nigerian police or military to terrorize and brutalize the people. However, instead of the decrease in such protests, most of which relate to unemployment, environmental degradation, destruction of the means of livelihood and lack of access to healthcare delivery, the region has become extremely volatile and portend danger to potential investors. It has also destabilized oil companies operations as most of their workers, and oil installations has fallen victim to the extra-judicial approach of host communities. Consequently, oil companies have decided to increase their corporate social responsibility towards host communities. It is believed that these will be the antidote or panacea to youth restiveness in the region. Corporate social responsibility connotes the commitment of companies towards encouraging community growth and development and voluntarily eliminating practices that are not in accordance with public interest. It is thus the deliberate inclusion of public interest into corporate decision making and the honoring of a triple bottom line: People, planet and profit. It is believed that if corporations or businesses establish an understanding with host community where such businesses are located, an understanding anchored on the protection of the people from the adverse effects or impact of its activities, it will go a long way in addressing the violent and conflictual relationship that do sometimes exist. In the Niger Delta region, where the people have for long lived with the consequences of oil and gas exploration on

their lives and environment, such thinking has led to oil multinational corporations voluntary desire to contribute to the growth and development of host communities. For instance in 2005, under the Global Memorandum of Understanding, Chevron, the third largest oil and gas company in the country intend to give communities greater roles in the management of their development through newly created Regional Development Councils (RDCs). Its objectives are to bring peace, stability and reduced conflict to areas where their operation is active. As at March 2011, chevron claims the initiative has generated approximately 200 projects in more than 400 communities, villages and chiefdoms and 600,000 community members have benefited immensely from this scheme.

Notably, Chevron has supported small and medium scale enterprise development and micro credit finance giving loans to 160 women between 2008 and 2009 to boast small trading businesses. Also as part of their CSR, they have empowered local contractors as part of their commitment to Local Community Content Development. In its desire to build human capacity, training of contractors and entrepreneurs has been pursued and as at 2009, 680 community contractors and entrepreneurs have participated in the training. During this period, Chevron in conjunction with NNPC, have awarded scholarships to 2,450 secondary students and 1,600 college students (Chevron, 2009) This success story is replicated by Shell, the biggest oil company in Nigeria. In their bid to help reduce tension in the region, Shell has shifted its focus from just the provision of infrastructures in host communities (roads, schools, clinics, and the provision of portable water) to specific community development programmes which include micro credit scheme and health scheme. Such shift in focus has produce 27 clinics in the delta and over 17,000 children are on Shell scholarship at any point in time, (Burger, 2011). As at 2010, Shell companies in Nigeria had trained 1,900 service providers in General Contracting, developed eight local dredging companies, awarded 10 United Kingdom scholarships and trained more than 3000 people in entrepreneurship, scaffolding, project management, welding, catering and other vocations, (Burger, 2011).

Still, in spite of these corporate social achievements, the volatile nature of the Niger Delta region has not experienced a marked improvement. Poverty, disease and unemployment feature prominently in the region. Thus, there have been continued hostility between these oil companies and the communities as these projects have failed to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. In this light therefore, the question that tend to provoke this study is why have all these corporate commitment failed to address the deteriorating interactions that has characterized relations between host communities and oil companies? It seems a critical assessment of these

projects reveals a tendency towards pacifying victims of environmental degradation rather than addressing the genesis of the problem. Where then has the oil companies gone wrong in their commitment towards ensuring sustainable development in the oil rich Niger Delta region? In line with the above, the general objectives of this paper will be to establish an in-depth understanding of the very concept of corporate social responsibility which will serve as a yardstick in measuring the corporate social behavior of oil multinationals in the Niger Delta region and its efficacy in poverty reduction and conflict management. More specifically this paper will also seek to:

1. To assess critically the current corporate social responsibility practice by oil multinational corporations
2. To show how and why they are not far-reaching enough
3. To demonstrate how the incorporation of environmental related issues which so far have been neglected are more related to the needs of the people and thus would have amounted to a more effective CSR and lastly
4. Make policy recommendation on how corporate social responsibility can be improved in other to meet the aspirations of the host communities in the Niger Delta region.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

The question as to why oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have chosen to invest less in environmental friendly technology as it is obtained in advanced economy has over the years been an intense scholarly debate (see Evoh, 2002). As this paper will go on to show, environmental issues have featured even less in their acclaimed corporate social responsibility to their host communities. These worries have become even more interesting given the fact that a less polluted environment is in the long term favorable to all parties concerned. Therefore to understand oil firms attitude towards the environment of the Niger Delta region and government lack of commitment in enforcing the country's environmental standards and regulations, it is believed that the economic model of cost benefit analysis offers an adequate explanation for this attitudinal behavior. The cost- benefit theoretical model assume that an individual, group or a firm will only undertake an action if, and only if the extra benefit of undertaking that action is at least as equal as the extra cost. In fact, cost- benefit analysis is used in the assessment of whether a proposed project, programmes, or policy is worth doing or to choose between several alternative ones. It involves comparing the total expected costs of each option against the total expected benefits in other to see whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Ordinarily

this is a desirable economic model for decision makers enabling them to make rational decisions. Therefore to understand this principle as it relates to oil multinationals exploratory activities in the Niger Delta region, it is important first to understand the economic motive of these oil giants. Many scholars have argued as against the claims made by these multinationals and their apologists, that the primary reason or objective for their presence in Third World Nations is to oversee the exploitation of the colonies natural resources, having lost their political hold on the emergent independent nations. The question that constitutes a dilemma for the departing colonial masters was to seek out a solution that guarantees them their economic interest while relinquishing their political power. The integration of African economy into global trade was the answer. A major player if not a primacy in effecting and assuring that interest was the Multinational Corporations. With the advent of oil dominance in Nigeria economy for instance, the oil multinational corporation assume the front seat. Since the economic goal of these agencies of western capital was not development oriented, but rather profit making, investment was geared towards actualizing that goal. Thus for example, gas flaring is as old as the discovery and exploitation of oil in Nigeria in spite of its adverse effect on the environment and there has been no committed effort to stop it. The reason given for this socially and morally unacceptable behavior is the infeasibility of acquiring the technology necessary for its termination. Hence over the years they have inadvertently agreed to pay the stipend charge for flaring gas than making any frantic effort to stop it. Using the cost benefit analysis it is more expensive to invest in any form of technology that will stop gas flaring and not a good business strategy so long as they will leave when the oil is dried up.

The federal government too has inadvertently played along with this logic when it allows itself to become a monocultural economy. It can not effect compliance with her environmental standards, standards that have been described as favorably in line with those in advance countries (Natufe, 2001), because it cannot do in a technical sense, without foreign expertise in her oil industry. Hence it is more beneficial to governmental rent seekers to allow environmental degradation so long as the expected oil rent can guarantee their personal acquisition of wealth and their legitimacy, without a consideration of the cost. As for the oil multinational corporations, corporate social responsibility geared towards the pacification of the aggressive behavior of the oppressed in the form that it has taken, will go a long way in assuring their safety in the exploitation of crude oil in the region. Sadly as they have come to realize, the external cost of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta now intensely felt by its inhabitants has given rise to extreme provocation expressed through conflicts and violence of a sort. The need for a change of strategy is therefore urgently needed

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Like most complex phenomena often dealt with in the social and management sciences, corporate social responsibility is difficult to define in concise and precise terms. Not surprisingly there is hardly a consensus as to what constitute an acceptable definition of the concept, one that will be universally accepted. Consequently, this has led to arrays of definitions. To avoid this confusion, we intend to provide an operational definition of corporate social responsibility as conceptualize in this paper. It is however pertinent to explore some of the ways it has over the years been used by international bodies, corporate organizations, states and academics. Corporate social responsibility is associated with the conduct of firms towards interests that tends not to be directly related to their goals or objectives. According to Kercher (2007), it addresses the question of whether corporations owe a duty to stakeholders other than shareholders. The concept received great impetus following the work of Bowen (1953) who posits that business firm's mission should not be exclusively economic but that the social implication of their decision should be taken into cognizance. (cf. Okafor et al, 2008). This was in contrast of a conservative views pursued by economist like Milton Friedman who advancing the primacy of shareholders, sees them as 'principals' who hire directors as their agents to manage corporations and the job of directors is to increase shareholders wealth through every means possible short of violating the law. In his words:

The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits....to make the most money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of thee society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical culture (Friedman, 1970 Quoted in Stohl, 2005)

Many factors could be accounted for this change. These are:

- i.** The impact of globalization and the proliferation of cross border trade by MNCs, resulting in increase awareness of CSR practices relating to areas such as human rights, environmental protections, health and safety and corruption
- ii.** The development of frameworks that outline norms for acceptable corporate conduct by organizations such as the UN, OECD and ILO.
- iii.** The increasing assess to information made possible by global communication networks e.g. CNN, internet and so on which has enable the public to be more informed and to easily monitor corporate activities.

iv. Commonality of expectations by citizens of various countries with regard to minimum standard corporations should achieve in relation to social and environmental issues, regardless of the jurisdiction in which the corporation operates.

v. Increasing awareness of the inadequacy of current regulations and legislation with regards to CSR matters and the regulation of MNCs. (Strategies Canada, 2011)

According to Sir Geoffrey Chandler, Founder Chair Amnesty International and former senior executive Royal Dutch/Shell Group (2001) quoted in Stohl et al (2005) CSR is defined as;

The responsibility of a company for the totality of its impact, with a need to embed society's values into its core operations as well as into its treatment of its social and physical environment. Responsibility is accepted as encompassing a spectrum – from the running of a profitable business to the health and safety of staff and the impact on the societies in which a company operates.

Natufe (2001) while contending that corporate social responsibility has no universally accepted definition noted that it has however acquired broad support in various international fora. These are the Organization for Economic Corporations and Development (OECD), World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSI). According to the WBCSD, corporate social responsibility is seen as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large. This definition adopted by the WBCSD is in line with its three fundamental and inseparable pillars of sustainable development which are the generation of economic wealth, environmental improvement and social responsibility. It is in this sense that the WBCSD posits corporate social responsibility as a vital link to the long term prosperity of companies as it provides the opportunity to demonstrate the human face of business and underscores the value of creating practical partnerships and dialogue between business, government and organizations. (cf. Natufe, 2001).

Certain core values were identified by the WBCSD as integral to corporate social responsibility. These are:

- i.** Human rights
- ii.** Employee rights
- iii.** Environmental protection
- iv.** Community development

- v. Supplier relations
- vi. Monitoring
- vii. Stakeholder rights.

Another organization that has shared in expanding the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the OECD. It stressed the need for both governments and companies to demonstrate their corporate responsibility by pursuing sound environmental and socially based policies (Natufe 2001). In an approved set of Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the OECD advises corporations to among other things:

- i. Contribute to economic, social and environmental progress with a view to achieving sustainable development.
- ii. Respect the human rights of those affected by their activities consistent with the host government international obligations and commitment.
- iii. Encourage local capacity building through close cooperation with the local community.
- iv. Encourage human capital formation, in particular by creating employment opportunities and facilitating training opportunities for employees.
- v. Abstain from any improper involvement in local political parties.

An organization that has impacted on the concept of corporate social responsibility in a practical way is the Dow Jones sustainability Group Indexes (DJSGI). Launched in Zurich on September 8, 1999, the DJSGI measures the performance of leading sustainability-driven companies world-wide using certain principles- Technology, Governance, Shareholders, industry and Society. Companies that satisfy these sustainability indexes qualify to be listed. Thus, due to global influences of the DJSGI, companies have tended to incorporate certain values into their operations.

DJSGI PRINCIPLE

Sustainability principles	Components
Technology	The creation, production and delivery of product and services...based on innovative technology and organization that use financial, natural and social resources in an effective and economic manner over the long-term.
Governance	Corporate sustainability...based on the highest standards of corporate governance including management responsibility, organizational capacity, corporate culture and stakeholder relations.
Shareholders	Shareholder’s demands should be met by sound financial returns, long-terms economic growth, long-term productivity

	increases, sharpened global competitiveness and contributions to intellectual capital.
Industry	Sustainability companies should lead their industry's shift towards sustainability by demonstrating their commitment and publicizing their superior performance.
Society	Sustainability companies should encourage lasting social well being by their appropriate and timely responses to rapid social change, evolving demographics, migratory flows. Shifting cultural patterns and the need for life-long learning and continuing education.

Other organizations and government too has also contributed to the expansive meaning of corporate social responsibility. Below are some of the widely used definitions of CSR

Government / Organization	CSR Definition
World Bank Group	The commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve the quality of life in ways that are both good for business and good for development.
European Commission	A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.
UK Government	CSR is about how business takes account of its economic, social, and environmental impacts in the way it operates – maximizing the benefits and minimizing the downsides. CSR is the voluntary actions that business can take, over and above competitive interests and the interests of wider society.
Chinese Government	Corporations should carry out their social responsibilities by abiding by all relevant laws, regulations, and business ethics codes. While pursuing economic profits, corporations are held responsible by shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, communities and other stakeholders. Moreover, corporations have responsibilities to protect the environment.

Source: Yang (2008)

In spite of lack of universality in defining CSR, subsequent scholars (Aswathappa, 2008; Yomere, 2002; Ezeani, 2006; Ejumudo, 2010; Slack, 2006; and Frynas, 2005) have all tended to sees CSR as a concept that entails giving back to the society. Thus the very concept of sustainable development can be

pushed past rhetoric if companies decide to behave responsibly. A key element of corporate social responsibility is environmental protection or sustainability and the application of environmental friendly technology as enshrined in the DJSGI sustainable principles. This has given rise to the term corporate environmental responsibility, a term which shows the significant position the environment plays (See Mazurkiewicz, 2005). The reasons for the environment given centre stage are not far stretched. They are well captured by Mazurkiewicz (2005: 2):

Traditionally, environmental protection has been considered to be in the public interest and external to private life. Governments have assumed principal responsibility for assuring environmental management, and have focused on creating and preserving a safe environment. When environmental problems arisen, the public sector generally borne the responsibility for mitigation of environmental damage.

Such negative externalities as the economists will call it have indeed impoverished many people, calling government commitment to question. Corporate environmental responsibility define as the duty to cover the environmental implications of the company's operations, products and facilities; eliminate waste and emissions; maximize the efficiency and productivity of its resources; and minimize practices that might adversely affect the enjoyment of the country's resources by future generations (Mazurkiewicz, 2005) has continue to gain currency since the 'Brundtland Report' was published in 1987, the result of a UN World Commission on Environment and Development. In that commission, efforts were geared towards an understanding of the concept of sustainable development. Defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, the concept of sustainable development according to Green (2002), focused attention on finding strategies to promote economic and social development in ways that avoids environmental degradation, over exploitation or pollution and away from the less productive debates about whether to prioritize development or the environment. In the remaining part of this paper therefore, we align with the definition of Mazurkiewicz (2005) as this will enable us to critically assess the corporate social inputs of oil companies towards the host communities. It is in this vein that we define corporate social responsibility as the *ethical requirement on the part of businesses to address the negative impacts their business activities have on the society by integrating social, economic and environmental concerns into their programme of actions*. The deliberate input of the term requirement is to show that companies no longer have the luxury to think that corporate social responsibility is a charitable aspect of their business activities. Thus according to Mazurkiewicz (2005), the fact that

partners and consumers are more likely to do business with a company who incorporated environmental and society concerns into their decisions makes corporate social responsibility a must for companies.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION

The Niger Delta comprises nine States, namely Bayelsa, Edo, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Abia, Ondo, Imo, and Delta State. The desire to include all Oil Producing States as part of the Niger Delta for administrative convenience saw States like Abia, Imo and Ondo being seen as part of the Niger Delta Region. This administrative definition of the Niger Delta will be applied in this essay. The Niger Delta is considered the world third largest wetland coming after Holland and Mississippi (Omene, 2003). This will be more appreciated given the richness of wetlands. According to Uchia (2005) wetlands are areas periodically covered by water that support unique assemblage of plants that can survive in water saturated soil. An attractive ecosystem, it is the most diverse and productive of all the ecosystems. This is because many species spend at least part of their life cycles in fresh water or salt-water wetland. However, oil exploration and exploitation has not been friendly to Niger Delta region thereby negatively impacting on it. Aside the fact that the destruction of the wetlands equally means loss of ecological services to the biosphere as well as loss of essential habitats for a myriad of species, it has and continued to hamper the people livelihood.

A lot have been written about the environmental problems associated with oil multinationals activities (Moffat and Laden, 1995, Nwilo and Badejo 2006). Nevertheless, it will be beneficial to us to reproduce some of the findings of these studies as it will help us in appreciating the need for social corporate behavior as a veritable means in developing the region and averting the various conflicts and violence which has become common place in the region. Jike (2004) contended that due to oil companies exploratory activities productive farmlands have been lost. Since this includes in most cases ancestral homelands thus "severing the link between the hiring and the forebears" it is expected that violence will erupt especially one directed against these oil companies which will further distort production. Chinedum (2001) bemoans the gradual extinction of biodiversity in the Niger Delta region. According to him, aside the fact that the county is home to Gorillas, chimpanzees, Baboons and Elephant, it is estimated that the county has 899 species of birds, 274 mammals, 154 reptiles, 53 amphibians and 4,715 species of higher plants. However, increased environmental degradation orchestrated by oil production has seen in recent times the country especially in the Niger Delta region where most of these species are found losing most of these varieties.

Orubu (2002) has linked oil production activities in the Niger Delta to the poverty observed among inhabitants in the region. Before the advent of oil production, the basic source of livelihood of the people are farming, hunting and fishing, occupations necessitated by the make up of the region and it is in such occupations that the Niger Deltans has always been relevant. Thus Jike (2004) espouses the fact that the Niger Delta region (prior to oil exploration and production) has always had a special attraction for entrepreneurs and foreign investors. However, these occupations came under severe threat with subsequent pollution of both their lands and the air by actions that result to oil spillage, gas flaring and deforestation to mention but a few. This on the other hand has produce poverty among the inhabitants who wake up to find their land degraded and the fishes depleted not to over fishing but due to human actions. Gas flaring for instance which has been going on since oil exploration started in Nigeria is more specifically dehumanizing. According to Orubu (1999, 2002), It has negative effects on the immediate environment, particularly on plant growth and wide life as well as human health. It is also one of the greatest contributor to climate change and global warming-major threats to environmental security. Secondly, it is a violation of the principles of human right as enshrined in the WBCSD values of corporate social responsibility. This and many others acts of irresponsibility on the part of both the federal government and oil companies has subjected the Niger Delta people to a life of servitude. This has also been the political economy basis of the conflicts and violence that has further disrupt businesses in the region.

The effect of gas flaring on the health of the people of Niger Delta cannot be quantified. In location where gas is flared for example in Oghara and Egbede both in Delta State the surrounding people suffer immeasurable hardship resulting from intense heat, strange diseases and respiratory problems. Despite these and its resultant global problems like global warming and climate change, the attitude of these oil multinationals reflects the economic reason for coming to do business in Nigeria. For instance they have taken no genuine stand to terminate gas flaring in the Niger Delta region, which currently places the country as one with the second highest percentage of gas flared globally. Arguments often employed by this oil multinationals are that the required technology needed to stop gas flare in the delta region is not within their reach. Hence the feasibility date for ending gas flare is not possible. Secondly, the Federal Government has made the flaring of gas a beneficial activity to the oil companies. This is in respect of the charge legally sanctioned to be paid for flaring gas. Evoh (2002) have in fact noted that this stance tends to encourage gas flaring unlike in the West where stringent laws and charges have discourage these oil conglomerates to look for an alternative. However, according to Ojeifia (2005), the net effect of these and other consequence of oil exploration in the Niger Delta have been to produce

weak societies that are characterized by a high degree of fragmentation, low levels of social solidarity and a great deal of anomie behavior. These anomie behaviors have often been expressed in the Niger Delta area through hostage taking which has now degenerated to kidnapping (see Ehwarieme, 2009). There is also the case of pipeline vandalization and communal crisis over these scarce resources. According to Okella (2003:9), pipeline vandalization, a consequence of youth restiveness has been on the increase in the Niger Delta. From seven cases in 1993, it rose to 33 cases in 1996 and 57 cases in 1998. There was dramatic increase of 497 reported cases of pipelines vandalization in 1999 and over 600 cases in 2008. Thus according to ANEES (2004), Nigeria lost an estimated N4.4 billion in 400 pipeline damages in Oil Producing States between January and August 2000. Loss of lives has also been a tragic consequence of pipeline vandalization. In 1998, about 1000 lives were lost in Jesse village and in 1999 over 12 persons died in Ekapamre in Ughelli local government area, both in Delta State. 300 persons were also reported to have died in Egborode village in Okpe local government area of Delta State in 2009

Inter ethnic and inter clan conflict have also been on the increase with oil exploration in recent years. From the early 1990s, there has been a cycle of protests and conflict in the Niger Delta notably in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers state. Some estimates suggested that the protest have cut onshore production by a third in 2001/03. A new dimension was introduced recently with the protest and occupation of Chevron Texaco oil terminal at Escravos by Itsekiri women, in Ugborodo community in Delta State from July 8 to 18 2002, making demands which included hiring some youths, building of schools and provisions of electricity and water supply in the community. Very recently in Sapele Local Government in Delta State there was an oil spill occasioned by a pipeline bust resulting in fire outbreak which claims the life over 20 persons (Vanguard, May 2011). Thus to Human Rights Watch (2002), the presence of oil companies in the Niger Delta exacerbates communal tensions of the type seen across Nigeria. Neighboring communities clash over claim of ownership of areas where oil drilling takes place. The incessant manner in which the environment has been subjected to all forms of degradation, calls for corporate social responsibility on the part of the oil multinationals. However it is clear that the OMNCs understanding of corporate social responsibility differs from how it applies in the West, their home countries. In the West, behaving socially responsible entails putting as top priority the health of those within the organization-operating environment. Under such volatile situations, it is good corporate social behavior, one that is germane to addressing the ills done on the environment that is urgently needed. This is because as Jike (2004) put it "The starting point for any meaningful solution to the Niger Delta crisis must be the environment". It is the destruction done to the environment (the source of livelihood of the majority of the inhabitants of the

region) that has been the bases of the conflicts, poverty and violence characterizing the region. Any efforts or CSR that is anti-environment is therefore expected to fall short of easing tension or economically addressing the poverty of the people.

However this has not been the case as this paper will go on to show. In two related ways, oil multinationals parochial way of addressing the problem in the Niger Delta region has further fuel the conflicts in the region and has not fulfill the basic tenets of sustainable development. Firstly, corporate social responsibility as carried out in Nigeria has not been people-centered thereby further polarizing the people into hostile groups and the implication has been the various intra and inter ethnic conflicts we observed in the region. Secondly, it has not incorporated environmental issues e.g. gas flaring, oil spillage or deforestation into its focus, thus unable to address the poverty of the people in the long term.

OIL MULTINATIONAL AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NIGERIA: WHAT IT IS

In a bid to forestall the conflictual relationship that exist between host communities and the oil companies, the oil multi-nationals embark on various projects aimed to ameliorate the sufferings of the people who have been adversely affected by their activities and also to create an enabling environment for the continuation of business. It is in this light that they build classrooms, hospitals, support education, encourage and provide for vocational learning or training, boreholes, provision of scholarship to selected students from the catchment's communities and creating some level of employment opportunities were also focused on – However, as Aderemi (2011) puts it "this in recent times is fast becoming an apology medium for vagrant abuse of social responsibility and protection of the environment in the scramble for maximizing profit. Such highly publicized charitable and philanthropic venture as he calls it has not been able to placate the abused publics who have been impoverished, neglected starved, marginalized, unemployed and environmentally bastardized (Yomere, 2007).

Ejumudo (2010, 2008) contends that corporate social responsibility

is in tandem with the principles of justice that seeks to achieve an accommodation or balance between access to environmental costs or burdens (pollution, unemployment, social and economic dislocation and crime) and environmental benefits (nutrients, food, clean air and water, health care, educational assistance, skills acquisition and development, community development and transportation and safe jobs.

This has not been the case in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta region. Rather, corporate social responsibility in Nigeria has been very divisive (Yomere, 2002), pitching ethnic groups against one another. Thus oil firms' corporate social acts are usually perceived by the people as a "pin in haystack in comparison to the huge take-home revenues of these multi-nationals" (Aderemi 2011). Aderemi (2011) further capture their divisive act in the following words: It serves as a shield against the various cases of resource exploitation and complicity of the multinationals in human rights violations. Thriving on the ethnic disputes, (which they have helped to create), resource control tussle between host communities and the federal government, the multinationals and other corporate bodies simply continues to get away with their abuse of the environment through gas flaring, oil spillages...

So divisive have the Oil MNCs brands of corporate social behavior, that it is they who determine who is employed in their highly technical firms. Yomere (2002, 176) noted this when he said that highly qualified youth from the Niger Delta hardly find favor in the recruitment policies of the multi national oil companies. He continues: The argument that these graduate youths did not meet the so called standard of excellence as an excuse for recruiting graduates from outside the Niger Delta is totally unacceptable to the youths. Similarly, demands for adequate monetary compensations for damages on farmlands, fishing equipment etc and the request for special consideration for contractors from the Niger Delta is usually met with divisive strategies.

The issue of compensation is a very good example in highlighting the divisive nature of oil companies "supposed" corporate social responsibility. Aside the fact that compensation are not adequately paid, if it is paid at all, they often employ the divide and rule tactics in paying compensation. What they do is to seek out those they feel can be very troublesome, educated or enlightened and pay little money to them believing that these can placate any uprising from the community involved. Shell, a company that controls over 50% of oil exploration in the region and which have shown variously their supposed commitment to the development of the region has recently been indicted for massive pollution of the region. On 3rd august, 2011 it was widely reported that Shell has accepted responsibility for two major spills at Bodo, a community in the delta region, which severely damaged the livelihood of the communities. The judgment shows that they have contributed more to the sufferings of the people. The UN Report on the effects of oil pollution in Ogoniland and in the Delta region concluded that based on scientific research carried out within the span of 2 years, oil companies exploratory activities especially Shell, have had disastrous impact on the human rights of the people living in the region. It found that oil contamination is widespread, contrary to oil companies' claims of addressing the environmental impacts of their

activities. According to Amnesty International Global Issues director, Andrey Gaughran, the report proves Shell has had terrible impact in Nigeria, but has got away with denying it for decades, falsely claiming they work to best international standard. The UN Report also showed the fallacious claims by Shell towards regulatory, environmental, social, commercial and technical considerations in their Sustainability Report. It has clearly proved that Shell commitment to community development is very vague, complacent and environmentally disoriented.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: this study was conducted at various communities in the Niger delta region. These communities are:

1. Ekpan, Gbaramatus, Ebedei, Odimodi, and Ubeyi communities in Delta State
2. Nembe and Twon-Brass communities in Bayelsa State

The target respondents were all from the above communities. Three main instruments of data collection were utilized in generating data in this study and these are:

1. in-depth interviews and observation, as primary source of data collection
2. literature review as secondary source

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Over 90 percent of our respondents (95.83%) stated when answering questions relating to the exploratory activities of oil companies that oil companies activities in the region have had destructive effects on the environment, endangering their land, air and water. Since this constitutes the basic means of survival for most of the inhabitants of these communities it has brought about unprecedented poverty on the people. As to the issue of youth restiveness, conflicts and violence, 96% of our respondents see these as a direct reaction and an offshoot of the way the environment has been degraded over the years through activities like gas flaring and oil spills that has continued to have adverse effects on the livelihood and health of the people. Many believe that government response towards the problem has often fallen short of addressing in a sustainable manner these problems as the practices continues unabated. This corroborated Jike (2004) findings that there is a significant relationship between environmental degradation and the increasing rate of social activism characterizing the Niger Delta region

In measuring corporate response by oil companies towards and in addressing the plights of the people 87% of our respondents stated that the oil

companies have not done enough in giving back to the communities given the pervasive nature of their activities on their environment and the profits they have accrued over the years from the region. In addressing specific claims by oil companies as regard scholarships awards, training of contractors and entrepreneurs, and micro credit assistance to local and small scale traders, over 84% of our respondents (84.87%) while stating that this is a fact however believe strongly that access to such scholarship schemes, contracts, programmes, and loans depends largely on who your contact is in the oil companies and more often, the awardees are those whose spouse works in the oil companies or have access to influential stakeholders in the oil sectors. The fact that poverty continues to feature prominently in the region shows that most of the beneficiaries of these oil companies' assistance and corporate response are not really those affected by the adverse effects of oil and gas exploration. On the issue of compensation, many in fact believe strongly (96.54) that it has been the cause of most inter and intra ethnic conflict and violence that do engulfed the region. The selective approach adopted by Shell, Chevron and other oil players in the region has polarized community members. Many believe that they are not carried along. The Ekpan conflict currently going on is a focal point. The issue of leadership which seems to be the major concern actually revolves around the question as to who will collect money from these companies. This has led to free for all fight and stagnation in business activities as stores and shopping centres are often closed down before night falls.

Finally, 98% of our respondents believe that poverty and youth restiveness will be drastically reduce if oil companies corporate social responsibility is geared towards addressing the environmental problems that has been the genesis of poverty, disease, and conflicts in the region. this is in line with the views expressed by Aderemi (2011) that any social responsibility that fails to address issues like gas flaring and oil spillage among others is as a "pin in the haystack" and cannot address the violent and conflict that still characterized the region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Companies such as Shell, Chevron, Agip, Eif and Total have spent millions of dollars in their bid to give back to society but still violence, conflicts and insecurity still continue to feature prominently in public policy and decision making. Clearly then, there must be something that they are not getting right or put more succinctly they are deliberately ignoring. For example, Shell the most visible and the biggest oil company in Nigeria in terms of production (Shell is actually responsible for almost 50% of Nigeria production) has been severely criticize for its activities in the Niger Delta region which falls short of the principle of sustainable development, a principle to which they are a party

of, and in spite of the fact that they are supposedly committed to corporate financial responsibility, corporate environmental responsibility and corporate social responsibility, being a member of WBCSD, an organization committed to upholding good corporate social behavior.

However, a close look at Shell activities shows that they are the greatest defaulters especially in the case of the second ethical values – corporate environmental responsibility. Though there have been marked improvement and efforts to curb gas flaring through projects like the Nigerian liquefied Natural Gas plant and the Nigerian Gas master plan evident by the fact that Nigeria presently occupies the second position behind Russia (Orubu, 2010), the fact that gas flaring continue to define oil production in the Niger Delta is appalling. Oil firms should be committed to corporate environmental responsibility. Jike (2004) and Aderemi (2011) are of the views that this should be the defining features of corporate social responsibility. According to Jike (2004) since the bone of contention between the oil companies and host communities is the degradation of the environment, the solution of the Niger Delta question must be located within such environmental issues. Oil multinational companies should stop paying lip services but redefine true corporate social responsibility with a human face consistent with global standards. Their double standards only intensify outrages and uprising. Compensation for oil spill and gas flaring should be commensurate with such outrageous acts of environmental degradation. So long as these environmental problems are not address, the current practice of oil multinationals corporate social responsibility will count for nothing and will be ineffective in curbing conflicts and violence directed against oil installations, oil workers and communal clashes. So far, the oil firms have viewed corporate social responsibility as extension of willingness to humanitarian charity or aid to host communities. This perception is wrong. Corporations should look beyond the past to the present to redefine and rebuild a new dangling image of responsibility, one that takes into cognizance the various environmental issues bedeviling the Niger delta region. This is the source of poverty and kidnapping that has become the bane of developmental efforts directed towards the region. Corporate social responsibility by oil multinational corporations operating in the Niger Delta region has not been geared towards the elimination of environmental related problems which for decades has been the bane of development and the genesis of conflicts, violence and poverty in the region. Rather, it has been systematically applied to ease tension enabling them to carry on their exploitation of the resources in the region namely oil. However as events have unfolded, the continued pollution of the environment, in spite of the limited address of some infrastructural and superstructural issues like the provision of scholarship to some selected areas, the building of schools, roads, bridges, etc, which has done little in curbing social activism

express through various means, has actually exacerbated an already acrimonious relationship between these companies and host communities on the one hand and between host communities on the other hand. It is therefore in the light of the above, that the paper recommends that lasting peace and security can be achieved in the Niger Delta if environmental related issues are incorporated into the corporate social responsibility framework of these oil companies. This is logical given the fact that the environment constitutes the economic base for majority of the inhabitants who depends on it for their daily bread.

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