Corporate Social Responsibility and Insecurity in the Host Communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy by multinational corporations (MNCs) in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. The goal of CSR is to encourage a positive impact through its activities with the stakeholders, the environment and the general public. CSR also focuses on how businesses would proactively support the public interest by encouraging community growth and development. The problem of insecurity in the Niger Delta region is attributed to the feeling of anger and frustration by host communities due to perceived negligence of CSR initiatives by the MNCs. This has resulted in crude oil theft, vandalization of oil pipelines, general insecurity and actions that have negatively affected the activities of the MNCs as well as the federal government who depend on the oil revenue for its national budgets. This paper considers the CSR initiatives of the MNCs and the underpinnings of security challenges in this region. This is an empirical paper based on in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the host communities of the Niger Delta region. Using the stakeholder theory, the paper maintains that initiating and implementing the right CSR strategy would help to reduce the crisis in this region and enhance the peaceful operations of the MNCs. It contributes to emerging discourse in CSR on how desired positive impact can be made through effective CSR.

Keywords: Insecurity, corporate social responsibility, community development, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Crude oil has become the major source of revenue for the Nigerian nation, 90% of her revenue is generated from the sale of oil and gas products. This has therefore made the oil and gas industry to attract utmost attention and a major determinant of the economy of the country. Despite the huge benefits of crude oil to the country as a whole, the people of the Niger delta region, where such oil is discovered and the bed rock of such resources are not happy and thus resorted to constant contestation, conflicts and insurgency in order to attract the attention of the government and solve their problems (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The area remains one of the poorest and under-developed. Issues of unemployment and deprivation seems to engulf them (Idemudia, 2009) leaving them with no option than to transfer their aggression to the oil companies operating in such areas.

By all accounts, petroleum profits have brought huge benefits to this country's rulers, but few to its people (Ajibade & Awomuti, 2009). Oil companies typically keep 7 percent of the profits from oil sales; the government gets 93 percent. In an effort to redistribute wealth, the government now gives 13 percent of the proceeds from oil sales to the producing states, but there is little accountability on how these funds are spent. Much of the oil resources simply disappears or wasted by inefficient or corrupt local officials (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009). The ethnic unrest and conflict of the late 1990s (such as those between Ijaws and Itsekiri), coupled with a spike in the availability of small arms and other weapons, led increasingly to the militarization of the Delta. By this time local and state officials had become involved by offering financial support to those paramilitary groups they believed would attempt to enforce their own political agenda. Prior to 2003, the epicentre of regional violence was Warri. However, after the violent convergence of the largest military groups in the region, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and the Nigeria Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom (both of which are comprised primarily of Ijaw), conflict became focused on Port-Harcourt and outlaying towns. The two groups dwarf a plethora of smaller militias supposedly numbering more than one hundred. This violence gradually spread to other parts of the Niger Delta and has become a recurring issue in this region as a whole.

On the strength of the above, the Federal government had made several attempts to solve the problem of this region by the Development Board in 1962, the Niger Delta River/Basin Development Authority in the 1980s, and the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 before the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. In this regard, the aim of NDDC is to complement the efforts of the various governments at all levels-local, state and federal by paying particular attention to the strategic development objectives of; promoting social harmony, peace and socio-political stability through the integration of social, national and communal initiatives to enhance economic development; facilitating equitable and sustainable economic growth and development through economic diversification, integrated and accelerated industrialization and employment generation; facilitating the development, maintenance and rehabilitation of physical and social infrastructure; complementing initiatives for poverty eradication and provision of basic social services by ensuring availability and accessibility and promoting sustainable environmental management and regeneration (Ugochukwu, 2001).

The technical committee of the international conference on development of the Niger Delta held in Port-Harcourt on December 10–12, 2001 led by Chief Ferdinand Alabraba summarized the challenges faced in the development of the Niger Delta to include; difficult terrain, long neglect, youth restiveness and insecurity. Most of these challenges are yet to be overcome. The oil producing companies have over the years been accused of insignificantly contributing to the development of this region. Companies like Shell Petroleum Development Company Limited, Chevron Corporation and Mobil Oil Nigerian Limited are currently involved in development activities in the Niger Delta Region in education, health and provision of other infrastructural facilities to rural communities. Despite the above oil production is being disrupted by militant youth through kidnapping of foreign workers, vandalization of oil pipe lines, ambush of supplies at the Creeks, attack of contractors and security staff of oil companies and attack of government security agencies (Police and Army) personnel deployed to maintain peace in the region (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009). The question then is; how can this matter be resolved?

Against this background, the specific objectives of this paper are:

- To examine the factors contributing to security challenges in the Niger Delta Region.

- To assess the CSR initiatives by MNCs and how such activities are impacting on the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta and

- To suggest possible initiatives that could enhance peace in the region.

In order to achieve these objectives, the paper is divided into seven sections. The section that follows the introduction considers an overview of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, followed by the description of corporate social responsibility, then the CSR initiatives of the MNCs in the Niger Delta region and the methodology and findings of the study. The section that follows is the discussion on the way forward and finally the conclusion.

2. The Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region is the world's third largest wetland, coming after the Mississippi in North America and the Pantanal in South America, respectively. Extending from Apoi to Bakassi, from Mashin creek to the Bight of Benin, it covers a coastline of 560 kilometres, about two-third of the entire line of Nigeria. It covers an area of about 70,000 square kilometres and accounts for 7.5 percent of Nigeria's land mass. It is noted for its sandy coastal ridge barriers, blackish or saline mangroves, fresh water, permanent and seasonal swamp forests, as well as low land rain forest (NDDC Bulletin, 2002). The region transverses nine out of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; these are Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States (see Figure 1 below). The estimated population of the region is about 20 million, comprising over forty different ethnic groups speaking 250 different dialects across about 3,000 communities (Afinotan and Ojakorotu, 2009).
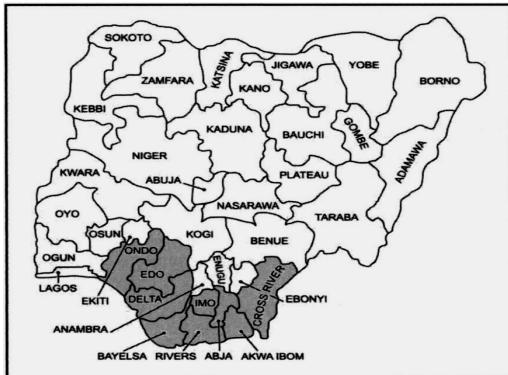
Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing the Niger Delta state

Source: http://pubs.sciepub.com/env/1/4/2/figure/1

Since oil was first discovered more than five decades ago, the region has grown to become the main source of foreign exchange earnings for the whole country. From 1975 to date, more than 90 percent of the of nation's export earnings have, on the average, been generated from the region's oil resources. Yet, the Niger Delta remains the least developed areas of the country in physical and social and economic terms. While oil exploration and exploitation has brought wealth to the country as a whole, it has also brought untold hardship, conflict, wars, poverty and insecurity to the Niger Delta region (Ejumudo et al., 2012). Severe economic deprivation and social exclusion have stood in sharp contrast to the enormous oil wealth of the area, creating a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. The Niger Delta is perhaps the only oil region in the entire world where the inhabitants are compelled to cope with the spill after spill situation (Afinotan & Ajakorotu, 2009). Even when attempts are made to address the spillage, local communities are hardly truly involved, in a region that has an extreme fragile ecosystem (NDDC, Dec. 2002). Poverty, unemployment and underemployment are pervasive in the Niger Delta (Idemudia, 2009)

Given the low level of availability and limited access to socioeconomic infrastructure, the level of deprivation is necessarily high (Ugochukwu, 2001). The long years of neglect and deprivation had created, by the 1990s a volatile atmosphere characterized by protest, agitation and community conflict. By 1998, the Niger Delta had become a lawless zone, where youth disrupted oil producing activities at will and communities frequently engaged, with little provocation in destructive inter and intra community strive (Omene, 2001). There has been series of agitations and sometimes violent acts to protest what was perceived as suppression and denial of their rights to development. The oil companies have also not been spared the brunt of these agitations. In response to persistent, often violent demands to plough their huge profits back into the area, they have had to step up their community development and social responsibilities over the years. To actually ascertain the extent of involvement of oil companies, the issue of CSR had to be considered. Research has shown that the CSR undertaken by oil corporations in this region is not making the desired positive impact and done little or nothing in improving the suffering of the inhabitants (Ejumudo et al., 2012). Tuodolo (2009) is of the opinion that most of the benefits local communities enjoy from the CSR programmes of the MNCs come at a great cost to them because of the negative environmental impacts of oil extraction processes.

The conflict situation in the Niger Delta can be traced to the long history of neglect, marginalization and repression of the people of the Niger Delta by successive Governments since the First Republic. The cumulative effect of all these have been lack of development and widespread poverty, and discontent among the people of the Niger Delta (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009). The immediate cause of the incessant crisis is general discontent of the Niger Delta peoples, which has given vent to this unlawful method of improving their living standards and benefiting from their oil wealth that is being unfairly carted away to Abuja and other places, while they wallow in abject poverty and unemployment (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). Since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta in 1956, various legislations have been passed and decrees enacted, the consequences of which have led to the denial of a large number of its peoples, destruction of their lands, pollution of their water, etc. Through the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Decree of 1978 the people have been dispossessed of what they once owned.

Revenue from oil is being siphoned to develop other parts of the country, while the Niger Delta itself was neglected in terms of provision of basic social amenities and infrastructural facilities (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). On

the environmental aspect, pollution of land, air and water through gas flaring and oil spillages have posed serious health hazards to the citizens of the area. Hunger, deprivation and unemployment became the lot of the people as their eco-system, farmlands and aquatic lives became destroyed during the last five decades of oil exploration and production (Ajibade & Awomuti, 2009). This has left the people with no other choice than to transfer their problems to the oil companies and expect them to be solved through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility

The field of CSR has grown significantly and the ambiguity within the literature to define CSR has resulted in articulating a great proliferation of theories, approaches and terminologies (Garriga & Melé, 2004), that try to describe and define CSR conceptually and/or in practice, and that stem from very different understanding of CSR. Building on the thinking of Windsor (2006) there is unresolved debate in ethics itself "where unclear semantics and specialist terminology make the concept as continuously mixed up in terms of context, content and perspectives" (Fassin et al., 2010, p. 2). Many scholars such as Carroll contends that defining CSR is as "an eclectic filed with loose boundaries, multiple memberships, and differing training/perspectives; broadly rather than focused, multidisciplinary; wide breadth; brings in a wider range of literature; and interdisciplinary" (Carroll, 1994, p. 14). Furthermore, CSR is a phenomenon which is defined differently through the reflection of various economic, political and/or ethical theories. It is dilemma that was captured in Votaw (1972, p. 25) writing "corporate social responsibility is a concept which has different meaning and tend to change its meaning according to the context of the situation". To further illustrate this, Frankental (2001) argues that CSR is a vague and intangible term which can mean anything to anybody, and therefore is effectively without meaning. However, having no unified definition does not undermine its significance and role in the relationship between business and society.

CSR is a concept that shows concern about the business practices that is aimed at more than profit-maximization. Although the CSR concern of businesses making profits along the other responsibilities towards employees, society and environment illustrates philosophical traditions in which this concept is rooted. CSR is particularly an emerging concept that emphasizes on fiduciary and obligatory duties that the organization are expected to oblige beyond their economical and legal duties (Carroll, 1979). It is more focused on expectations and responsibilities rather than emphasis on profits maximization. This is in line with the view of Anita Roddick (The Body Shop founder) that:

> In terms of power and influence, you can forget the church, forget politics. There is no more powerful institution in society other than business. This suggests that it is now more important than ever before for business to assume a moral leadership. The business of business should not be about money, it should be about responsibility, it should be about public good, not private greed (Purkayastha & Fernando, 2007, p. 1)

CSR therefore has a powerful potential to make positive contributions to addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities in developing countries (Ite, 2004). On the other hand, there are ways in which CSR could, whether by mistake or design, damage the same communities, politically, social and economically. In the same vain, Bowen, 1953) describes CSR as the obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies and make decisions that are in line with the desires and values of the larger society. This seems like a very herculean task for corporate organizations considering the array of responsibilities. However, such tasks are surmountable if approached with the right motives. This is why Baker (2010) explains that CSR is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. This argument is equally supported by Garriga and Mele (2004)'s view that business depends on society for its existence, continuity and growth and should therefore be able to pay back to the very society through CSR.

According to Ite (2004) lack of national macro-economic planning and management, backed by equitable resource allocation, and an enabling environment, have significant implications for the overall performances of CSR initiatives by multinational corporations in developing countries. In the Nigerian context, lack of sustainable development and poverty are pervasive problems in the Niger Delta, mainly due to lack of significant Nigerian government commitment to the development of the region over the years. The issue now is the extent to which CSR initiatives carried out by oil producing companies has impacted on the communities and how this has contributed positively or negatively to restiveness of youth other than economic development and how the security challenges has affected the oil producing companies. The role that government has to play to ensure peace in this region should also be taken into consideration. Since the Nigerian economy depends on petroleum extraction, it is important that any impediment should be tackled to avoid economic crisis.

4. CSR initiatives by MNCs in the Nigerian Oil Industry

The efficiency in the practice of CSR requires that the firms must assess the impact of their operation on the host community and must be willing to plan and execute actions that will ensure minimal negative impact of their activities on the environment. In the case of the Niger Delta, the oil exploitation process especially the spills and other environmental threats associated will oil production have tremendously caused disruption of the ecosystem stability and traditional livelihood structures of the communities (Zabbey, 2005). The demand for a reverse of this trend is the cause of conflict between oil exploration firms and their host communities. This is especially so because the MNCs had erroneous presumption that as long as they have been able to satisfy the conditions of issuance of operational license and the subsequent payment(s) of various taxes to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), then, they have no obligation to develop oil-producing communities with the apparent near-zero level of corporate responsibility (Zebbey, 2008).

While the companies are of the view that it is the function of government to ensure that life in the oil-producing areas is improved, the host communities assert that the MNCs owe their host pay back development and alternative means of livelihood, having exploited their wetlands that were in the end transformed to or abandoned as wastelands (Zabbey, 2009). The management of these parallel concepts of optimizations of benefits to the MNCs, government and the Niger Delta people is the hallmark of corporate social responsibility, especially as it will ensure that the MNCs retain the social license of operation issued by their host communities. Available evidence suggests that until recently the evolution and deployment of CSR strategy within Nigeria's oil industry was largely a defensive strategy adopted by the MNCs to help minimize the damanage of their reputation and reduce increasing cost of operation due to community strife. CSR by MNCs are viewed from a philanthropic perspective instead of a basic requirement, placing the host communities at the receiving end of whatever is provided without recourse to their needs.

The strategy used in CSR initiatives by most MNCs in this region seem to be predicated on the premise of business objectives and focused on fulfilling only the most minimal ethical obligations. Underlying this approach is the assumption that the economic goals of business are incompatible with the development aspirations of the local communities. Based on these premises, CSR practice seldom varied from legal compliance and providing the "moral minimum" (Desjardins, 2006). Reliance on this narrowly defined business focus prevented the oil companies from taking proactive steps in designing and implementing CSR programmes. However, the attempts made by the MNCs in this regards have received huge criticisms from the host communities as most of the CSR programmes are perceived to be carried out in reaction to the agitations from the locals. In sum, despite millions of dollars and naira invested in community help project, CSR practices in the Niger Delta are perceived by observers and the community as cosmetic attempts to act in a socially responsible manner or actions taken only to protect the company's reputations (Ite, 2004).

Subsequently, CSR projects were not designed to address urgent economic environmental and social problems. For example, ExxonMobil's gift of schools and healthcare facilities were presented on one-time offers instead of as sustainable projects (Ite, 2004). The continuation of gas flaring, despite calls for reduction, is another example (UNDP, 2006). Though the oil companies have attributed reasons for the slow progress to the costs of implementing alternative systems, continued gas flaring suggests a lack of urgency concerning a serious environmental problem. The neglect of sustainability in CSR initiatives suggests that the future of the people is not guaranteed and this would subsequently result in a continuous reliance on the MNC or the government. Despite the need for community development, incessant destruction of the environment signifies danger for the people of this region. However, the integration of community development and self-help projects in CSR Strategy in the Niger Delta did not occur until the mid-1990s—The evidence suggests that early attempts at community help projects and infrastructure development were reactive (Ite, 2004). The MNCs integrated CSR into corporate strategies only when hostility against the companies intensified.

Similarly, the lack of a coordinated strategic approach to the implementation of CSR produces uneven results that have no impact on the people of the Niger Delta (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The millions of Dollars and Naira spent on scholarships, schools and agricultural extension projects have had no impact on poverty alleviation or the socio-economic development of the region. The absence of a comprehensive emergency response plan to address oil spills in the region illustrates this point. The oil company's response to such environment disaster rarely extends beyond the villages in the vicinity to communities downstream where farmlands and rivers have been equally ruined. It is evident from precious researches that the CSR activities by oil corporations in the Niger Delta region are not having the desired positive impact and the living standards of the people have not improved which has brought about incessant crisis by the inhabitants (Ejumudo et al., 2012).

5. Methodology and Findings

This is an exploratory research adopting a qualitative technique. It combines the use of primary and secondary data; the primary data was obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews while the secondary data was obtained through documentary evidence. Twenty eight interviews were conducted in three host communities in Akwa Ibom state. The communities were selected based on their proximity to oil multinationals operating in that region. These communities include Edo in Esit Eket Local government area, Mkpanak in Ibeno local government area and Atabong in Eket Local government area. Those recruited to participate in the study included chiefs, local politicians, women, and youth leaders that have privileged information due to either their position and/or have been directly involved in negotiation with oil MNCs on behalf of the communities. The semi-structured interviews involved 24 members of the host communities and 3 employees of ExxonMobil. The research used purposive and snowballing sampling strategy to identify and recruit participants for the study. The interviews were arranged and agreed by identified participants. Participants' consent were sought to have the interviews audio tape-recorded in order not to lose vital information. The interviews were fully transcribed by the researchers and notes taken on the field. An interview guide was prepared to provide a basis for discussion although the questions were no followed strictly as some questions were answered in the course of the discussion making is unnecessary to ask such questions any further.

The findings reveal that the host communities have resorted to causing problems and making the area uncomfortable for the MNCs because they feel deprived of their right to the provision of basic infrastructure and other social amenities. The MNC were initially seen to be performing their responsibility as expected by the host communities but are now being accused of neglecting their obligations. Participants expressed concern over the attitude of the MNCs which suggest that the host communities are being taken for granted. It is believed that their right is being exploited and they may be seen as being weak if they do not react. The reaction of the host communities suggests that their expectations have not been met. One of the participants stated as follows;

> For the past 10 years, Mobil producing Nigeria operating in this area did nothing in the form of community development rather Mobil saw the peaceful manner of the people and capitalize on the cooperation of Ibeno people as weakness on their part and exploit the rights of the people. (PA, Mkpanak, Oct. 27, 2014)

This therefore suggests that lack of community development initiatives for several years has attributed to the conflict in this region. The host communities seem to have cooperated with the MNCs with the hope that things would be done the right way in term of CSR, which they consider as their right. This awareness is in line with the need for socio-economic practices in oil producing communities all over the world which makes the discovery and exploitations of oil a welcome idea for the natives of such communities (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009). The expectations of such communities are that of a better life and improved standards of living as compared to other communities. They also have prospects for provision of social amenities, better roads, good water, schools and health care facilities. However, these wide range of expectations can vary from community to community and are bound to influence community decision making and relationship with the MNC (Idemudia, 2007). Irrespective of the array of expectations and variation in priorities by different host communities, the MNCs should design strategies to handle such needs if they desire a peaceful working environment.

Another major factor underpinning the conflict in this region is the issue of unemployment. One of the prospects of the host communities were that most of their youths would be gainfully employed in the oil company which would in turn reduce poverty in this area. The feeling of frustration is born out of the fact that they can hardly be employed in the MNCs and at the same time, their traditional livelihoods which would have been a second option have been damaged. They attribute their joblessness to the negative effects of oil extractive processes which have destroyed their traditional livelihoods. Due to oil spills, the traditional livelihoods of the host communities which were hitherto farming and fishing have been abandoned. Abandoning their traditional livelihoods has resulted in incessant disputes and restiveness of youth because most of them have become jobless. The host communities feel that having taken what rightly belongs to local communities; the MNC has an obligation to provide something in return. Accordingly a participant from Mkpanak village states as follows;

> The livelihood has been abandoned. The young men are now on the road with sticks and nails to block any company coming in (laughs) in order to get what to eat because they cannot fish again. The youths did not just wake up one day to take up arms against oil companies. It is as a result of years of frustrated efforts at improving the lot of their communities. They kidnap oil workers, break oil pipelines, take the crude oil to the high seas where there are no borders and receive sophisticated arms in return. (PA, Mkpanak, Oct. 27, 2014)

In the same vein another participant from Edo community states that;

> The community is forced to abandon traditional livelihood, the young men are now on the road with sticks and nails to block any company coming and company workers from going to work [..] they even block Mobil airstrip in order to get what to eat because they cannot fish again. (HU, 9 Oct, 2014, Edo)

This explains why recurring issues of sabotage, acts of destruction and some level of violence from the host communities can hardly be stopped. Negative environmental impacts through oil spills and gas flaring are seen as the major causes of crisis in this region because they affect the socio-economic lives of the people. The host communities see themselves as stakeholders in the affairs of ExxonMobil. Using sticks and nails to block the road and preventing the oil company workers from going to work is to proof to the company that they have a stake in their activities and to express their grievance. Crane and Matten (2010) describe a stakeholder as an individual or a group which either is harmed or benefits and whose right is respected or violated by the corporation. Based on this idea of being stakeholders, the host communities feel that their rights have been violated and the best approach is to fight back. This may not seem right, but it affirms the fact that as stakeholders, their action could affect the activities of the company. Such reaction is to prevent the company workers from working for several weeks and in some cases up to months.

However, the MNC is of the view that the disputes and conflicts are as a result of their inability to meet high expectations of the host communities and their constant demands. Irrespective of the demands of the host communities, they feel that the MNCs should live up to their expectations in carrying out their CSR if they want to continue to operate in a peaceful environment. The focus should not be on the reaction of the host communities but rather the cause of their reaction. The destruction of traditional livelihoods through oil spills should be given adequate consideration if the crisis has to stop. The reaction of the host communities affirms the views of Eweje (2006) who says that environmental impacts of oil exploitations have increased the problem of the Niger Delta region. The assertion of the MNC does not rule out the fact that, they owe their host community an obligation which has to be fulfilled for peaceful coexistence. Idemudia (2009) opines that the persistent incidences of blocking of roads, oil-worker hostage taking, blockage of oil facilities and human right violation have had a negative impact on both corporate profit and government revenue. If the profits have to be retained as well as the licence to operate in a conducive environment, then these causes of violence and continuous disruption of oil production through crisis has to be handled with caution.

The Niger Delta region, which was once a peaceful area with the inhabitants going about their normal businesses and living a normal life have been turned into an area of crisis and insecurity. The crisis in this region has negatively affected the people in such a way that they constantly live in fear. Incidences of kidnapping of adults and children of rich men for a ransom, destruction of oil pipeline, illegal bunkering, gun running, cult-gang building and militancy as defence mechanisms has become the order of the day (Eyinla & Ukpo, 2006). Furthermore, Afinotan and Ajakorotu (2009) explain that the area has become a hot bed for insurgency, host-taking, crude oil theft and gang wars. The youths have resorted to the use of arms against government and the multi-national oil companies which sometimes result in several deaths. The youths are taking it upon themselves to break open oil pipelines in order to redeem the benefits they have long expected rather than wait endlessly for the promise to be fulfilled. They feel cheated by the federal government on what they rightly owned and are prepared to fight for their right. Hence insecurity in this region has scared away prospective investors therefore reducing the possibilities of benefiting through the CSR activities of such investors.

6. What is the Way Forward?

Having discussed the causes of the problem and some challenges in finding a solution, it is necessary at this point to proffer suggestions to the way forward. Idemudia and Ite (2006) classify the causes of the Niger Delta crisis into the root cause and the trigger causes. The political (quest for power and marginalization), and economic (oil revenue allocation) factors are the root causes while environmental (pollution and gas flaring) and social factors (youth unemployment) as the proximate and trigger causes. They also opine that the Niger delta crises have not been resolved despite efforts by oil multinationals through community development activities and initiatives for local communities because the root causes have not been addressed. This therefore suggests that any meaningful attempt to get out of this undesirable situation in the Niger Delta must address the root causes which include; the past neglect, marginalization and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta. Furthermore the prevalent poverty in the region is attributed to incessant oil spills and its impact of the socio-economic lives of the people. In recent times the situation can no longer be ignored because of its potentials for further damage which is evident in recent agitations and calls for resource control and the restructuring of the Federation. There is a possibility that if the existing situation remains unattended to, the reaction could worsen and threaten the continued

corporate existence of our nation. Efforts should be made to ensure that the Nigerian nation remains as in unity, but it must be unity based on equity, justice, fair play, freedom and a sense of belonging where every part is able to develop at a similar pace.

On the environmental aspects, efforts should be made to reduce negative environmental impact of oil exploitation on the people. Issues of oil spills, pollution and gas flaring should be minimized or totally eradicated. Though this may be at a huge cost to the MNC, it seems to be the best option for a better relationship between the MNC and their host communities. This is seen as one of the root causes of consistent violence in this area which has given rise to the trigger causes as discussed above. This paper therefore suggests that reducing negative environmental impacts on livelihoods and providing alternative livelihood programmes through effective CSR initiatives could be a way forward. However, the MNCs have their policies regarding the specific areas of community investment they are willing to implement which may not be in agreement with the specific needs of the communities. The paper argues that a single criterion for CSR does not and should not exist in practice. In other words, the country's special circumstances should be taken into consideration when decisions are taken with regards CSR initiatives. CSR must be defined realistically to suit such situations. It is also argued that oil multinational companies operating in this region should understand the contemporary trends in CSR within stakeholders' perspective and embrace them to promote a viable operating environment for their business activities. Providing alternative livelihood initiative is one of the major findings of this research which is different from the suggestions from previous researchers although this may not be a definite answer to the problem of this complex region.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study is basically a qualitative research limited to the in-depth interviews conducted in three host communities in one of the states in the Niger delta region. It is therefore recommended that further studies could be conducted using other methods of primary data collection. The replications could also be done in other states of the Niger delta. However, being a qualitative research with limited sample size does not mean that the results are not valid as the researcher engaged in rigorous processed of identifying and coding the themes as well as the process of data analysis.

8. Conclusion

In line with the goal of effective corporate social responsibility and the need to boost a positive impact through its activities with the stakeholders, the environment and the general public, this paper has considered the CSR strategy by oil multinational corporations in Nigerian. The design, planning and implementation of CSR initiatives by the MNCs have been reactive rather than proactive which is not dependent on public interest but on the policy of the company. Such activities have therefore been viewed negatively by the host communities and do not seem to foster a relationship that is based on trust and mutual benefit. The uncordial relationship is attributed to failed expectations which have resulted in different kinds of crisis ranging from crude oil theft to vandalization of oil pipeline, blocking of airstrip, destruction of lives and property and general insecurity. The problem of insecurity in the Niger Delta region is also attributed to the feeling of anger and frustration by host communities due to perceived negligence of CSR by the MNCs in addressing the negative impacts of their activities and marginalization by the Federal government.

These actions have negatively affected the profits generated by the MNCs as well as the federal government who depend on the revenue made from the sales of crude oil. Accordingly, the different stakeholders such as the government, oil companies, local communities and the private sector should consider new insights on integrated strategies concerning the crisis in the Niger Delta. The CSR initiative of the MNCs does not seem to yield positive impact in this regard hence the need to vary the approach to CSR. Using the stakeholder theory, the paper maintains that initiating and implementing the right CSR strategy would help to reduce the crisis in this region and enhance the security and peaceful operations of the MNCs. Having considered the root and trigger causes of the crisis, it concludes that without rural development and human capital development, restiveness by militants will continue to jeopardize oil operations in the Niger Delta. This paper therefore provides meaningful suggestions to oil companies, local communities and government authorities to enhance the economic development of the Niger Delta Region. This research has created additional knowledge in the implementation of CSR which should be based on the peculiarity of such area. It contributes to emerging discourse in CSR on how desired positive impact can be made through effective corporate social responsibility.

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