



Article

Oil and Gas Exploration in Kolo Creek: Implications on Youth Development

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Abstract: This study examines youth development in the Kolo Creek region of Bayelsa State, focusing on the role of Shell's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts within the oil and gas sector. Despite the significant potential of youth as a national resource, the local youths in Kolo Creek have yet to benefit from these development programs. The research, employing qualitative methods and literature analysis, identifies key obstacles, perspectives, and strategies that affect youth development in the region. Findings reveal that prioritizing livelihood and regulatory approaches in the oil and gas sector can help mitigate conflicts between local communities and oil companies. The study recommends that Shell adopt ethical CSR initiatives focused on youth development, which would benefit the business, community, and government.

Keywords: Youth Development, Oil and Gas, Exploration, Kolo Creek

1. Introduction

Youths are seen as the leaders of the future on a global scale. They should be a part of all national development plans and programmes since they are vital to the prospects for progress. One of the most valuable resources a country can possess is its youth. They are not only rightfully considered as prospective future leaders, but they also have the greatest potential to contribute to the growth of a nation. It is impossible to overstate the importance of young people to the development of society since they play a critical role in it and are every country's hope and future; a country that invests in its youth is investing in its future [1]. A youth's capacity to identify themselves as participants in civic engagement and as stakeholders in their society depends on their understanding of the notion of empowerment, according to Langhout and Thomas (2010). Notwithstanding, other obstacles confront organizations and initiatives aimed at promoting the principles of empowerment, including the social and environmental milieu of the young people and their aspirations to uphold their social standing within their communities [2].

The entry of oil companies into the Niger Delta has no doubt brought great financial wealth. Indeed, there have been substantial improvements in the nation's economy over the past five decades. Currently oil revenue accounts for 70% of Nigeria's total revenue, as well as generating more than 14% of the GDP. However, activities associated with petroleum exploration, development and production operations have local detrimental and significant impacts on the atmosphere, soils and sediments, surface and groundwater, marine environment, biological diversity and sustainability of terrestrial ecosystems in the Niger Delta [3].

Petroleum is a naturally occurring complex mixture of predominantly hydrocarbon compounds and significant amounts of nitrogen, sulphur, and oxygen together with smaller amounts of nickel, vanadium, and various elements. Petroleum compounds occur

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in solid form as asphalt, liquid form as crude oil and/or gaseous form as natural gas. The inadvertent discharges of petroleum hydrocarbons into the environment often pose threats to human health, safety and the environment, and have significant socio-economic consequences. Despite these concerns, multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region have failed to adopt best practice strategies for risks mitigation and comply with environmental regulations. This coupled with the failure of the Nigerian government to enforce the aforementioned environmental regulations contribute towards the unabated environmental contamination, with direct consequences on the surrounding populations' socio-economic wellbeing, human health and the environment.

However, in February 1958, Shell-BP started exporting crude oil produced from Oloibiri and Afam oil field at Port Harcourt [4]. The giant Bomu oil field, which has estimated ultimate recovery of 0.311 billion of barrels of oil and a total of 0.608 billion of barrels of oil equivalent including gas, was discovered southeast of Port Harcourt-Rivers State in 1958 [5]. At this time; the petroleum sector began to play a vital role in shaping the Nigerian economy and political destiny of the country. When Nigeria became an independent nation on 1 October 1960, Shell-BP began to relinquish its acreage and its exploration licenses were converted into prospecting licenses that allowed development and production.

Following the increasing dominance of the Nigerian economy by petroleum sector, the sole concession policy was abandoned and exclusive exploration right was introduced to encourage other multinational oil companies aimed at accelerating petroleum exploration and production. Most of these multinational oil companies recorded considerable successes in oil and gas exploration and production in both onshore and offshore fields in the Niger Delta, yet they find it interestingly challenging empowering youths in the Kolo Creek region. This is the basics behind the study which aim at balancing youth development in the Kolo Creek region of Bayelsa State through the progressive activities of oil and gas exploration companies in the region.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder theory, which has grown to be one of the most significant and widely mentioned ideas in the literature, offers a robust framework for understanding and interpreting youth development by the activities of oil and gas exploration, According to Post (2003) the stakeholder theory involves an organization's ability to survive and thrive depends on its ability to address the requirements of its numerous stakeholders in order to achieve both its non-economic (such as corporate social performance) and economic (such as profit maximization) objectives.

This approach suggests that managers can foster socially responsible behaviour by focusing on the needs and rights of all stakeholders, including young, in a firm [6]. An organization is considered socially responsible if management make decisions with stakeholders' interests in mind. Therefore, this theory will be implemented since, according to its theoretical interpretation, socially conscious organizations will give their relevant stakeholder, the youth, and social welfare such as scholarships, job possibilities, skill development, and sporting opportunities.

Oil Operations in the Niger Delta

Nigeria began exploring for crude oil in 1908 when resources in the Araromi area of Ondo State were found. Oil was found in Oloibiri, in what is now Bayelsa State, later in 1956 by Shell D'Arcy, today known as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria. Commercial production of the oil began in 1958. By 1961, a large number of additional international oil corporations had entered Nigeria's Niger Delta and were

conducting both onshore and offshore oil activities. At the moment, the region's oil sector operations are highly visible due to the extensive network of pipelines, oil wells, and flow stations that cover a large area of land and wetlands.

A total of 31,000 square kilometres are covered by SPDC alone. Mobil, Chevron, Texaco, Elf, NAOC, Pan Ocean, and a few indigenous Nigerian businesses like Dubril, Summit, and Consolidated Oil are some more Multi-National Oil Companies (MNOCs) [8]. According to Sagay (2001), onshore seismic prospecting, onshore drilling, oil production, and gas processing are examples of oil operations. According to his opinion, the entire process of exploring for and producing petroleum has negative environmental effects that impede the growth of other renewable resources such as plants and animals. Storage tank, pipeline, and abandoned well spills have equally contaminated the ground water.

In agreement, Saliu et al. (2007) and Akujuru (2014) stated that all phases of oil-related operations, from drilling and exploration to transportation, cause environmental damage and jeopardize the way of life for the locals, who rely on the Delta's land and creeks for their survival. But according to Jike (2010), the seismic explosions and vibrations that occur during oil prospecting put enough stress on the built environment's existing structures. In summary, Nweze and Edame (2016) said that the petroleum sector encompasses the extraction and production of crude oil as well as the marketing and refining of petroleum, all of which have a significant impact on the environment and the local population in the Niger Delta.

As per multiple authors (op. cit), Shell engages in a range of community development initiatives, such as educational programmes that grant scholarships to primary and secondary school graduates for higher education, skill development initiatives, water pipeline construction, access road construction, distributing farming equipment to farmers and providing training on its use, and supplying electricity to communities that produce oil. Saliu et al. (2007), and Oviasuyi and Uwadiae (2010), on the other hand, believe that their contributions pale in comparison to the extent of harm done to the ecosystem and the host communities.

Due to the formula for sharing the revenue from mineral resources, which gradually decreased and almost completely vanished from 50% of all proceeds of mineral resources allocated to producing states in the 1960s (1960–1969) to 1% by 1992, violence and protests have become a defining characteristic of the oil industry in the region. Even worsening the situation were the pertinent statutes and laws that vested all mineral resources in the federal government and took land away from its owners [9]. First sparked by peaceful protests, these issues later descended into violence with pipeline and flow station explosions, kidnappings, and oil theft.

The government, MNOCs, and the host communities lost money, facilities, resources, and lives as a result of all of these actions and incidents. The repercussions of oil spills and gas flaring are well established in the literature. The severe repercussions of gas flaring, as mentioned by Takon (2014), led to the establishment of a 1985 deadline for ending the practice. This was later extended to 2004 but proved unachievable; therefore it was further delayed to 2008. Despite the fact that gas flaring continues to have detrimental consequences on both people and the ecosystem in the area, as evidenced by the Department of Petroleum Resources' (DPR) 2015 report, gas flaring defaulters have paid fines.

2. Materials and Methods

The study utilized a qualitative methodology to explore the detailed facets of addressing youth development among oil and gas exploration in the Kolo Creek region of Bayelsa State. By conducting thorough analyses of relevant literature, the research aimed to reveal the fundamental obstacles, perspectives, and strategies utilized by oil and gas in

youth development within the Kolo Creek region of Bayelsa State. Additionally, it aimed to identify the core elements influencing the youth development.

3. Results and Discussion

Effects of Oil Operations in the Kolo Creek

The disturbance caused by oil and gas exploration and the related activities that include clearing sites, building roads, granting pipelines right-of-way, and other land modifications required for the drilling of exploration and production wells as well as the building of production facilities can be linked to a number of issues. Yousif and Nancy (2005) claimed that in the 36 producing states of the United States, local negative effects on soils, surface and ground waters, and ecosystems had resulted from petroleum exploration and production.

While Delt and Igben (2012) claimed that the increased use of petroleum exploitation, including seismic surveys, land acquisitions, drilling, transportation, storage, waste dumping, and related oil spillages, has worsened environmental degradation and caused the Niger Delta region's population to become impoverished and lose their means of subsistence. The vast oil and gas operations that have a detrimental effect on the environment and the populace are evident throughout the region thanks to the extensive network of pipelines, oil wells, and flow stations.

Oil spills from pipelines and other petroleum transportation methods frequently contaminate nearby land and water. According to Takon (2014), the Niger Delta's oil operations result in oil spills, gas flaring, and blowouts, which release hazardous materials, crude oil, and chemical wastes into the atmosphere. These events can also be caused by malfunctioning machinery, human error, or the intentional destruction of facilities stemming from illegal activities. Thus, the next subsection discusses how the oil industry's operations affect the host towns and their surroundings are;

- A. **Effects on Health:** It is well recognized that oil activities are harmful to human health, particularly when it comes to gas flaring and oil spills that contaminate the air, land, and water. The majority of the populations in the Niger Delta region rely on rainwater and river water for their food because they lack access to portable water. Human health is negatively impacted by gases like CO and CO₂ and hydrocarbons discharged into the atmosphere. Certain chromium compounds can induce skin ulcers when applied topically, and consuming excessive amounts of it can lead to kidney and liver damage, ulcers in the stomach, and even death [10]. According to Atubi (2015), environmental pollution from oil operations generally causes respiratory issues, increased blood pressure, heart rhythm abnormalities, stomach irritation, muscle weakness, changes in nerve reflexes, swelling of the brain and liver, lung diseases, cancer, kidney and heart damage, diarrhoea, asthma, eye infections, bronchitis, skin infections, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, eye and throat irritations, and breathing difficulties.
- B. **Effects on Mangrove and Aquatic Life:** According to a 2011 UNEP assessment on Ogoniland, oil pollution in numerous intertidal streams has stripped mangroves of their leaves and stems, leaving the roots covered in a substance that resembles bitumen that is occasionally one centimeter or more thick. According to the paper, widespread pollution in mangrove areas affects fish breeding places and juvenile fish nurseries, which has a negative effect on the fish life cycle. Because of this, fish tend to migrate away from contaminated areas in search of cleaner water, forcing fisherman to relocate in order to find fish. The majority of MNOC host communities regularly experience this kind of situation, which undoubtedly makes life more difficult for those who live in rural areas. Similar circumstances exist in Angolan fishing communities, where fishing is the primary source of income [11].
- C. **Effects on Soil Fertility and Agriculture:** A major industry and source of livelihood for the vast majority of the rural population in the Niger delta is agriculture, which

also provides jobs and money for those living in rural areas. However, the region's oil and gas operations now pose a serious threat to this source of food. According to Egbe and Thompson (2010), the majority of host communities' agricultural lands have been destroyed by oil spills, and previously productive areas have become wastelands as a result of increased soil sterility brought on by the loss of soil microorganisms. Because the oil layer on the soil's surface creates a physical barrier between the air and the soil, oil spills prevent the soil from properly aerating. According to Egbe (2012), agriculture suffers as a result of the government's excessive emphasis on the oil business.

- D. **Effects on Fresh Water and Groundwater:** The majority of the Niger Delta's population's fish, bath, and eat from the rivers, streams, and ponds that surround them. Residents suffer greatly as a result of oil operations contaminating these water sources. Water, both fresh and subsurface, is contaminated. For instance, the local population will not only find it difficult to obtain portable water, but fish and other aquatic life will also be eliminated if rivers, streams, and wells that supply water are poisoned.
- E. **Effects on Economic Activities:** The primary sources of income for the rural residents in the oil-rich zone are farming and fishing, but threats to this supply also include the loss of biodiversity brought on by overuse of already-existing resources and the pollution that follows, as well as the reduction and abandonment of agricultural lands. Produce farming and fishing have significantly decreased as the region's oil and gas operations have taken centre stage [12]. As a result, the majority of rural residents look for other ways to survive and move to better areas or urban centers, which causes the majority of rural villages to disappear.
- F. **Impacts on Stability and Peace:** Conflicts inside and between communities are a key aftereffect of oil activity in host communities, and they frequently make things worse for the local populace. According to Watts, Ike, and Dimiari (2004), conflicts inside and across communities can occur concurrently and can influence or be generated by one another. They looked at how resources, businesses, states, and communities relate to one another as well as the conditions that lead to intense conflict and violence in the communities that produce oil.

Youth Development

Young people acquire the capacity, authority, and agency to make decisions and bring about change in their own lives as well as the lives of other people, including adults and other adolescents, through the process of youth development, which includes attitudinal, structural, and cultural [13]. Youth development includes more than just giving young people jobs; it also includes empowering them in terms of politics, the economy, the arts, and society. The young people feel like they belong because of this. Youth who are empowered are better equipped to work in multiple capacities to meet the societal objectives. Youth development is frequently discussed as a means of promoting civic involvement, intergenerational equity, and the growth of democracy [14].

Youth in Nigeria are agents of change. When they are developed, they acquire a variety of abilities, attitudes, values, and orientations that have an effect on their own lives as well as the lives of others and society at large. Therefore, youth development refers to any initiative that aims to equip young people with the business and vocational skills they need through technical and managerial training, so enabling them to become more economically and socially responsible as well as self-reliant [15]. Therefore, it is crucial to empower Nigerian youth in order for them to lead fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of society, and maintain peaceful coexistence.

Ways of Tackling Youth Development in the Kolo Creek

1. **Skill Acquisition:** Many people have said that acquiring skills is the key to ending severe poverty and hunger since it can open doors for work, which in turn can lead to the creation of wealth and jobs while fostering independence and self-sufficiency [16]. The ability to acquire new skills is known as skill acquisition. These skills might be manual, like learning to build or make something, or cerebral, like learning to talk, listen, read, and write. According to Isaac (2011), developing new skills is essential for ending hunger and poverty, reducing or eliminating unemployment in society, and lowering crime rates through the active involvement of young people. The practice of encouraging young people to take responsibility for their life is known as youth empowerment. In order to enhance their access to resources and alter their awareness through their ideas, values, and attitudes, they must address their circumstances before acting to change it. The goal of youth empowerment is to raise standard of living. Engaging in youth empowerment initiatives is the first step towards achieving youth empowerment. Companies should broaden their CSR efforts to empower young people through a variety of skill-building initiatives, they do this action with the hope that young people would always support their businesses and give back in kind. Few studies demonstrate how CSR that makes use of skill development has made a major contribution to young empowerment.
2. **Employment Opportunity and Youth Empowerment:** Furthermore, businesses that demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility by providing jobs may encourage young people in the community to join them in their endeavors and foster a calmer, more favourable business environment. As a result, social activation helps them to gain emotional benefits from working with young people [17]. It must be remembered that a company's success which may be ensured by putting CSR into practice also translates into success for youth empowerment through employment opportunities. Richer businesses are able to hire more workers and offer higher benefits, as evidenced by Książak, 2016. The majority of the facility's labour is typically drawn from the neighborhood, giving young people there more work options.
3. **Scholarship Scheme and Youth Empowerment:** A scholarship programme is a charitable act that is given to a beneficiary in order to improve their quality of life by an individual, a group, a government agency, or a commercial firm. In order to promote social and educational inclusion through the upliftment of marginalized youth through the assistance of educational scholarships and ICT empowerment programmes, organizations start offering scholarship programmes as part of their corporate social responsibility. The youth demographic constitutes a significant portion of the worldwide population and is thus essential to the production and consumption patterns of the global business community. In addition, within the next three generations, 41% of the world's young will be African, with Nigerians accounting for 1/6th of this demographic. Furthermore, just approximately one-third of Nigerian adolescents own a cell phone, 32% have access to the internet, and 43% of the country's youth are under 35 [18]. Meanwhile, 60% of students have completed at least a secondary school. With the appropriate empowerment strategy, these numbers point to a social and economic problem that can be solved [19]. In order to address the young's diverse training demands, corporate organizations have recognized the critical role that youth empowerment plays through scholarship programmes [20].
4. **Social Amenities and Youth Empowerment:** Human requirements that are thought to be necessary to make life easier and more enjoyable are known as social amenities. In order to improve the standard of living for the citizens of a given nation, the government of the majority of countries provides basic utilities including roads, running water, hospitals, schools, recreation centers, and electricity [21]. Today,

though, things are gradually shifting. Numerous social amenities emerged as a result of businesses embracing corporate social responsibility (CSR). Businesses' social obligation inspired them to create infrastructure, innovations, and new technology that all members of society including young people can utilize [22]. Businesses that share their hard-earned money and support youth development and empowerment by offering social amenities have realized how important corporate social responsibility (CSR) is as a marketing tool, and as a result, their CSR commitments are growing based on how valuable they are to them.

Empirical Review

Wisdom (2014) examined the impact of CRS programme on youth empowerment in Yenagoa, Nigeria. The study employed a survey research approach, and the data analysis was predicated on primary data obtained from the 7,000 project participants in Yenagoa who completed questionnaires [23]. Simple percentages and tables were used to analyse the data, and Chi-Square was used to test the hypotheses. It was discovered that youth empowerment is significantly and favourably impacted by CSR.

In her study of corporate social responsibility and young restlessness in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region, Soreh (2012) discovered that a significant contributing factor to youth restlessness in the region is their impression of the oil firms' subpar CSR efforts. He further contended that the Niger Delta region of Nigeria would benefit greatly from the effective and efficient implementation of corporate social responsibility by the oil and gas companies operating there, as this would enhance infrastructural development and foster sustainable peace [24].

Owoeye and Yara (2011) conducted a study in Ekiti State, Nigeria to determine how CSR proxies by provision of health facilities and social amenities in school contribute to academic performance of youth schools [25]. The study found that school social amenities and health and amenities have an impact on youth academic achievement using a descriptive survey design of the ex-post factor type. Therefore, the study made the case that if the community was to have higher expectations for the academic performance of the youth, then the supply of academic and social facilities was crucial.

The results of this study supported those of Sardauna and Mustapha (2011), who contended that social amenities had an impact on children's cognitive development and, as a result, had a direct bearing on their academic achievement. Sanjo, Abimbola and Gabriel (2017) investigated the effect of CSR programme as an effective tool on youth empowerment towards the initialization of sustainable development in an economy [26]. The CSR initiatives include giving young people employment chances, social facilities, and skill development. The study employed a descriptive research approach, and copies of the questionnaire were sent to 300 Cameroonian recipients of CSR initiatives. The data was analysed using regression using ordinary least squares [27].

The results of the analysis indicated a strong positive correlation between programmes for acquiring new skills and the decrease of poverty. Ilemona, Akoji, and Agoha, (2016) provide a framework that shows the antecedence and impact of CSR on youth empowerment in Kogi State of Nigeria. The CSR programme recipients who were randomly selected from six Local Government Areas in the state and given a well-structured questionnaire by a trained enumerator were the source of primary data used in the study. Frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire.

According to the results, 65% of the respondents agreed that Nigeria's high rate of poverty is caused by a lack of CSR opportunities for young people [28]. The outcome also showed that a minimum of 60% of those who benefited from CSR interventions are now able to afford necessities of life. Although the study yields a favourable result, it does not specify the sample size; also, it employed a subpar statistical tool; if SPSS and other analytical techniques had been used, the conclusion might have been more reliable.

Bodisere and Baikwe, (2017) examined CSR programs by selected banks in Delta State: Implication for youth restiveness using descriptive survey design with a sample of 460 respondents. The purposive sample strategy was utilized by the researcher to pick only youths as respondents for the investigation [29].

The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation, and the results indicated that youth empowerment in Bayelsa is discouraging, youth assessment of CSR programmes is extremely low, and the degree of CSR programme implementation by the chosen deposit banks in the state is low. Yusuf and Kawuwa (2014) evaluated CSR programme on youth empowerment using infrastructural development, provision of scholarship and skill acquisition as the major proxies for CSR. An extensive interview and a questionnaire were used to collect data for the study [30].

Using the simple random sampling technique, which includes using a table of random numbers to select respondents from the population, 105 respondents were randomly selected as sample sizes from each of the three programmes [31]. By using a proportionate sample technique, 100 beneficiaries were chosen and given a questionnaire. Five (5) representatives from the Borno State Ministry of Youth Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation were chosen for a comprehensive interview. One hundred and five respondents in all participated in the research [32]. The data was analyzed using a simple mean and percentage table, and the outcome did not demonstrate a significant and positive association between CSR and youth development [33].

4. Conclusion

Supporting the sustainability of oil and gas firms' activities requires addressing issues related to local youth development. However, it is unclear if the legislative structure governing youth development is effectively enforced. Enforcing social and environmental protection rules as well as harmonizing various layers of important legislation continues to be top priorities. Although the difficulties with the legal framework governing youth development extend beyond the effects of social and environmental governance, it is necessary to make it more realistic and attainable in order to compensate for oil spills and other environmental impacts. Giving livelihood and distributional consequences a high priority in the regulation of the oil and gas sector could help us understand how to handle violent conflicts between local communities and oil companies.

Recommendation

The study therefore finds the following recommendation useful;

1. The management of Shell should focus their efforts on implementing ethical corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities that will directly impact youth development. Gainful youth development has huge benefits for the business, community, and government.
2. The administration of Shell needs to implement a strong scholarship programme that is suited to the needs of young people in their fields of study and will give the majority of young people in the community opportunities for training and growth. The less fortunate kids will be able to take advantage of this and get the skills they need.
3. The management of the Shell should take steps to offer skill-acquisition programmes like as sewing, soap-making, carpentry, and shoe-making, among others. By giving young people the skills they need to stay occupied and less agitated, these programmes would empower the youth.
4. In order to ensure a sustainable future, the people of the Kolo Creek must assume greater responsibility for safeguarding their own youths, putting aside short-term gain and selfishness.

5. In addition to carrying out its legal duties in the legitimate enforcement of established legislation put in place to protect the environment, the government bears the burden of serving as the only arbiter between the two sides.
6. NGOs that can act as whistleblowers and hold all parties accountable for their acts can help increase the voice of the people of Kolo Creek as a whole and combat the blatant corruption that has plagued efforts.

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