

**INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
PROJECTS ON PORT HARCOURT RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF
NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of corporate social responsibility projects on Port Harcourt residents' perception of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The research design used for the study was a survey. The questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. The study which was anchored on organizational image theory and the stakeholder theory had a projected population of 3,171,076 for 2021 at a growth rate of 5.0% (NPC census figure). A sample size of 400 represents was used for the study using Glen (1992) sample size determination table cited by Singh & Masuka (2014) which states that at + or -5 precision levels, where the confidence level is 95% at $p=0.5$, a population of 100,000 should have a sample size of 400. The study found out that though residents of Port Harcourt were aware of Corporate Social Responsibility projects embarked upon by NDDC, they agreed that the CSR projects have not contributed to the socio-economic and educational needs of the community, hence did not have any positive impact on the commission's corporate image. The study recommends that NDDC should embark on relevant CSR projects in their host communities. This will enhance a cordial relationship between the host community and the commission.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Image, Projects, Niger Delta Development Commission and Port Harcourt Residents.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The “Development mandate” of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) over the years has been made moribund as a result of a series of corrupt practices. The use of the word “mandate” in connection with the commission work not only disorients the commission but also confuses the community of the Niger Delta which the NDDC itself called “primary stakeholder” (NDDC, 2004, p.11) cited in Papamie, Okon & Dike (2020).

Globally, organizations budget and spend a huge sum of money on activities, programmes and projects they believe will impact positively on the host communities as well as enhance the corporate image of the organization. In order to maintain good public relations with host communities, organizations invest heavily in raising public relations strategies, community relations strategies, corporate social responsibility activities among others.

CSR is “a process with the aim to embrace responsibility for the campaign's activities and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere who may also be stakeholders” Wikipedia (2014).

The Niger Delta region consists of nine coastal states located in the southern region of Nigeria. The region covers an area of about 70,000 square kilometres, comprising wetlands and drylands, (UNEP,2011,p.20). It consists of all the six south-south states – Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers; as well as Abia and Imo states – the south – East and Ondo state - the south-west. The Niger Delta region contributes a huge percentage to the nation’s economy. The region caters for over 80 percent of Nigeria’s foreign exchange earnings (World Bank, 2017, p.15).

It is worrisome to note that the Niger Delta region have for long been neglected. Many people have attributed the root cause of widespread poverty and yawning underdevelopment in the Niger –delta region to apparent lack of interest by government... and a disconnect between government and members of the host communities. (Ogri & Ogri 2019).

Recently, the Buhari administration called for a forensic probe of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with a follow up of the sacking of the commission interim administration and a subsequent appointment of Mr. Effiong Akwa as interim administrator for the commission.

The series of agitations by groups in the Niger Delta region for inclusiveness in the activities of the commission has painted a bad image of the NDDC especially in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. In spite of the much-acclaimed community projects embarked upon by NDDC in host communities as CSR projects, how have the CRS projects embarked upon by NDDC influence Port Harcourt’s residents’ perception of the commission?

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) Find out if the residents of Port Harcourt are aware of the corporate social responsibility projects of NDDC
- (2) Examine the CSR priorities and community development projects of NDDC in Port Harcourt.

- (3) Determine how the residents of Port Harcourt perceive CSR projects of the NDDC in Port Harcourt.
- (4) Ascertain if CSR projects of NDDC contribute positively to its corporate image.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) Are the residents of Port Harcourt aware of the CSR projects of the NDDC, and what is the extent of such awareness?
- (2) What are the CSR priorities and host community developments projects of NDDC?
- (3) How do the residents of Port Harcourt perceive the CSR project of NDDC?
- (4) Do the CSR projects of NDDC contribute positively to its corporate image?

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have carried out empirical studies on CSR. The high ranking of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on research agendas (Greenfield 2004, Maignan and Ralston 2002, Mewilliam et al 2006; Pearce and Doh 2005 cited in Lingreen and Swaen, 2010) appears to be reflected in the theoretical and managerial discussion that argues "not only in doing good the right thing to do, but it also leads to doing better" (Bhattacharya & Sen 2004, p.9 cited in Lingreen et al 2010). As a result, CSR has moved from ideology to reality, and may consider it necessary for organizations to define their roles in society and apply social and ethical standards to their businesses (Lichtenstein et al 2004 cited in Lingreen et al 2010).

In Chen's research (2011), CSR was mainly influenced by four core components: accountability, transparency, competition and responsibility; while developing business strategies companies taking accountability and transparency as a priority would strengthen their competition and generate responsibility and in turn lead to CSR. To buttress this point, Esen (2013) proposed organizations are being reputable through CSR activities.

President Olusegun Obasanjo in his inaugural address to the governing board of the NDDC in 2001, transmitted his vision as a mandate to the commission. According to Obasanjo, his vision... "was to bring sustainable and even development; to establish a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful" (NDDC, 2004 p.18).

According to the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNESA, 2007, p. 1), cited in Ogri (2019) Corporate Social Responsibility simply means "The overall contribution of business to sustainable development" Dominique (2010) sees the increasing concern of organizations about their corporate image in the way society was changed drastically to public demand for more transparency in organizational dealings.

Authors have criticized the lack of proactive CSR initiatives by organization to tackle the dire needs of host communities as a result of the lack of legal framework that will regulate standard CSR projects. According to Ijaiya (2014, p.67), since the emergence of CSR in Nigeria, there is no law put in place by Nigerian government in the area of CSR. CSR is still at the discretion of companies. In 2007 Senator Uche Chuckwumerije presented a bill in an attempt to establish a legal regulatory framework for CSR in Nigeria. The argument that

making CSR compulsory would endanger organization with their host communities put a halt to the bill.

As noted by Oginni & Omojowo (2016, p.3) cited in (Ogri & Ogri 2019) "since corporate social responsibilities core values that define the commitment of a business enterprise to society, economy and the environment that sustain its activities, its broad scope can be integrated into a sustainable development agenda".

As a Public Relations tool, CSR has been appraised as a potential tool for fostering harmonious community relations amongst organizations and host communities. According to Lattimore, Baskin, Heinman & Toth (2009, p. 221) cited in Ogri and Ogri (2019) "good community relations aids in securing what the original needs from the community and in providing what the community expects".

Many scholarly types of research have been conducted in the CSR practice of organizations in the Niger Delta Region whereas some of the studies examined the need for the organization operating in the region to be socially responsible to the communities in their areas of operation, others x-rayed the CSR projects and strategies of the organization and how they can contribute positively to the development goals of the host communities.

Egbe and Paki (2011) in their study entitled: "The rhetoric corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta" using Shell Oil Company as a study, examined the place of the CSR initiatives of organizations in the Niger Delta region development. The study which was anchored on Milton Friedman's Shareholders theory and Freeman's Stakeholder theory found out that CSR projects of Shell Companies (SPDC) in the host communities were not sufficient and were carried out to satisfy political interest. The study recommended that SPDC's General Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) should be made a Niger Delta wide development master plan for host communities and should be community-driven.

Uzoagu (2015) carried out a study on the CSR of Shell and Agip for the socio-economic development of the host community in Rivers State. The research made use of the survey research design. The study found out that oil companies have been able to provide projects like road construction, electricity, water supply, scholarship among other development programmes.

From the literature reviewed, none seems to touch on the influence of corporate social responsibility projects on NDDC on residents of Port Harcourt. This research will make an immense contribution in that regard.

5.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study made use of two theories namely: Organizational image theory and System stakeholder theory.

The organizational image management theory believes that organizations attempt to create, maintain, and in some cases regain a legitimate image of themselves in the eyes of the public. According to Massey (2003), this theory assumes that image is a holistic and vivid impression held by an individual or a particular group towards an organization and is a result

of sense-making by the group and communication by the organization; and that such communication by the organization occurs as top managers and corporate image makers make deliberate attempts to influence public impression. It follows therefore that NDDC will be trying the best it can to maintain a favourable corporate social responsibility project among the residents of Port-Harcourt.

According to Carroll (2001), the essence of the Stakeholder theory is that it is immoral to maximize wealth for the owners and shareholders of big businesses while leaving the host communities in poverty; and the return on investments must not be for the shareholders alone but also for the host communities. The theory argues that a fundamental premise of businesses is to show care and concern to the yearnings and needs of their host communities, and not just the owners and shareholders. Hence NDDC should vigorously embark on CRS projects so as to create a favourable image on the minds of the host communities. Thus the relevance of these theories.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

According to Babbie (1990) cited in Akarika, Kierian & Ikon (2020: 131) survey is probably the best method available to the social scientists interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly. The survey design was used for the study. The questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. The population of this research included all residents in Port Harcourt, Rivers State 3,171,076 who are literate enough to understand the subject of discourse. A sample size of 400 was determined based on Glen (1992) sample size determination table cited by Singh and Masuku (2014). Which states that at + or -5 precision levels, where the confidence level is 95% and $p = 0.5$, a population of over 100,000 should have a sample size of 400. The researcher used cluster and simple random sampling techniques. The cluster sampling techniques were used to divide Port Harcourt into cluster zones, (Okrika, Obio-Akpor, Ikwerre, Oyigbo, Ogu-Bolo, Etche and Eleme); while the simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents in a way that all respondents have an equal chance of representation. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents, 385 were found useful for analysis. The data were analyzed in simple percentages and tables.

6.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This research focused on the influence of corporate social responsibility projects on Port Harcourt residents' perception of the Niger Delta Development commission. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents, 385 copies of the questionnaire were found useful for the analysis. Howbeit, demographic information of the respondents is presented in table 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by sex

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Male	280	73
Female	105	27
Total	385	100

Table 2: Age distribution of respondent

Respondent	Frequency	Percentages
18 – 22	40	11
23 – 27	90	23
28 – 32	100	26
33 and above	155	40
Total	385	100

Table 3: Educational level distribution of respondents.

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduates	150	39
HND/BA/B.Sc/Its equivalent	145	38
MA/M.Sc/its equivalent	80	21
Ph.D	10	2
Total	385	100

The biodata of respondents in Table 1 shows that 280 representing 73% were male, while 105 representing 27% were female. Data gathered presented in table 2 shows that 255 respondents (100, 155) representing 66% (26%, 40%) were between the age range of 28-32 and 33 and above respectively. This implies that respondents are mature enough to provide answers to the research questions.

Table 3 shows that 295 of respondents (150, 145) representing 77% (39%, 38%) were undergraduates and first-degree holders. This means that the majority of respondents were educated and as such were exposed to information on NDDC projects.

Table 4: Respondents level of awareness of CRS projects of the NDDC

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	205	79
No	70	18
Not sure	10	3
Total	385	100

Data gathered and presented in table 4 shows that 305 respondents representing 79% of the population said they were aware of CRS projects embarked upon by the NDDC. This means that majority of respondents were aware of CSR projects embarked upon by NDDC.

Table 5: CSR projects of NDDC identified by the “yes” respondents.

Project	Frequency	Percentage
Health	30	15
Electricity	35	17
Education support	30	15
Youth/women empowerment	25	12
Agriculture	30	15

Provision of infrastructure	50	24
Science technology	5	2
Total	205	100

Table 5 indicates that infrastructural projects and electricity projects dominate the list of projects executed by NDDC for members of the host, while science and technology projects were the least with 5 respondents or 5%. This implies that CSR projects embarked upon by NDDC were on infrastructure and electricity.

Table 6: Respondents perception of CSR projects of NDDC

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	NDDC embarks on useful infrastructural projects in my community	40% 155	39% 150	13% 50	8% 30	100% 385
2	The CSR projects of NDDC have contributed immensely to the socio-economic and educational needs of the host community	10% 40	16% 60	35% 135	39% 150	385 100%
3	The CSR projects of NDDC are nothing compared to the money embezzled by administrators and politicians	53% 205	39% 150	4% 15	4% 15	385 100%
4	The CSR projects of NDDC are sub-standard and over budgeted	52% 200	26% 100	12% 45	10% 40	385 100%
5	The CSR projects of the NDDC are instruments used in settling political gladiators and those with vested interest in the host communities.	66% 255	100 26%	20 5%	10 3%	385 100%

In table 6, majority of respondents 305 (155, 150) representing 79% (40%, 39%) agreed that NDDC embarks on useful projects in Port Harcourt city, majority of respondents 285 (135 and 150) representing 74% (35%, 39%) were of the opinion that CSR projects of NDDC have not contributed immensely to the socio-economic and educational needs of the host community.

Table 7: Respondents views on if CSR projects of NDDC have contributed positively to its corporate image.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	26
No	260	67
Not sure	25	7
Total	385	100

Table 7 shows that majority of respondents 260 representing 67% were of the opinion that CSR projects of NDDC have not contributed positively to its corporate image. On further probing by the researcher to know why CSR projects of NDDC have not contributed to a positive corporate image for the commission, respondents mentioned such factors as environmental degradation, prevailing unemployment, the prevalence of poverty in host countries, embezzlement in the commission and agitation for inclusiveness of indigenes in the administrative cadre of the NDDC. The respondents who said "yes" were further probed to know the extent to which the CSR projects of the NDDC contributed positively to its corporate image.

Table 8: Respondents views on the extent to which NDDC, CSR projects have contributed positively to its corporate image.

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
A large extent	25	25
Some extent	40	40
A little extent	35	34
Total	100	100

Majority of the respondents agreed that NDDC CSR projects have contributed positively to its corporate image to some extent (40%).

7.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are discussed in line with the research questions

Research Question 1: Are the residents of Port Harcourt aware of the CSR projects of NDCC?

Data gathered and presented in table I show that 205 representing 53% answered "yes"; which implies that they were aware of CSR projects of the NDDC; 70 respondents representing 18% said "NO". The finding of this study further buttresses the point by Esen (2013) who said that organizations are being reputable through CSR activities. The finding of this study also justifies the assertion that the Niger Delta region caters for over 80 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (World Bank, 2017, p.15). The findings of this study further give credence to the finding by Uzoagu (2015)

Research Question 2: What are the CSR priority and host community developments projects of NDDC?

In an attempt to probe further CSR projects awareness by respondents, those that answered "yes" to the first research question were asked to identify CSR projects embarked upon by NDDC.

Table 2 indicates that 85 respondents, representing 41% said that infrastructure and electricity projects dominate the list of projects executed by NDDC, while science and technology projects and women empowerment (12%), Agriculture 15% other projects include health (15%) education (15%) Youth was the least projects (5%). This means that CSR projects

embarked upon by the NDDC in Port Harcourt were on infrastructure and electricity. The findings of this study also affirm the utterance of the study by Uzoagu (2015).

Research Question 3: How do the residents of Port Harcourt perceive the CSR projects of NDDC?

Table 3 vividly captures residents perception of CSR projects of NDDC. The first statement if NDDC embarks on useful infrastructural projects in Port Harcourt, 255 respondents representing 79% strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the statement. On if CSR projects of NDDC have contributed immensely to the socio-economic and educational needs of the host communities, 285 respondents, representing 74% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Concerning the notion that CSR projects of NDDC are nothing compared to the money embezzled by administrators and politicians. 355 respondents representing 92% strongly agreed and agreed to that statement. On the statement, if CSR projects of NDDC are sub-standard and over-budgeted, 300 respondents representing (79%) affirmed the statement. Regarding the use of NDDC CRS projects as instruments in settling political gladiators and those with a vested interest in the host communities 355 respondents representing 92% strongly agreed and agreed to that statement.

The major implication of table 3 is that CSR projects of NDDC have not contributed immensely to the socio-economic and educational needs of the host community. The finding of the study disagrees with the notion of the World Bank which notes that the Niger Delta region caters for over 80 percent of Nigerian foreign exchange earnings. The finding of this study also gives credence to the forensic probe of the NDDC by the Buhari-led administration. The finding also corroborates the finding by Egbe and Paki (2011) who found out that CSR projects of shell were not sufficient. Furthermore, Egbe and Paki (2011) found out that CSR programmes of SPDC in host communities were carried out to satisfy the political interest. Moreso, the findings of this study lend credence to criticism by scholars on the lack of proactive CSR initiatives by organizations.

Data gathered and presented in table 4 captures the views of respondents on if CSR projects of NDDC have contributed positively to its corporate image. Probing further to know why, respondents mentioned such factors as widespread poverty, prevailing underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region, environmental degradation, embezzlement and corruption inherent in the commission and agitation for inclusiveness of indigenes in the administrative cadre of the NDDC. Table 4 also show that 100 respondent, representing 26% said "yes".The respondent, who said "yes" were further probed to know the extent to which CSR projects of the NDDC contributed positively to its corporate image.

Their response as presented in Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that NDDC CSR projects have contributed positively to some extent to its corporate image (40%). The finding of this study corroborates the observation by Ogri and Ogri (2019) who attributed the root cause of widespread poverty and yawning underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region to apparent lack of interest by the government and a disconnect between government and members of the host communities.

The findings of this study further buttress the point by Esen (2013) who notes that organizations are being reputable through CSR activities. The finding of this study negates

the organizational image management theory which believes that organizations attempt to create, maintain and in some cases regain a legitimate image of themselves in the eyes of the public.

8.0 CONCLUSION /RECOMMENDATIONS

The major objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of the CSR projects on Port Harcourt residents; perception of NDDC. From the findings of this study, NDDC still has a long way to go in making host communities have a sense of belonging through their CSR projects. Based on the foregoing, this research recommends that:

1. NDDC should embark on relevant CSR projects in Niger delta host communities. Such projects should be sustainable development projects that are relevant to the needs of the communities.
2. The NDDC should adopt a stakeholder approach in implementing their CSR projects; this will enhance a cordial relationship between the community and the commission.
3. NDDC General Memorable of Understanding (GMOU) should be all-inclusive to the Niger Delta region and a community-driven development master plan for CSR projects in host communities should be implemented.

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