

Oil Companies and Corporate Social Responsibility in Nigeria: An Empirical Assessment of Chevron's Community Development Projects in the Niger Delta

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Abstract

The restiveness of oil rich communities in Niger Delta area in Nigeria and the attendant implication for the national economy has engendered much debate in recent times. The heightened tension, agitation and crises in the region have persisted despite various efforts by the government to create a peaceful atmosphere between the host communities and the oil companies. In spite of the oil companies' claim that they are doing enough in terms of bringing development to the communities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, the host communities remain at variance with the oil multinationals, thus creating unconducive business environment. The study, a descriptive survey assessed the CSR efforts of one of the oil companies-Chevron, in three oil communities of Niger Delta. 150 opinion leaders from three communities were purposively selected for participation in the study. Data were generated with Corporate Social Responsibility Project Assessment Instrument (CSRPAI) ($r=0.84$). The results indicate that although, the community development efforts of Chevron were actually on ground in the three communities, they were considered not satisfactory nor relevant enough to the needs of the community dwellers. Hence the study suggested a critical review of Chevron's CSR efforts, involvement of the host communities in the conception and execution of such projects to ensure their relevance to the needs of the recipients.

Key words: Oil companies; Corporate Social Responsibility; Community Relations; Community Development

Introduction

Nigeria is mono-economic based, with the mainstay of the national economy derived from crude oil found in the Niger Delta area of the country. The Niger Delta, made up of nine states and having an estimated population of about 28 million amounting to 16.7% of the Nigerian population (Emmanuel. O. 2004 pp 44) has suffered the dire effects of oil exploration with its attendant environmental degradation for years. Ironically, oil revenues account for about 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 95% of federal revenue (George.Y. 2006). Billions of US dollars have accrued to the country from the combined operations of various oil companies including the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), which conduct oil and gas business on behalf the country. The NNPC operates mainly through joint venture contract. The greatest joint venture partner of NNPC remain: the Anglo Dutch Conglomerates, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron, Mobil, Texaco, Elf and; Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas(a subsidiary of NNPC).

Unfortunately, the influx of oil companies and the heightening of their operations in Niger Delta are not matched with an agenda for the development of Nigeria in general and Niger Delta in particular. The oil companies claim to have executed several projects in the host communities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. The claims include: construction of hospitals, roads and schools, provision of portable water, electricity, sponsorship, scholarships, and; supporting health campaign programmes among others. However, the host communities in Niger Delta seem not to have acknowledged these acclaimed community development projects by oil companies as they continue in their hostile disposition to the companies. According to Omole (2000), the relationship of cordiality which existed between oil communities and the oil companies in the good old days has given way to hostility and violence. The hostility takes the form of pipeline vandalisation, kidnapping, shutting down of oil companies, seizure of oil installations, militancy, intra and inter-community conflict.

These crises or upsurge of violence in the Niger delta is both a matter of national and international concern. The increasing instability in the oil rich region of Nigeria has been partly responsible to the fluctuation in the price of crude oil in the international market. Nationally, the crises constitute a great threat of unimaginable magnitude to the economy as the nation loses quite a large number of oil barrels to pipeline vandalisation every year. One then wonders why the persistent youth restiveness and militancy in the oil-rich region in spite of the claims of the oil companies to be doing enough in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility in the communities. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the acclaimed Community development projects of one of the Multi-national oil companies- Chevron in three host communities in the Niger Delta.

Synopsis of Oil Industry in Nigeria

The Nigerian oil industry is about a century old. The very first attempt was made in 1908 by a German company, known as The Nigerian Bitumen Corporation, in Araromi area of Ondo State. However, the initial effort was terminated in 1914 as a result of the outbreak of the First World War, (Nzekwu, 1982:31). In 1937, the second attempt was made by Anglo Dutch Consortium, Shell D'Archy, which later became Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria. The outbreak of the Second World War abruptly ended this effort. However, Nigeria can be said to be fifty one years in the oil exploration business. This is so because the very prospecting for oil started between 1953 and 1956. According to Agbo (2008:49-51), Shell D'Archy arrived Oloibiri in 1953 following their movement from Dorgu

Ewoama where they could not find oil, hence, they set a camp in Oloibiri, a town in present Bayelsa State. After a few years of search, and an investment of over 30 million dollars, a commercial quantity of oil was discovered in 1958 at Oloibiri. This implies that, oil was first struck in Nigeria in June 1956, but in a commercial quantity in 1958. Between 1958 and 2011 is fifty three years of oil flow in Nigeria.

Lukeman (1998:31-37) observes that Shell started oil production and exportation at Oloibiri field at the rate of 5100 barrels per day. According to the report, this quantity doubled the following year and crude oil production in Nigeria attained its peak in January, 1979 at the rate of 2.44 million barrels per day.

In 1959, the sole concessionary rights over the whole country granted to Shell was reviewed and exclusive exploration rights extended to companies of other nationalities (Nzekwu, 1982:32). The success of Shell Company encouraged other companies to join in the exploration. In 1961 Agip, Mobil, Gulf Satrap (now Elf), Tenneco/Amoseas (now Chevron) joined the explorers for oil in the onshore and offshore areas. Other companies like Phillips, Ashland, and Sunray joined later.

All crude oil produced was initially wholly exported unrefined, while the country's needs for petroleum products were satisfied through importation. Government decided that when the daily crude oil production in the country reached 500 thousand barrels per day, the building of a refinery would be considered. When this target was attained in 1959, foreign experts were invited to conduct preliminary surveys for a suitable site around the principal ports of the coast. After due consideration to a number of factors, Ala-Elеме near Port Harcourt was chosen. In 1962, construction started and in 1965, the work was completed at the cost of 20 million naira. Subsequently, two more refineries were constructed in Warri and Kaduna respectively as the production increased. Although these refineries are not functioning any longer as Nigeria refines its crude oil products outside the country.

Nigeria is a big player in the international oil and gas business. As at January 2007, Nigeria's oil reserves were estimated at 36.2 billion barrels.. Nigeria is the largest oil producer in Africa and the seventh largest oil producer in the world. Its total oil production in 2006 including condensates, natural gas liquids, and crude oil averaged 2.45 million barrels per day (bpd), with oil amounting to 2.28 million bpd. It is difficult to put a definite figure to how much has accrued to the country in the last 53 years of oil production, (Emmanuel 2004). Today, Nigeria is the fifth largest oil exporting country to the United States, the fifth largest petroleum exporting country in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Nigeria produces 30 percent of the total oil production in Africa.

Oil Communities in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is situated in the Southern part of the country and is bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by Cameroun. The region occupies a surface area of about 112,110 square kilometers. It represents approximately 12% of, Nigeria's total surface area and going by the 2006 population census, its population is put at over 28 million inhabitants. The pattern of settlement in the region is largely determined by the availability of dry land and the nature of the terrain. Low relief and very poor drainage are the primary factors responsible for the low number of large settlements in the region (Opara, 2008).

The Niger Delta is one of the largest wet lands in the world. It covers an area of about 70 thousand square kilometers and is noted for its sandy coastal ridge barriers, saline mangroves, fresh water, permanent and seasonal swamp spills forests as well as low land rain forest. The

whole area is traversed and criss-crossed by a large number of rivers, rivulets, streams, canals, and creeks. The coastal line is buffeted throughout the year by tides of the Atlantic ocean while the mainland is subjected to regimes of flood by the various rivers, particularly, River Niger. The Niger Delta consists of nine states which, make up the southern geopolitical zone in Nigeria. The region is predominantly inhabited by minority ethnic groups such as Ijaws, Itsekiris, Urhobos, Ibibios, and Edos. (NDDC, 2004).

The oil communities in the Niger Delta are those communities which play host to the multinational oil companies. They are different from other parts of Nigeria. The criss-cross of creeks means that people depend on water for their survival. Any oil company that seeks a better life for the people of this region must consider its host communities live on a wetland where farming and fishing are the major sources of livelihood. These oil communities include some communities in Delta state, Rivers state, Edo state, Ondo state and some parts of Akwa Ibom State and its environs. Some of these oil communities include Okirika, Ogoni, Bonny, Kegbara-Dere, Erema, Perukele, Elele Alumini, Rumuekpe Port Harcourt, Akabuka, Amah, Ubeta, Ibeno, Opobo, Igbokoda among others.

The poverty level in these communities of the Niger Delta is higher than national average. (NDDC 2004). George (2004:5) adds that a typical host community in the Niger Delta is one characterized by the following feature:

- Situated close to an oil terminal which is under the watchful eyes of armed security operatives.
- Presents a vivid image of poverty and misery by at least 95 percent of its inhabitants.
- Depends on water transport as a result of poor or no access road whose jetty is decrepit and unsafe for water transport.
- Drinking water is supplied by an oil company for a few hours a day.
- The community school lacks basic amenities as its most visible equipments are blackboard and benches.
- There are many young and energetic school leavers and dropouts who are considered inexperienced and unqualified for employment in the oil company who in turn, are recruited into the glowing militancy in the region that regularly confronts the security agents.
- The natural water and the air are polluted by emission of toxic water caused by gaseous flare and neighboring oil installations.
- Farming which is the traditional source of employment and also the major source of livelihood for members of the community is made impossible because of oil spills.

Decades of political and economic marginalization that resulted from the neglect of the Niger Delta region by successive governments, and the initial hesitation of multinational companies to address their social responsibility and contribute to social development enshrined poverty in the regions. The policies of multinational oil companies have been a major source of prevailing violence in the oil communities of Niger Delta.(World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2001).

To buttress this point, George (2004:4-5) states that this region is characterized by

- Mass killings arising from frequent clashes between communities (inter-community clashes) and clashes between communities and security forces.
- Hostage taking the personnel and property of oil producing companies are often targets of hostage taking.
- Large scale theft of oil and loss of huge amounts of revenue.

- Sabotage and disruption of operations of oil corporations.

According to Enyia (2000:48), “the local imperatives of acute poverty in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have put a number of demands on oil companies operating in the area. The difficult terrain of these communities and the low or total lack of government presence in terms of viable projects, make the area volatile and the people confrontational, with its attendant Community Relations implications”.

Community Relations/Corporate Social Responsibility (Csr)

We cannot discuss about Corporate Social Responsibility without throwing light on Community Relations which is an area of Public Relations. Ekeocha (2001:46) defines Community Relations as a series of mutually beneficial business partnerships with one or more stakeholders, which enhance the company’s reputation as a good corporate citizen.

Peak (2002: 117) stressed the importance of community Relations to business when likened to a marriage institution where the business concern as the suitor, marries the community, settles with it and takes inherent responsibilities associate with the union. The wife (community) however takes a close look at the marriage vows and discovers that her husband (business) owes her more than financial support (taxes). The husband cannot abandon his marital responsibilities; else he will face some negative consequences.

Community Relations is a branch of Public Relations that has emerged from what used to be referred as Corporate Social Responsibility. It is concerned solely with how to create an enabling environment in the host community so that the company can carry out its activities without any hindrance, but rather with the assistance and support of host inhabitants. “Community Relations is a problem solving process and this involves strategic analysis of the problem, planning, taking action, and evaluating programme effectiveness, inadequacies, or outright failures” (Onabanjo 2005:44).

Desatnick (2001) notes that Community Relations refers to the various methods companies use to establish and maintain a mutual beneficial relationship with the communities in which they operate. The underlying principal Community Relations is that when a company accepts its civic responsibility, and takes an active interest in the well being of its community, then it gains a number of long term benefit in terms of community support, loyalty, and general good will. Community involvement builds public image and employee morale and fosters a sense of team work that is essential in long term success. Bahl (1994: 109) adds that Community Relations is an organizations planned, active and continuous participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the institution and the community. This brings us to the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). If an organization does not recognize itself as a corporate citizen, who has obligations and responsibilities towards its host communities, it can never recognize the need for Community Relations practice.

According to the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2009), “Corporate Social Responsibility” also called Corporate Responsibility, Corporate Citizenship, Responsible Business, and Corporate Social Opportunity is a concept whereby organizations consider the interest of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, communities and stakeholders as well as the environment. This obligation is seen to extend beyond the statutory obligation to comply with legislation, and sees organizations voluntarily taking further steps to improve the quality of life for the local community and society at large”.

In 1963, the free market philosopher, Milton Friedman described CSR as fundamentally subversive, writing that Corporate Responsibility is the pursuit of individual interest in an unrestrained market.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and the families as well as the social community and the world at large.

Black (1989:9) classifies CSR into four categories.

- Enterprise: Supporting and developing initiatives to nurture budding entrepreneurs and boost enterprise.
- Education: Helping to bring new horizons into the lives of young people.
- Arts and Culture: Providing assistance to a range of artistic activities and bringing communities together.
- Environment: Encouraging efforts to safeguard the environment and improve the quality of life.

Sietel (1987) as quoted by Onabajo (2005:38) provides what he calls a partial list of CSR categories to include being responsible for

- Product Lines: Not producing dangerous products and maintaining good product standard that are environmentally safe.
- Marketing Practices: Responding to consumer complaints, setting fair prices and maintaining fair advertising contents.
- Employee Service: Training, counseling, granting allowance for the welfare of employees.
- Corporate Philanthropy: Contributing to community development activities and initiating social projects.
- Environmental Activities: Embarking on pollution control projects, adhering to federal government standard and evaluating procedures of new package.
- Employee Safety and Health: Setting effective work environment policies, accidents safeguard food and medical facilities.

The practice of CSR is subject to much debate and criticisms. Proponents argue that there is a strong business case for CSR, in that corporations benefit in multiple ways by operating with a perspective broader and longer than their own immediate, short term profits. Some critics however, argue that CSR distracts from the fundamental economic role of business.

The Problem

The restiveness of oil rich communities in Niger Delta area in Nigeria and the attendant implication for the national economy has engendered much debate in the recent times. The heightened tension, agitation and crises in the region have persisted despite various efforts by the government to create a peaceful atmosphere between the host communities and the oil companies. In spite of the oil companies claim that they are doing enough in terms of bringing development to the communities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, yet the host communities remain hostile and constantly at variance with the oil multinationals. With the claims of the oil companies and the persistent hostility of the oil communities, it becomes necessary to examine the claims of the oil companies with regard to the acclaimed Corporate Social Responsibility efforts. Are the communities satisfied with the CSR efforts? and; are the CSR efforts of the oil communities relevant to the needs of the communities? These are the

pertinent questions that require answers in a bid to end the face-off between oil producing communities and the oil companies. This constitutes the focus of the present study.

Research Questions

To effectively address the focus of the study, the following research questions require answers

RQ 1: What are the major projects that form the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) to the host communities?

RQ 2: What is the level of the host communities' satisfaction with the Corporate Social Responsibility projects of Chevron Nigeria Limited?

RQ 3: How relevant are the Corporate Social Responsibility projects of Chevron Nigeria Limited to the needs of the host communities?

Methodology

The study was a simple descriptive survey of ex-post facto type. People in three oil communities in Niger Delta region: Elekahia (Rivers State), Aruakpo (Delta State), and; Igbokoda (Ondo State) constitute the population of the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of fifty (50) respondents from each of the oil rich communities. The respondents however fall within the category of opinion leaders in the communities. The Community Relations Officers (CROs), Clan heads, Chiefs, Women leaders and youth leaders were purposively selected for participation in the study. A total of 150 people participated as subjects of the study.

Data were generated with Corporate Social Responsibility Project Assessment Instrument (CSRPAI) developed and validated by the investigator. The instrument was subjected to a reliability test and it yielded the reliability alpha of 0.84, indicating that the instrument is internally consistent and reliable.

Results

Research question 1: What are the major projects that form the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) to the host communities?

Table 1 below provides answer to this research question.

Table 1: PROJECTS THAT CONSTITUTED CNLs CSR EFFORTS IN HOST COMMUNITIES

CSR EFFORTS IN COMMUNITIES	FREQ	PERCENTAGE
Construction of schools and Hospitals	56	37.3 %
Construction of jetties and foot bridges	24	16.0%
Scholarship and bursary	49	32.7%
Provision of portable water	7	4.7%
Drug donation to hospitals and health centres	10	6.7%
Provision of electricity	1	0.0%
Financial support	3	2.0%
TOTAL	150	100%

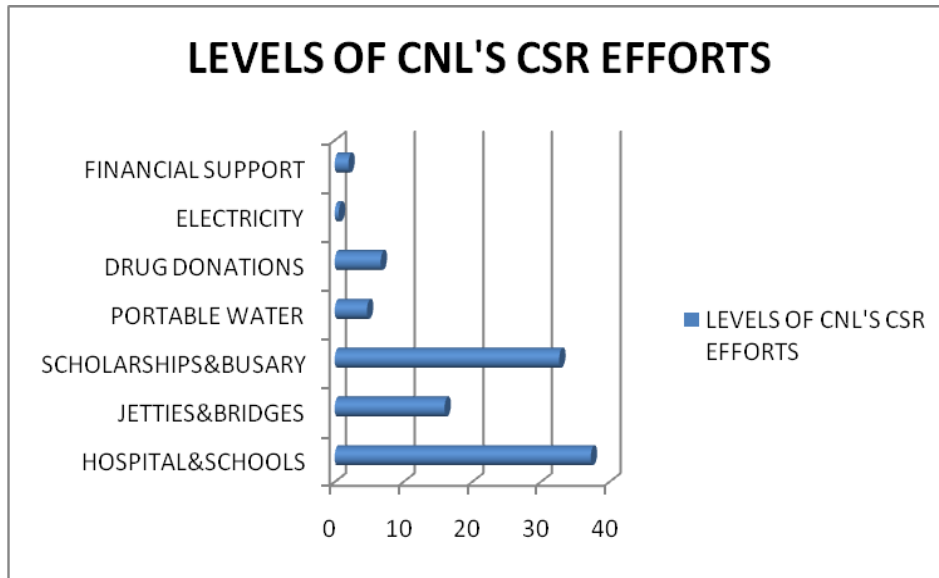


Table 1 above shows that some respondents rated construction of schools and hospitals (37.3%) and; provision of scholarship and bursary (32.7%) to the students from the host communities as the top priorities of Chevron's Corporate Social Responsibility efforts in the oil communities. Construction of jetties and foot bridges was also accorded priority (16.0%) while provision of portable water, drug donations, provision of financial support and electricity received little attention.

Research Question 2: What is the level of the host communities' satisfaction with the Corporate Social Responsibility Projects of Chevron Nigeria Limited?

TABLE 2: CROSSTABULATION OF STATES BY LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH CNLs' CSR EFFORTS BY COMMUNITIES

STATE			COMMUNITIES		
			ELEKAHIA ARUAKPO	IGBOKODA	
RIVERS Level of CNL's CSR Efforts	Not Satisfactory	Count	15		
		% within community	25.86%		
	Fairly satisfactory	Count	27		
		% within community	46.55%		
	Satisfactory	Count	16		
		% within community	27.6%		
TOTAL	Count	58			
	% within community	100%			
DELTA Level of CNL's CSR Efforts	Not Satisfactory	Count			33
		% within community			79.0%
	Fairly satisfactory	Count			09
		% within community			21.0%
	TOTAL	Count			42
		% within community			100%
ONDO Level of CNL's CSR Efforts	Not Satisfactory	Count		16	
		% within community		32.0%	
	Fairly satisfactory	Count		19	
		% within community		38.0%	
	Satisfactory	Count		15	
		% within community		30.0%	
TOTAL	Count		50		
	% within community		100%		

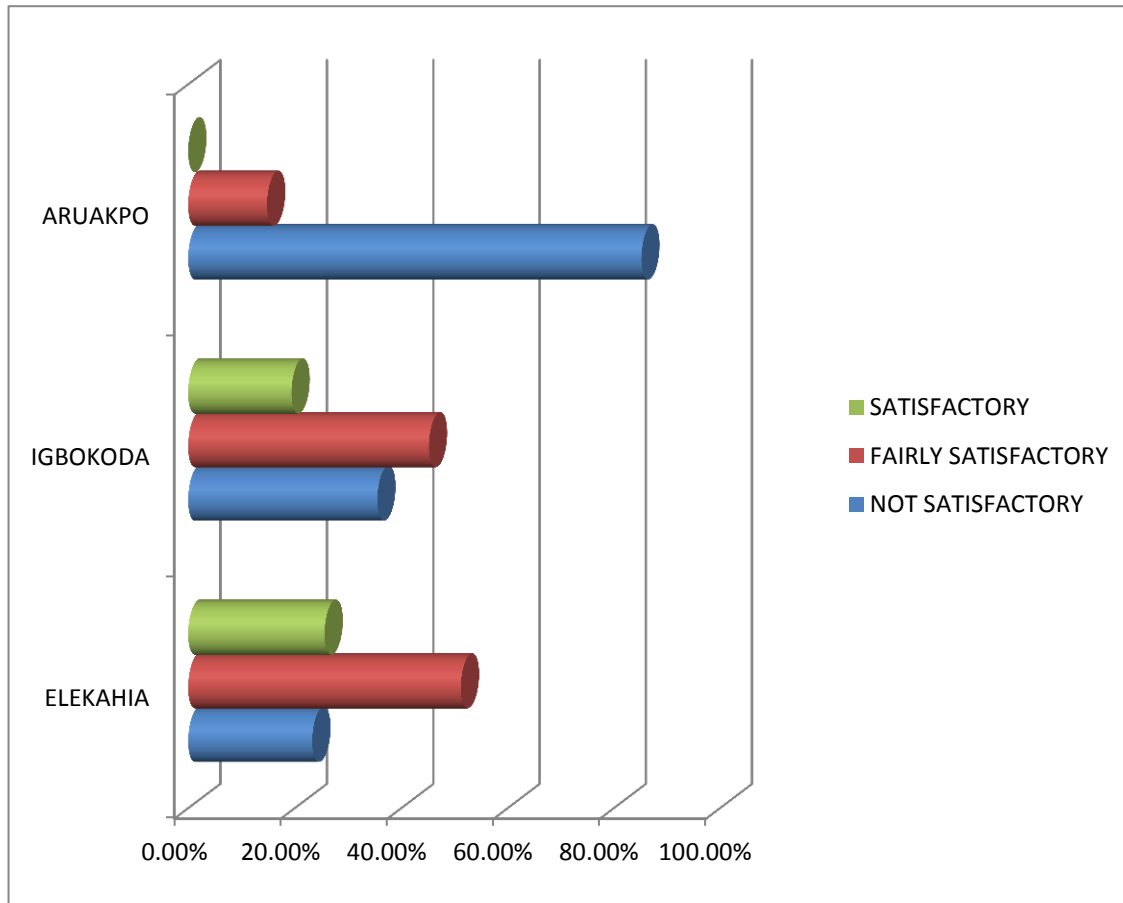


Table 2 shows the level of satisfaction of the host communities with the CNL's community development efforts. The table reveals that 79.0% of the respondents in Aruakpo area of Delta State expressed dissatisfaction with the level of CNL's community development efforts in their community. 46.55% of the respondents in Elekahia community of Rivers State believe that CNL's community development effort in their community is fairly satisfactory while 38.0% of respondents in Igbokoda in Ondo State agreed that CNL's effort in their community is satisfactory and 30% believed that the CNL's effort is satisfactory. By implication, out of the three communities sampled in Niger Delta, it is only in Aruakpo (Delta State) that people are not satisfied at all with the CNL's Corporate Social Responsibility's efforts.

Research Question 3: How relevant are the Corporate Social Responsibility projects of Chevron Nigeria Limited to the Needs of the host communities?

Table 3: CROSSTABULATION OF STATES BY RELEVANCE OF CNLs' CSR EFFORTS TO THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES

STATE			COMMUNITIES		
			ELEKAHIA ARUAKPO		IGBOKODA
RIVERS	Not relevant	Count	10		
		% within community	11.6%		
	Averagely Relevant	Count	35		
		% within community	69.8%		
	Relevant	Count	12		
		% within community	16.3%		
	Very relevant	Count	6		
		% within community	2.3%		
TOTAL	Count	63			
	% within community	100%			
DELTA	Not relevant	Count			31
		% within community			96.3%
	Averagely Relevant	Count			6
		% within community			3.7%
	TOTAL	Count			37
		% within community			100%
ONDO	Not relevant	Count		11	
		% within community		19.4%	
	Averagely Relevant	Count		13	
		% within community		25.8%	
	Relevant	Count		13	
		% within community		25.8%	
	Very relevant	Count		13	
		% within community		29.0%	
	TOTAL	Count		50	
		% within community		100%	

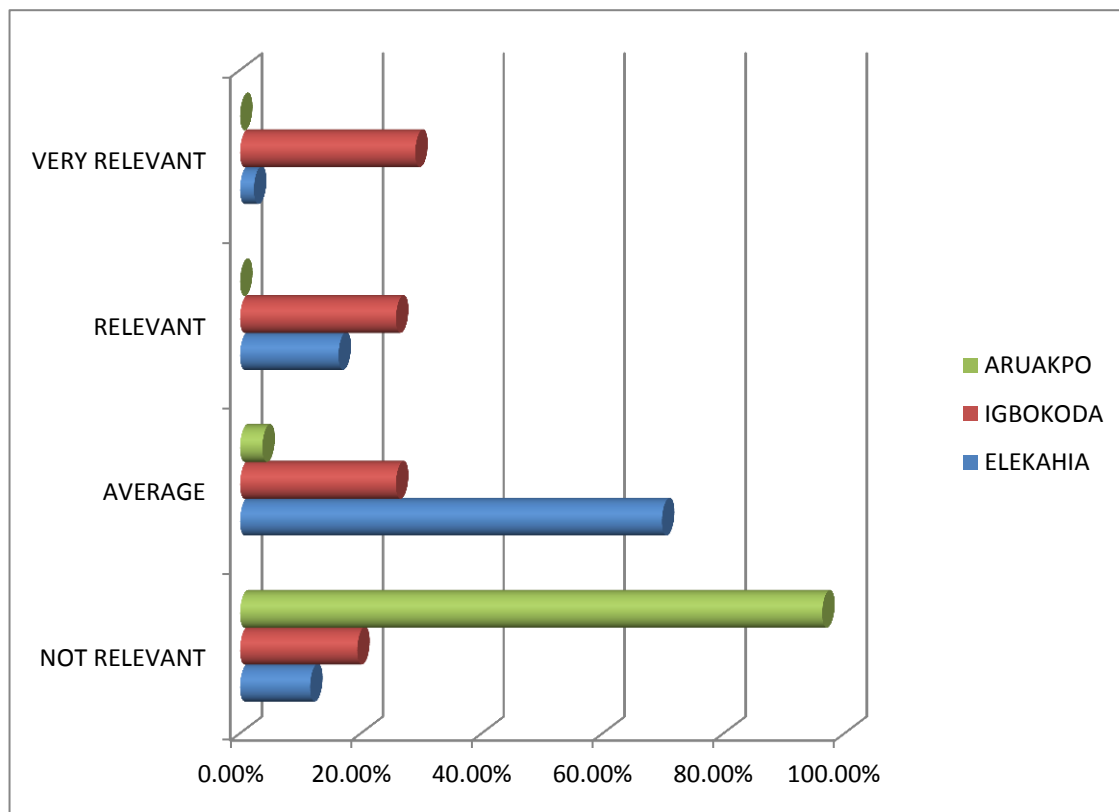


Table 3 shows the relevance of the CSR efforts of CNL in oil communities. In Rivers State (Elekahia community), 69.8% of the respondents rated the CSR efforts of Chevron as averagely relevant. In Ondo State (Igbokoda community) the relevance of the corporate social responsibility of Chevron seems distributed across Very relevant (29.0%), relevant (25.8%); and averagely relevant (25.8%), while in Delta State (Aruakpo community) 96.3% of the respondents believe that the CNL's effort in the community lacks relevance to the needs of the community.

Discussion of Findings

It is glaring from the results that Chevron's community development efforts range from the provision of hospital and schools, construction of jetties, foot bridges, provision of scholarships and bursary, provision of portable water, drug donations to hospitals and health centres, provision of electricity; to financial support to host communities. However, evident in the results is the fact that emphasis seems to be placed on the construction of hospitals, schools, jetties and bridges while other areas such as provision of portable water, drug donations to hospitals and health centres, assistance in the area of electricity supply and financial donations to host communities receive less attention.

The results also show the level of the host communities' satisfaction with the CSR efforts Chevron. While 46.55% of the respondents in Elekahia community in Rivers state believe that the community development efforts of Chevron is fairly satisfactory, 38.0% of the respondents in Igbokoda community in Ondo state believe the same while overwhelming majority, 79.0% of the respondents in Aruakpo community in Delta state believe that Chevron efforts are not satisfactory. With this finding, it becomes critical for to re-evaluate its CSR efforts in all its host communities, particularly in Delta state where the host community appears not satisfied at all with Chevron's efforts. The expressed lack of satisfaction of the host community with the efforts

of Chevron may not be unconnected with their high expectations from the oil giant in return for their environmental degradation over the years. According to Birger, Tangen, Swanson, Christiansen, Moe and Lunde (2004:15), multinational oil companies recognize broader concerns beyond local community impact and programme, as such does less to satisfy the host communities. Also, Odién Ajumogbobia quoted by Odenigbo (2008:118) believes that the revenue that is derived from oil extraction is not re-employed even to restore the environment of the oil communities.

Another issue is the relevance of the CSR efforts of Chevron to the needs of the host communities. Rating the relevance of Chevron's CSR effort to the needs of their communities, 69.3% of the respondents in Elekahia community of Rivers state rated the CSR effort as averagely relevant. In Delta state,(Aruakpo community) respondents (96.3%) believe that the CSR efforts of Chevron are not relevant to the needs of their community, while in Ondo State(Igbokoda Community), the distribution of respondents' opinion about the relevance of the CSR efforts of Chevron to the needs of the community range from very relevant(29.0%), relevant (25.8%) to averagely relevant(25.8%) These findings could be as are result of inadequate effort at determining the needs of the host communities before project execution in the communities, particularly in Aruakpo community of Delta state.

Conclusion and recommendation

Evidently, Chevron Nigeria Limited's claim about various community development effort embarked upon as part of the company's Corporate Social responsibility is undeniable, the findings however show the need for Chevron Nigeria Limited to carry out a re-appraisal of her community development efforts in the host communities in order to ensure that only projects that are directly relevant to the needs of the host communities are embarked upon as part of the company's CSR effort. It could be necessary also for Chevron to adopt a bottom-up approach in its community development drives. This will ensures proper investigation into the relevant needs of the community, build local capacity, enhance confidence, build social capital and stimulate growth of the local economy.

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