
EXPLORING AND EXPLOITING THE POTENTIALS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE QUEST FOR MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NIGER DELTA ENVIRONMENT: A CASE OF RIVERS STATE

¹Windy S. Alikor & ²Stella I. G. Ikiriko

^{1,2}Department of Mass Communication
Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic
Rumuola, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
E-mail: windyalikor@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is designed to unbundle the potentials of the ten commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Quest for Environmental Management and Sustainability in the Niger Delta. The rationale for the choice of this theme is predicated on the perennial environmental pollutions associated with oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The paper draws its strengths from the "Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility." The work is anchored on qualitative research and observation approach. Consequently, the following findings are made among others: There is absence of adherence to prescriptions of "Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility" in the operations of the multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta hence the threat to the sustainability of our environment. Also, there is a growing destruction of aquatic lives and sea foods as a result of legal and illegal oil production in the Niger Delta. Again, lack of application of the Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility has also led to frosty relationships between multinational oil companies and their host communities particularly Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). A case in point is the conflict between Soku/ Bille communities vs. SPDC over OML 25 in Rivers State. In view of the above, the following recommendations are made among others: There should be strict adherence to the Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility by oil exploration and production company's operating in the Niger Delta in order to minimize environmental pollution and the destruction of ecosystems. Again, there should be aggressive remediation of land in the oil bearing communities especially the ones that are ravaged by oil spillage with the aim of re-engineering their land for future agricultural purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Niger Delta region of Nigeria has suffered untold environmental degradation and pollution right from the time the first crude oil was discovered in Olobiri in 1956 till date. Many critics have argued that the environmental degradation and pollution witness in the

region currently is associated with constant oil exploration and production in this part of Nigeria without concomitant environmental impact assessment.

Sarowiwa (1995) cited in Wilson (2005) lamenting the level of environmental problems in the Niger Delta few minutes before he was killed by Nigeria government during the military era has this to say:

“My Lord, we all stand before history; I am a man of peace, a man of ideas appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly oil endowed land, distressed by their environmental, political and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, and hunger occasioned by oil exploration and exploitation”.

Sarowiwa further states:

“Our environment is polluted, water-wells, rivers and streams taken over by oil pollution. My people have water but cannot drink and land but cannot farm because of the perennial oil pollution and environmental degradation caused by the multinational oil company called Shell Petroleum Development Company” (Sarowiwa, 1995).

Sarowiwa (1995) further observes:

The company has indeed ducked this particular trial, but we know that this day will surely come, and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war the company (SPDC) has waged in the Niger Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war will be duly punished. The crime of the company’s dirty war against the Ogoni ethnic nationality will also be punished.

Okoko (2002, p.1) discussing the issues of oil politics in the Niger Delta states “that many people do not understand nor appreciate the magnitude of the ecological problems thrown up by oil exploration and exploitation.” He opines that most people are not even sympathetic to the quest for a more just and fair distribution of the oil wealth by the oil producing communities using such glib, paternalistic and banal argument as after all, oil is God-given resources. Therefore, belongs to no one as if other resources are not God-given (Okoko, 2002, p.125).

Okoko further opines that:

Oil exploitation in the Niger Delta has severe consequences on the people. It results in oil spillage, destruction of farm lands, the degradation of the ecosystem and the disempowerment of the people, yet the income generated by the proceeds of these oil exploration activities are siphoned to develop other areas other than those whose land produces the oil (p.125).

Besides, in spite of the hundreds of billions of naira generated by the oil company and the government, the communities which produce the oil remain in abject poverty or penury without basic social infrastructure and without means of survival or economic empowerment (Okoko, 2002, p. 126). These problems of environmental degradation, pollution, poverty, hunger, poor infrastructural development, gas flaring-induced health problems, unemployment among others are still prevalent in most oil producing communities in the Niger Delta till today. Most of the oil bearing communities do not have

good pipe borne water, good health centre, good road, well-equipped primary and post primary schools let alone employment opportunities in the oil producing companies they play host to. A typical case of this neglect is Idu-Ekpeye community in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State which has over five oil wells and multiple flow stations without a health centre and other value addition projects and programmes from the oil companies operating in the community.

Again, Rumekpe and Okporowo-Ogbakiri communities in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State also suffer almost the same fate. These communities are just few among other communities hosting oil and gas companies without internal roads, employment of indigenes and other Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and projects to the benefit of the host communities.

The consequence of this is the underdevelopment and the attendant perennial antagonistic and sticky relationship between the oil and gas companies on one hand, and their host communities in the Niger Delta on the other hand, which some schools of thought believe is the cause of the militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Asari Dokubo, 2009).

According to Seer as quoted in (Alumuku, 2006, p.90) the issue of development is narrowed down to three principal areas: "poverty, unemployment and inequality." He states further that the basic questions about the meaning of development are hinged on:

- A. What has been happening to unemployment?
- B. What has been happening to poverty?
- C. What has been happening to inequality?

If all the three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, it is believed to be a period of development for the country or community. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse especially if all the three as witness in the oil and gas bearing communities in the Niger Delta, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled (Alumuku, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, in almost all the oil and gas bearing host communities to multinational oil exploration and production companies, there has been a high level of unemployment, poverty and inequality between the host communities and the staff of the multinationals. No doubt, this call for urgent attention and redress through aggressive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and projects anchored on community-people-participatory and the "Ten Commandments of CSR." This is where the adoption and practice of the Ten- Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility comes in with the view of saving the Niger Delta communities from the ongoing environmental decay vis-à-vis environmental degradation and pollution.

Corporate Social Responsibility and its Implications for Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Corporate social responsibility is a voluntary social service rendered to the environment and community which comes in form of environmental impact assessment, remediation of polluted land, embarking on social infrastructure, employment creation, capacity building programmes, supplying of health and laboratory equipment in schools and public health institutions among others by a corporate organization, religious organization or non-governmental organization.

It is also a social investment of an organization whether profit or non-profit organization towards its immediate constituents or neighbours with the aim of improving their socio-economic well being which helps an organization to be classified as socially responsible to the society and classified as a good corporate citizen.

Kreitner (1995, p. 135) x-raying the concept of corporate social responsibility holds that it is a business notion which believes that corporations or corporate organizations have an obligation to its immediate constituent or groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law or union contract. A central feature of CSR is a voluntary service to humanity and society. So when law suits must be initiated or court orders issued before a company responds to the social needs and environmental problems of its host communities, such company is not being socially responsible to the society because of lack of proactive action.

This kind of corporate attitude is customary in the activities of most oil exploration and exploitation companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The host communities often agitate for initiation of corporate social responsibility programmes before they are reluctantly embarked upon if at all. Sometimes, the host communities even picket the companies and declare them “incommunicado” before the introduction of social service programmes to them. In some cases, the host communities take the oil companies to court before their outcries are heard and sometimes, the companies also institute legal case against their host communities to avoid extending their hands of fellowship to their host communities through corporate social responsibility programmes in the Niger Delta region part of Nigeria.

Sound corporate social responsibility programme is when the management of an organisation has broader responsibilities than just making a profit. A strict interpretation of this holds that an action must be voluntary to qualify as corporate social responsibility. Accordingly, reluctant submission to court orders or government coercion is not a good example of corporate social responsibility (Kreitner, 1995, p. 155).

Alikor (2016, p. 60) unmasking the potentials of corporate social responsibility to the survival of corporate organization states that CSR as an acronym of corporate social responsibility. It is a Public Relations concept which holds that an organization or company

is environmentally, socially, morally and economically indebted to its immediate constituents, neighbours or environment which is aimed at enhancing the standard of living of the people especially their host communities and eliminates hostilities in an organisation's or company's areas of operations.

Alikor further states that the essentials of CSR in corporate organizations cannot be overemphasized. Some of these essentials are:

1. It fosters a win-win relationship between a corporate organization and its immediate neighbours.
2. It also reduces community relations-induced conflicts.
3. It makes host communities feel sense of belonging to the operations of the corporate organization or company.
4. It helps in building and sustaining good corporate image and reputation for a corporate organization.
5. It enhances the chances of profit making of the corporate organization.
6. It stimulates industrial harmony in corporate organization's operations.
7. It as well stimulates community policing of companies or organisation's property and personnel.
8. It serves as a parameter or yardstick for accessing the amount of social services given to an organisation's immediate constituent.

Conversely, lack of corporate social responsibility can stimulate violent-conflicts, kidnapping, hostage-taking, loss of revenue, image and reputation problem, loss of confidence and trust, violent agitation, emergence of militancy groups, perennial media attack, vandalization and stealing of company's property, declaration of incommunicado against a corporate organization in its area of operations (Alikor, 2016, p. 69).

So, corporate organizations operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria ought to adopt the notion and practice of corporate social responsibility if they must be seen as good corporate citizens, and their CSR practice must be anchored on the "Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility", as postulated by Larry D. Alexander and Williams F. Matthews (1984) and cited in Kreitner (1995).

Conceptual Framework

This paper draws its strength from the "Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility" as its conceptual framework. The commandments read:

- 1) Thou shall take corrective action before it is required.
- 2) Thou shall work with affected constituents to resolve mutual problems.
- 3) Thou shall work to establish industry wide standards and self-regulation.

- 4) Thou shall publicly admit your mistakes.
- 5) Thou shall get involved in appropriate social programmes.
- 6) Thou shall help correct environmental problems.
- 7) Thou shall monitor the changing social environment.
- 8) Thou shall establish and enforce a corporate code of conduct.
- 9) Thou shall take needed public stands on social issues.
- 10) Thou shall strive to make profits an ongoing basis.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that CSR is a catalyst to the corporate relationship between organizations and their immediate constituents. But to what level has multinational oil exploration and production companies obeyed and adhered to the “Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility” in their operations in the Niger Delta?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a desk and observational research methods due to their relevance to this work. Incidentally, the researcher is an indigene of Niger Delta nay Rivers State hence has observed several incidents of picketing of oil companies in the region and forceful taking over of company’s operational base e.g. Soku and Belema communities in Rivers State which have occupied Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) OML 25 oil wells and flow stations for nine months and declaration of the company incommunicado for lack of implementation of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and absence of corporate social responsibility programmes for the host communities.

This is against the backdrop of the perennial request by many oil bearing communities from the companies they play host to, such as SPDC, Agip, Chevron, Total Exploration and Production Company Nigeria Limited to improve their well being through corporate social responsibility. For example, commandment 5 in the ten corporate social responsibility expects corporate organizations to embark on appropriate social programmes that would give value addition to their immediate constituents or immediate neighbours while commandment 6 stresses the need for corporate organizations to help correct environmental problems in the society particularly in their host communities.

If these are the expectations of the commandment 6 in the ten commandments corporate social responsibility, why has SPDC not done a lot to correct the environmental problems in the Niger Delta such as the cleaning of oil polluted lands in Ogoni ethnic nationality and Egi ethnic nationality, and gas flaring in Eleme, Igwuruta, Egita communities, etc. in Rivers State?

Again, taken a cue from the commandment one of the ten corporate social responsibility which holds that corporate organizations should work with affected constituents to resolve mutual problems, why then has SPDC and other multinationals

prefer to connect to the security agents such as Army , Police, DSS, rather than connecting with the host communities or immediate constituents to resolve mutual problems such as lack of employment opportunities, lack of capacity building programmes, poor infrastructural problem, environmental degradation and remediation problems in oil producing communities like Rummekepe, Ogoni, Idu-Ekpeye, Obele-Ibaa, Soku, Bele, etc?

Similarly, relying on commandment 3 of the ten corporate social responsibility which states that corporate organizations should establish industry wide standards and self-regulation, why have the multinational oil companies continued to embark on gas flaring in their oil exploration and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta when the law regulating oil production in Nigeria has banned gas flaring in the country? But rather than refraining from gas flaring which health experts and environmentalists believe to trigger health and environmental related problems in the oil producing communities, the oil bigwigs like SPDC and Total E&P still involved in gas flaring.

Since corporate social responsibility can be used to save and protect the environment through environmental impact assessment, remediation of land, protection of ecosystem, protection of aquatic lives and fishes on one hand and on the other hand, provision of social infrastructure and other life-saving and value addition and social programmes, therefore, it becomes sacrosanct for corporate organizations to adhere to the prescriptions of the ten commandments of corporate social responsibility in their oil exploration and production activities in order to protect and manage our God-given environment for the survival of humanity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Sustainable Development and its Implication in the Niger Delta Environment

Sustainable development deals with equity for human generations yet to come, whose interests are not represented by standard economic analysis or by market forces that discount the future and equity for people living now and who do not have equal access to natural resources or social economic goods (World Conservation Commission cited in Okoko (2002). According to World Conservation Commission, sustainable development deals with improving the quality of human life while living within a capacity of ecosystem (Okoko, 2002).

Alumuku (2006, p, 90) sees sustainable development as the sustained elevation of an entire society and social system towards a better and more human life. He states further that in ultimate analysis, sustainable environment involves development of the people, development for the people and development by the people. Development of the people involves building human capacity through the development, protection of the environment and human resources.

Development for the people according to Alumuku (2006) implies that the benefits of growth must be translated into the lives of people and development by the people emphasizes that people must be able to participate actively in influencing the processes

that shape their lives. But how far have the people of oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria benefited from the human development of the multinational oil companies in spite of the huge natural resources tap daily from their God-given lands by the oil exploration and exploitation companies? This is the bane of the development of the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta.

There is poverty in the communities; there is environmental degradation in the communities; there is pollution in the communities; there is neglect of host communities; there is perennial gas flaring in the communities; there is lack of economic opportunities and employment in the communities, there is economic deprivation in the communities; there is repression in the communities; there is hunger in the communities and there is underdevelopment in the communities. What are the antidotes to the aforementioned problems?

Something needs to be done to addressing these plethora of problems by full adoption of the “Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility” by corporate organizations operating in the Niger Delta particularly the oil exploration and production companies in the region.

Observations and Findings

The following observations and findings are made:

- 1) There is a growing environmental pollution in the Niger Delta as a result of oil exploration and exploitation in the region.
- 2) There is a threat to aquatic lives and sea foods as a result of legal and illegal oil production in the Niger Delta particularly in Rivers State.
- 3) Niger Delta region particularly Rivers State is faced with environmental pollutants such as gas flaring and black-soot, resulting from legal and illegal oil production hence endangering people’s lives and buildings.
- 4) There is close to absence of corporate social responsibility programmes in most oil bearing communities thus leading to cat and dog relationship between host communities and the multinational oil companies like Agip vs. Egbema, SPDC vs. Kula and Ogoni communities in Rivers State.
- 5) There is lack of environmental impact assessment in most oil bearing communities in spite of the ecological problems they are presently facing particularly the coastal areas in Rivers State like Soku and Kula communities in Kalabari kingdom.
- 6) There is lack of remediation programmes on lands where oil spills have eaten up in the Niger Delta especially in Ogoni, Idu-Ekepeye, Egi and Egbema communities in Rivers State.
- 7) Multinational oil companies do not adhere to the prescription of the “Ten Commandments of Corporate Social Responsibility” in relating with their host

communities vis-a-vis environmental management thus leading to the environmental problems in the region and violent agitations for CSR programmes by the Niger Delta youths.

- 8) The violent agitations by the Niger Delta youths will hardly stop by the adoption of gunboat and militarization crisis management approach adopt by the multinationals in the region until there is a paradigm on the part of the multinationals particularly in their community relations policies and management models.
- 9) Multinational oil companies are more comfortable connecting with the security agents like Army, DSS and Police rather than connecting with their host communities hence the cat and dog relationship between the former and the latter.
- 10) There is a rising case of picketing of multinational oil companies by their host communities tied to lack of CSR programmes, implementation of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and lack of employment opportunities for the teeming youths of the host communities.
- 11) The multinational oil companies liken their host communities to Oliver Twist. Therefore, do not take their demands seriously.

CONCLUSION

The neo and corporate colonialisation, environmental injustice, problem of ecosystem, the near to total impunity, host communities' abject poverty, militancy, environmental degradation, poor infrastructural facilities, environmental pollutions, high level of neglect, extra judicial killing of indigenes of oil bearing communities, illegal oil bunkering, hostage-taking, poverty and unemployment in host communities, etc can only be tackled headlong when corporate organizations particularly multinational oil companies obey the ten commandments of corporate social responsibility in their oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in the quest for environmental management and sustainability of the region.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are poised to mitigate the observations and findings made in this paper:

- (1) Government should sincerely declare state of emergency on remediation of land where oil spillage has devastated in order to re-energize the land for agricultural activity and sustainability of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.
- (2) Government should equally declare state of emergency on gas flaring in the Niger Delta in order to minimize its health associated problems in the region.
- (3) Government should re-calibrate efforts in ensuring that multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta adhere to the dictates of the ten commandments of corporate social responsibility in their areas of operations.

(4) Corporate organizations particularly oil exploration and production companies should consider corporate social responsibility as a flagship policy in the formulation of their community relations policies and programmes in order to stimulate the sustainability of the environment where they operate.

(5) There should be sincere and committed efforts of government and multinational oil companies to addressing the ecological problems affecting the Niger Delta people particularly the oil bearing communities.

(6) Government and multinational oil companies should be apolitical in the cleaning of Ogoni land and other oil bearing communities suffering the same problem of oil pollution in the Niger Delta.

(7) There should be a strict enforcement of law regulating multinational oil companies in their exploration and exploitation of crude oil vis-à-vis environmental impact assessment before commencement of new oil exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta in order to guarantee the sustainability of the ecosystem and our environment.

(8) Corporate organizations should intensify their community relations efforts in order to minimize hostility and illegal oil bunkering and eradicate the problem of man-made oil spillage in host communities which contribute to environmental problems in the oil bearing communities.

(9) We also believe that total adherence to the ten commandments of corporate social responsibility will serve as an elixir to the social-economic, environmental and ecological problems affecting the Niger Delta people particularly the oil producing communities.

10) The nicknaming of host communities as Oliver Twist cannot stop the on-going violent agitations by the Niger Delta youths against the multinational oil companies but a swift adoption of proactive community relations practice in the companies' communities of operations will serve as a recipe for building a sustainable and mutual relationship between the former and the latter, and at the long run, stimulates the sustainability peace and tranquility in the Niger Delta environment.

11) Multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria should be compiled by the government and the media to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) reached with their host communities from the inception of their operations in the communities to minimize the plethora of community relations issues and crises bedeviling the organizations and their host communities.

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