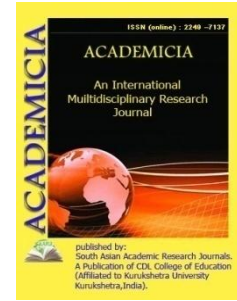


ACADEMICIA
**An International
 Multidisciplinary
 Research Journal**
 (Double Blind Refereed & Peer Reviewed Journal)



DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2021.00632.7

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MULTINATIONAL OIL
 COMPANIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN COMMUNITIES OF
 NIGER DELTA REGION, NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL
 GOVERNMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of oil exploration in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta region in 1956 came with great excitement and huge hopes for rapid development and accelerated civilization in communities, in the region. Although most multinational oil companies (MNOCs) have found the Niger Delta a fertile ground for business, the region remains backwards, poor and underdeveloped. The host communities in the region represent a sordid tale of its squalor and underdevelopment in centre of its tremendous wealth, which include deforestation, noise pollution and other ecological damages, which has presented serious humanitarian challenges with implications for security, development, human right, social justice and poverty. To address these issues, the MNOCs have engaged in some programmes intended to benefit the oil bearing communities in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR). This paper is focused on the role of the federal government in regulating the activities of the MNOCs with regards to CSR in the development of communities in the region and its contributions to conflict resolution.

KEYWORDS: *Community, Corporate Social Responsibility, Conflict and Conflict Resolution.*

INTRODUCTION

Recurrent oil conflict has affected the Niger Delta region since the past five decades since the commercialisation oil exploration from the Niger Delta in 1958. The region's conflicts are blamed on the negative effects of oil exploration activities, which have impacted negatively on

the relations amongst MNOCs (Shell, Chevron and Agip), the Nigerian State, and oil producing communities. The problem in the Niger Delta stems from the alleged neglect; oppression, marginalization and environmental dilapidation occasioned by oil exploration and production activities (Ifedi, 2011). After a long period of frustration over the appalling conditions created by the economic activities of the MNOCs, the communities of the region, according to Ibeanu (2000) in Nwankwo (2018), took up arms against petrol-business and its political allies in order to draw attention to their situation. The resulting conflict, which has degenerated and defied several measures aimed at its resolution, could inherently be related to the failure of the MNOCs CSR projects and policies in the Niger Delta in general.

The contradiction that generates conflict in the Niger Delta could be traceable to the haphazard nature and failure of the various multinationals' corporate social responsibility projects and policies (Ako, 2013). In spite of the attempt by the trans-nationals and government at various levels to mediate the crisis through interventionist strategies and programmes as measures towards managing or addressing the issues, conflict in the region has remained unabated. The tension in the Niger Delta continues to pose serious challenges for good governance and livelihood for the people in the region. That the militarisation of the region has not helped in restoring the much-desired stability in this regard raises a question of the government's conflict management style. Key socio-economic indicators reveal that there will be further devastating consequences if the crisis is not managed through inclusive policies derived from democratic and participatory processes. Without doubt, restoring peace in the region would require political will (Epelle, 2010) and determined effort to bring about the physical development of the region. The formulation and implementation of CSR policies and the establishment of a new and positive culture of social, economic and democracy can support this. In this regard, a multi-stakeholder joint problem solving approach is required for timely implementation of CSR.

In spite of the interventionist measures adopted, the aggrieved communities seem not to be appeased by the Nigerian oil industry. On the other hand, the MNOCs in a bid to rebrand their image with the international community spent millions of dollars investing in the Niger Delta as part of CSR. Thus, according to Okodudu (2008), Shell's annual expenditure increased from \$25m in 1994 to \$60m in 2000. Despite these concerted efforts, Shell has continued to be blamed by the host communities with consequences including insecurity and public safety breaches.

The dependency mentality within the host communities has been fostered by the failure of most CSR programmes, which does not involve the local people in the initiation, planning and implementation process. Since, the construction of buildings and other development projects do not genuinely involve the local people, these social initiatives are seen, as gifts from outsiders and the local people do not claim ownership of the projects. Schemes introduced in this way cannot remain functional without the continued support of the owners/users, and this contravenes a basic principle of development. Thus, as stated earlier, while the MNOCs claim to be actively engaged in CSR and to have invested extensively (huge amount of money) towards the development of the oil producing communities, the latter contend that the MNOCs have not done enough. In this regards, this study is focused on evaluating the reasons why increases in CSR funding by the MNOCs, correspondingly produces intensive communal resistance.

Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Community

The term community has various meanings from different scholars. There are communities such as rural, urban, religious, racial or ethnic, economic, organized labour, industrial, academic etc. One could only grasp the concepts of these different communities with a better understanding of their dynamics. However, the basic ideology which is found in all communities is the shared interest. Hence, Egenti (2012) identified a community as a group of people living within a legally established area, communicate together and living in a given geographical environment, have common needs and problems, such as the family, village, town or clan, tribe, state or nation. A community, therefore, is a social group, occupying a more or less defined geographical area and based on the feeling that people have for one another.

In a similar view, Umezulike (2003), observed that a community involves a conscious organization of individuals within a geographical area with definite legal boundaries who support some basis of primary institutions, use some common facilities within this geographical area, and have a common legal as well as political identity. Hence a community can be described as constituting those residing in a given locality who shares certain interest, common backgrounds or goals. The common feeling of a community recognizes attributes and common sentiment which make the people believe in one destiny and have a strong bond holding the people together (Abiona, 2009).

Community creates a feeling of brotherhood, in all members to the extent that what affects a member of the community or an event that concerns a group attracts a common feeling in the community. Moreso, community has the ability to share a recognized way of life. This can be manifested on culture, dressing, language, education, politics etc. for example, the pre-colonial communities of the Igbos, Yoruba's, Hausa's, Ijaw's, Ibibio's etc. The modern Nigeria is also a community because of their share political, economic and social interest. The way of life is peculiar to a given community and such people attract certain values to the system. A breach in the social order is frowned at and a social sanction is enforced in order to curb the occurrence of such acts.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The business of social responsibility has gained attention in recent years, especially since the 1990s thereby demonstrating a nexus between businesses and society (Idemudia, 2010). At the heart of every CSR programme is the need to satisfy the aspirations of the people in the community where the business is located (Alfred, 2013). Obi (2010) asserts that CSR is effective when corporate behaviour is aligned to the needs and expectations of not only the organizations, but also the communities where the company is situated. By implication, the social and environmental welfare of the people must be considered as are responsibility of the company, even while making a profit (Obi, 2010). The foregoing means that the companies are obliged to plan towards enhancing the human and environmental conditions of the communities where they carry out their businesses as friends of the people and not their foes. Such obligations are identified by Jones, Hillier and Comfort (2009) as protection, improvement and consideration of the welfare of all the stakeholders in the communities.

There are different views on CSR. One of which is the classical perspective, which focuses on the economic benefits of business. Another one is the stakeholder view, which, in line with the stakeholder theory, states that corporations must live up to the expectations of being socially responsible to the people and the entire environment (Lantos, 2001). In line with the “constrained profit-making view,” Manuel Castelo Branco, Lucia Lima Rodrigues (2007) in Nwankwo (2018), averred that the profit making goal of companies overshadows some of their basic obligations owing to the fact that the ethics of business does not receive the desired attention. Also, Friedman (1998) maintains that the high level of honesty in their dealings with the people would enhance corporate image while generating and maximizing profit.

Concept of Conflict in Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

Conflict conveys many meanings and carries many connotations. Accordingly, Heraclites, an ancient Greek philosopher, describe conflict as the defining property of human community. To function properly, the social order, as a necessity becomes a conglomerate of cleavages. It is from such disagreements that the society derives to own vibrancy. It is a circle that runs forever (Orluwene, 2008), conflict can also be defined as actions that contending parties take toward each other due to the incompatible objectives in what they are attempting to achieve. The Niger Delta conflicts that lead to organized violence emerges from a combination of several factors directly related to their grievances, demand and struggle aimed at redressing their disadvantages and deprivations. Otite (2001) sees conflict from the pursuits of divergent interests, goals and aspiration by individuals and, or groups in a defined social and physical environment, he further notes that conflict generally entails struggle, competition, rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach value. From this definition, conflict does not necessarily have to be violent. But when conflict turns violent, it becomes detrimental to the growth and stability of the system.

From the foregoing, it may be drawn that conflict is a natural consequence in any situation where the parties involved do not see the same issue from the same point of view. Otite (2000) argues that conflicts are conscious processes of interaction. Stedman (1991) cited in Peterside (2014), explains further that conflicts result from incompatible human interactions where the ability to satisfy ones needs depends on the choices, decisions and behaviour of others. The behaviour exhibited by the others may not be what the other complaining party or parties want, and indeed, may escalate the conflict. Hocker and Wilmot (1998) agree with Stedman on the incompatible factor, but add that there must be at least two interdependent parties who perceive that the other party is interfering with the achievement of their own goals. Hence, conflict is the violent manifestation of incompatibility.

Basically, four major conflict situations have been identified by Ugbomeh (2008) in the Niger Delta Region these include:

i) Community/Oil Companies Conflict: This conflict situation can be caused by several factors such as incursion into community land; a threat or perceived threat to the continual existence of a community, ineffective communication between communities and oil companies; nonpayment of compensation for occupied land, nonpayment or inadequate payment or unduly delayed payment of compensation for polluted land and water resources, abject poverty due to displacement and loss of livelihood arising from pollution of farmlands or fishing waters. This disputes between communities and oil companies are therefore often of long standing nature and difficult to resolve.

ii) Community/Government-Federal, State or Local Government

Conflict: The causes of community and government conflict are many. Some of which include:

- a. Low level and quality of development in the region.
- b. Perceived low level of government presence in the region.
- c. Non-chalant attitude of government towards the plight of the people of the Niger Delta.
- d. Marginalization by government.
- e. Creation of local government by the federal and state government.
- f. Boundary adjustment by federal government.
- g. Use of force in conflict management by the police and military force.

iii) Inter-Community Conflict: This conflict situation is a result of long disputes between two or more communities, unsettled boundary problems, disputes over oil-bearing land or incursions into community land.

iv) Intra-Community Conflict: This conflict situation may be due to long standing disputes between individuals within a community, political marginalization by a ruling class, ethnic groups or class, an unacceptable traditional ruler or embezzlement (real or imagined) of compensation by community leaders.

Pursuant to the above, it has been observed that generally, conflicts in the Niger Delta region are becoming increasingly frequent and intensely violent leading to incessant loss of lives and properties. Furthermore recent management and resolution strategies such as the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the creation of local government Areas/councils, the provision of social amenities and payment of compensation for land, have failed to arrest conflicts in the Niger Delta. If anything, the violent conflicts have taken a new turn for the worse. Thus, there is a need to re-examine the resolution strategies in relations within and between communities and oil companies and communities and government, with a view to instituting conflict management procedures that would lead to peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta Region.

Sources of Conflict in Niger Delta Region

It is not difficult to fathom the proximate, causes of the conflicts in the Niger Delta region. The origin and fundamental causes of the present Niger Delta Crisis were laid in the colonial period within the context of the inability of then government to address the issue of the minorities. The region lost its power to control their destinies with the amalgamation of the southern and Northern protectorates by Lord Lugard and every successive federal constitution was reluctant to address the fears of the minorities in the region. The minorities fear was centred on political and socio-economic rather than cultural or linguistic in nature. The fear of the minorities was confirmed by the Willincks Panel Report of 1958, (Peterside, 2014). The apparition of violence in the Niger Delta is attributable but not limited to the following.

1. The Distorted Structure of the Nigeria Federation

Historically, conflict in the Niger Delta region can be traced down to federal system of government that is being practiced since independence which from the very beginning was at variance with the expectations of many minorities in the nation. It has been argued that the federal constitution that was drafted suffered from two fundamental and destabilizing setbacks. The first, was the classification of the country into unequal regions. The second is the political and demographic domination of the Northern, Western and Eastern regions, being the majority ethnic groups and the marginalization of the minority ethnic groups. The Niger Delta people are the largest group amongst the minority groups spread over the South-South geopolitical zone (Akporaro, 2008).

The skewed structure of the Nigeria State has precipitated fiscal centralization in favour of the Federal Government and ethnic majority. The overbearing domination by the federal government has made it difficult for the oil-bearing communities to gain equitable access to wealth derived from their resources. Thus, the people of the Niger Delta have led a wave of agitation for greater control of their resources. Such agitation has more often than not, assumed violent dimensions. Therefore, it can be said that resource disparity in access, control and wealth distribution has been the bases of the conflicts between the oil companies and the Nigerian government and communities and the various ethnic groups in the Niger Delta for decades.

ii. Activities of the Oil and Gas Companies

From all indication, oil exploration and exploitation have unleashed far-reaching consequences on the environment. Oil-related activities have done much damage to the fragile Niger Delta environment as well as the health of the people (CASS, 2005 in Peterside, 2014). Notable impact of oil extraction, have been the loss of biodiversity; ecological devastation/degradation and destruction of mangrove forests. The popular perception in the region has been that the operations of the oil companies have led to the gradual destruction of the region's ecosystem. And whenever the oil companies fail to take responsibility for the damage done to the environment, the stage is invariably set for conflict between the people of the community and the oil companies.

Also, the trend of violence and compulsive appropriation by communities, groups and youths was as a result of decades of reckless environmental degradation, barefaced economic exploitation, arrogance, insensitivity and mistreatment of the communities by multinational oil companies. According to Ikelegbe (2005), communities and community groups and militants have had to threaten or actually destroy and disrupt multinational oil companies operations before any benefits are extended to them. Also potential benefits from the oil economy and revenue to community leaderships and grouping whether solicited or compelled are quite enormous and a major element in the struggle for the benefits and control of the oil revenue including the ownership of land and water in which oil fields are located. According to Ikelegbe (2005) this has fuelled inter family, group, communal and ethnic contestations of indigeneity and ownership of oil rich land and water which has tended to involve ferocious, highly destructive and vicious fighting. Apart from issues of ownership of land and water, there have been conflicts between and within communities over the distribution and control of payouts and compensations by both the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian State for appropriated and polluted land and water and related benefits.

iii. Militarization and Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The militarization and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta have been one of the causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta region. Successive governments have sought to contain the impasse in the oil-producing region through troops and weapons deployment. The aggrieved communities have in turn, taken up arms against the security forces to dislodge what they have long regarded as an unwarranted siege on their communities. The militarization of the region by the government finds expression in the several cases of military invasion of restive oil producing area (Akporaro, 2008).

iv. Retention of Legislations Widely Perceived as Obnoxious

It is widely held that the people of the Niger Delta have been disempowered and disinherited of their land through the instrumentality of legislations such as the land use Act, the petroleum Act, lands Act and some sections of the petroleum Act. These legislations vest ownership and control of lands, waters, and the resources found there in the hands of federal or state government. Environmental activists in the region argue that these legislations stifle local initiatives at protecting the environment and the reluctance of the government to accede to such requests have all intensified the activism for resource control, protests, brigandage and violence (Akporaro, 2008).

Conflict Resolution Strategies

There are different strategies adopted to resolve conflicts. While some people adopt a non-adversarial approach, others adopt confrontational strategies or even the total avoidance of the conflict. This section will discuss alternative dispute resolution, confrontation and arbitration as conflict resolution strategies that are adoptable in the Niger Delta.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Miller (2005) argues that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) aims to address conflicts in such a way that the outcome would be mutually acceptable to the parties involved. ADR does not involve litigation (which lasts longer and seems to be a more complex method of conflict resolution). The nonviolent approaches or ADR approaches have been discussed by Hadi (2010) in Nwankwo (2018), to include negotiation, mediation, reconciliation and arbitration. Otite (2001) adds that the joint-problem solving approach, which involves constructive listening by both parties in a conflict, so as to comprehend the elements in the conflict with the aim of addressing them.

Otite (2001) asserts that it takes two parties that are willing to actualize a win-win outcome for the joint problem solving approach to be successful. In addition, Albert (2010) gives an example of joint-problem solving, with the argument that the best way to deal with the herdsmen and farmers conflict is by assisting both parties to appreciate the opportunities offered by joint problem solving. However, joint problem solving entails that parties collaborate to address their problems (Onyima and Iwuoha, 2015).

Confrontation

Confrontation could be a direct expression of a group or a person's view, thoughts or feelings regarding a conflict situation. Confrontation could be an invitation to actors in conflicts to

express their views on a particular conflict. Confrontation as a conflict resolution strategy is basically concerned with exploring and clarifying issues of conflict, but it can be aggressive.

When it becomes aggressive, those involved in the conflict attack each other, either physically or emotionally, sometimes in verbal form (Otite, 2001). An example of confrontation is the Federal Government of Nigeria's approach to resolving the Niger Delta conflict. The Nigerian state adopted the option of the military intervention principle (Etekepe, 2007). This intervention strategy was utilised by the Obasanjo administration between 1999 and 2007. It deployed Nigerian soldiers to contain the restiveness of youth and criminal gangs that sought to hinder oil production and distribution without taking into consideration the reasons for their grievances (Etekepe, 2007). Before the establishment of the Joint Task Force in 2003, the Federal Government had adopted the principle in Ogoni, in 1990; Umuechem, in 1990; and Odi, in 1999. The confrontation strategy caused the Federal Government to spend billions of naira to sustain the presence of security forces in most Niger Delta communities to protect oil installations and oil workers (Okolie-Osemene and Tor, 2012).

Arbitration

Arbitration is a form of alternative dispute resolution that requires third-party intervention in conflict situations. This requires disputants to appoint arbitrators to hear evidence and take a decision on the issue (Hadi, 2010 in Nwankwo 2018). An arbitrator is a third party that seeks to address the source of the prevailing conflict. According to Zartman (1991), "third party decision-making methods occur when third parties acting on behalf of the larger society such as a court of law, pronounce mandatory judgments to resolve the conflict." The impact of arbitration is felt when the decision of an arbitration tribunal is enforced, like the judgment of a court, and such an award is usually binding on all the parties involved (Hadi, 2010 in Nwankwo 2018).

Linking Multinational National Oil Companies Corporate Social Responsibility and Conflict Responsibility

Many studies have linked CSR with conflict (Idemudia, 2010). The environmental unfriendly activities of MNOCs are contributory to conflicts, whereas their genuine CSR involvement can prevent and quell conflicts. He observed that conflict-sensitive organisations and their managements symbolize a necessary part of a combined effort to achieve a more peaceful world. In other words, the CSR commitment of businesses would definitely influence changes or the outcome of conflicts within the local communities and society, at large. However, businesses cannot stay neutral in conflict situations, as the advocates of CSR suggest that organisations seem to have focused on the enhancement of a peaceful business environment in their host communities (Idemudia, 2010).

Paradoxically, it is still disputable that CSR and conflict have a close nexus, especially in the context of conflict de-escalation. Allen, (2014) argues that there is no adequate empirical evidence to decide whether or not the involvement of businesses in CSR could prevent or reduce conflict. However, recent studies have been directed towards this direction (Idemudia, 2010). The scientific community is hesitant in establishing the scope of sincere corporate citizenship on security and its contributions in either triggering or quelling intra-state conflict in particular. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that given the expected growing role of businesses in conflict mitigation, there appears to be a necessity to examine the situation and scope to which these

roles can be fulfilled, hence businesses are perceived as effectual vehicles for conflict mitigation (Idemudia, 2010).

Concrete CSR reduces the negative impact of business activities on the environment; society reserves the right to a healthy and clean environment irrespective of corporate practices. The theory of the right to a liveable environment was established in Blackstone (1988), who notes that the right to a clean, safe environment is a human right. Therefore, MNOCs are expected to act responsibly to protect this human right. This is, particularly, important nowadays owing to the danger of the lack of a liveable ecosystem essential for human existence. Aghalino & Okolie-mene, (2014) have also demonstrated the importance of this theory by arguing that it is not possible for humans to flourish in an environment that is chemically toxic while at the time experiencing freedom or being content with the quality of the air they breathe. Most importantly, the right to a liveable environment is enshrined in the constitutions of most countries; therefore, this is an inalienable right. In other words, a distortion of this right is capable of causing conflict.

In the Niger Delta region, for example, when building a pipeline, the MNOCs would engage the communities with another project, which ends as soon the pipeline is completed. This implies that projects in the realm of CSR in the region are only peace projects, because the oil companies have realized there would be conflict otherwise. On the problems with CSR projects in the Niger Delta, Idemudia (2010) argues that the failure of MNOCs in CSR involvement was the major triggering factor for the Ken Saro-Wiwa-led protest that resulted in massive human rights violations in Nigeria in the 1990s. Frynas (2005) alleged that, most businesses get involved in CSR for selfish reasons; such as that of maintaining a stable working environment. Apparently MNOCs involvement in CSR with the Niger Delta has not been carried out as obligation but haphazardly. Put differently, as a measure of managing the regions conflict.

Federal Government Role in the CSR Related Conflict and the Success of the Strategies

The government's involvement in oil exploration and exploitation makes it necessary for it to be actively involved in the resolution and management of oil related conflicts between different stakeholders. To this end, the Federal Government of Nigeria has played a number of roles in both the resolution and management of oil related conflicts in the Niger Delta. It has achieved these by strengthening the legal framework needed to regulate the activities of the MNOCs, through third party intervention, the establishment of committees and the creation of commissions to accelerate the development of the area.

Specifically, several meetings have been held between government officials and representatives of militant groups and sometimes directly with the militants themselves. A case in point is the series of meetings held with the militants (sometimes referred to as 'the boys in the creeks' meeting with stakeholders) in July and August 2007. The meeting was attended by the then Vice President, Good luck Jonathan, Senator David Brigidi, key actors in the Warri creeks, and some representatives of the oil states' Peace and Rehabilitation Committees (Watts, 2009). The meetings offered the opportunity for them to discuss possible ways of brokering peace, the demilitarization of the Niger Delta and as a corollary, a truce between the Joint Task Force and the militants. The National Assembly's (Nigeria's central legislature) House Committee on Environment also provides a platform for mediating between stakeholders in the Nigerian oil industry. This can be achieved by organizing public hearings on oil and environmental related matters.

Other efforts by the government to resolve conflicts between the host communities and the MNOCs include the establishment of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) in 2004. The Federal Ministry of Environment in compliance with the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Cooperation (OPPRC) initiated NOSDRA (Ugochukwu & Ertel, 2008). This intervention by the Federal Government, which has enormous legislative significance, is intended to help in regulating the activities of the international oil companies in the country. NOSDRA evaluates and determines the causes of spills and respond appropriately; it also allows NGOs, CBOs and communities to send representatives to ensure transparency during oil spill investigations.

From the above, it is clear that there are legal mechanisms in place to regulate the relationship between MNOCs and the host communities. However, the implementation of the laws is the problem. For instance, in the investigation of the incidents of oil spills of the MNOCs, it is interesting to point out that the Nigerian government largely depends on MNOCs such as Shell to provide the technical expertise and/or to authenticate issues of spills (IDI, Environmental Rights Action, 2013). How then do you enforce sanctions on a company that provides you with the requisite technical expertise to investigate an oil spill? This 19 Senior officer in the Environmental Impact Assessment Department of the FME, 2014 demonstrates a conflict of interest and it is a limitation on the part of government to effectively represent the interests of the host communities (Epelle, 2004).

The effectiveness of the federal Government's intervention strategies in the oil industry would have been strengthened within the framework of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) (now Petroleum Industry Bill Governance (PIBG)) if it had been passed into law as the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). The PIB aims to increase local content in the oil sector; introduce a participatory approach of the people in the industry and; give indigenous people more sense of belonging. The PIB, which is about 223 pages long, has as one of its objectives to develop indigenous manpower and encourage the use of local resources and services, thus contributing to economic empowerment. It would also address what Evoh (2009) calls 'unsustainable patterns of resource exploitation and community relations that contributed to the destruction of the foundations of traditional economy in the Niger-Delta, as well as end decades of lethal ecological war'.

Most peace-building workers in NGOs believe that the Federal Government has indirectly fuelled the conflict by not attending to the people's immediate needs. Such needs include the passage of the PIB, which they believe would have helped to economically empower the indigenous people, and hence reduce the problem of unemployment. For them, the non- passage of this bill explains why there is a high rate of anti-social activities in most oil producing communities.

Hence, it is no surprise that joblessness has heightened the host communities' frustration especially amongst graduates. The majority of able bodied young men are seen all over the Niger Delta cities riding 'keke napep' (a tricycle transport vehicle) in order to raise money needed to meet some of their basic human needs. This trend further discourages most youths from acquiring higher education. The crisis in the Niger Delta is worsened by the failure of the Federal Government to directly empower the people. Most youths in the region hold an opposite view.

They believe that government officials do not get to the grassroots to identify the basic needs of the people. They also believe there is corruption and impunity in the NDDC and the duplication of the NDDC roles by the Ministry of Niger Delta reduces each agency's responsibility, and therefore should be able to undertake the needs of the region.²⁰ From the interviews conducted, it was observed that employment generation and everything that gives priority to empowerment of the youths and women are the main basic needs that should never be downplayed by the government and MNOCs. The implication of this finding validates the third hypothesis that if MNOCs and government embark on programmes and projects that stimulate the local economy (like employment generation and youth empowerment), then incidences of social conflicts in oil bearing communities will lessen (Nwankwo, 2018)..

Summary

This paper reviewed the relevant literatures on the subject matter of the study. It began with the concepts of CSR; conflict and its dimensions, causes and strategies for its resolution; oil conflicts in the Niger Delta and the role of MNOCs managing the conflicts. In the next chapter, This study has critically investigated whether or not the current CSR strategies of the MNOCs operating in the Niger Delta have contributed to the perennial conflicts in the region. The background information on the perceived exploitation of the Niger Delta people from the pre-colonial palm oil period to the current era of oil exploration as well as the attendant resistance by militants in the region. The conflict in the region became aggravated in the 1990s when the host communities, became more conscious of the wealth accruable from the oil beneath their land, and felt deprived of their resources largely due to the previous colonial laws and ordinances. The inability of the MNOCs, operating in the Niger Delta region, to stick to MoUs signed with host communities, and the government's inability to discipline the MNOCs on their environmental abuses, contributed to the escalation of the conflicts. All these factors are underlined by the Government's failure to reinvest the tax paid by the MNOCs into the region: together they exacerbate the host communities' current impoverishment and underdevelopment. The paper also examined the relevant literatures relating to oil conflict and the MNOCs' CSR approach in the region. It also conceptualised the term "conflict" by analysing its different connotations, management, and resolution as well as arguments for and against it. The conflictual relationship between the communities, the MNOCs and the Government, was examined to establish the major causes of the conflict. The relationship between ineffective CSR and conflicts in the Niger Delta region and the role of Federal Government was examined.

Recommendations

The paper offers the following recommendations:

- I. MNOCs should be sensitized with regards to the importance of adhering to the signed General Memorandum of Understandings (GMOUs) with host communities since deviation from this is normally what triggers most of the CSR conflicts in the Niger Delta region. They must also ensure that their CSR projects are timely, relevant and aimed at meeting the genuine socio-economic needs of the local people.
- II. MNOCs should embark on environmentally friendly processes of oil exploration and maintenance as well as replacement of antiquated oil pipelines, some of which have not been changed since oil was discovered in commercial quantity in 1958. They should as

- a matter of obligation guard against staff negligence and equipment failures that result to oil spillage.
- III. The host communities should be included in the joint venture agreement with the MNOCs rather than the existing 60/40 partnership between the government and the oil companies. A percentage should be set aside for the host communities. It is believed that the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) now Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB), which was not passed by the last National Assembly (2011-2015), would have addressed this problem. The PIB was said to have reserved 10% share of the oil business for the host communities. If this is done however, the latter will now see themselves as stakeholders in the oil exploration and exploitation process and will play their part in protecting and preserving the mutually beneficial oil business. It will also help in reducing their demands for resource control.
 - IV. Attempts should be made to identify the traditional economy of the oil producing communities and revive them; they should be arranged in clusters depending on what they produce. These cluster communities should then be provided with agro- allied cottage industries with funds and technical supports provided by the government and the oil companies whilst the communities themselves would manage its funds. The Government should, as a matter of urgency, review upwardly its revenue allocation formula from the present 13% to the 1963 (50%) derivation formula level.
 - V. The Government and the MNOCs should employ a sustainable development model that will examine the local people's needs for not just electricity but constant electricity, the provision of accessible healthcare, the construction of good road networks and the availability of drinking water.

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