

Corporate Social Responsibility as a Critical Tool in achieving Harmony with Host Communities: The Case of SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company PLC

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Abstract

Sustainability is not just important for people and the planet but also for business success. Business experts will cite everything from strong loyalty programme to a personalised, mobile friendly shopping experience as keys to business success. These offerings are certainly important, but one thing that may tilt the scale in your favour is using your profits to do good in the world. This is where Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) comes in. CSR refers to a business practice that involves participating in initiatives that benefit society. This study therefore appraises the use of corporate social responsibility in achieving harmonious coexistence with host communities with its ripple effect on the economy and corporate image of an organisation. The study adopts the qualitative analytical technique in evaluating the very essence of corporate social responsibility practice by corporate organisations as an off-shoot of public relations practice vis-à-vis its salient contributions to the health of any organisation. It goes without saying that CSR determines to a large extent the existence, profitability and sustainability of an organisation. The foregoing underscores the particular mention of SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc and its CSR model as an acme of good corporate citizen. The study concludes among others that without CSR, an organisation may find it difficult to operate in a safe environment and may even go into extinction. It recommends among others that organisations operating in Nigeria should take a cue from SEPLAT Petroleum Company Plc in developing a CSR model in tandem with the needs and aspirations of their host communities with an aim to promoting mutual and harmonious relationship with them.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Critical tool, Harmony, Host Communities, SEPLAT Plc.

1. Introduction

All over the world, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has indeed become a veritable tool for effective public relations practice as every organization realises the imperativeness of a healthy relationship with its host communities. It suffices to say that there is need for corporate bodies to be responsive to their environment and to the needs of their host communities, as well as being able to make the best out of their business through profit maximisation. This is what the adoption of a well designed model of CSR does for an organisation. It does not only create a good relationship between them but it is also a way of compensating the community for the damages caused it by the organisation's activities (Nwodu, 2007, p. 230).

Corporate social responsibility borders on the ability of corporate institutions, companies or organisations to provide basic and essential social services and/or amenities to the communities where they operate. Such act according to Emeh (2008) is seen as good organisational policy. For a company to be regarded as a good corporate citizen, it must be involved in social responsibility programmes and projects. That is what is called corporate charities.

Nwosu (2001, p. 49) observes, CSR demands that social institutions identify with the problems and achievements of the communities in which they operate, work with other members of the community to achieve set objectives, which are in the overall interest of the community and all its members. Reinforcing the above position, Nwodu (2003, p. 18) states, successful organisational image building and sustenance require strict commitment to ethical imperative and social responsibility. Stressing further, he observes, "In practical terms, it is the responsibility of a corporate organisation to carryout infrastructural development of its public as a way of compensating them for the damage caused it by the organisation's activities".

The will of the host community is the ultimate yardstick upon which the organisation conducts its activities and sets its goals. Corporate social responsibility efforts should be geared towards ensuring that organisations' will,

opinion, attitude and perception are favourably disposed towards an organisation and its host communities and further ensures that a mutually beneficial acceptable relationship is maintained between the two parties. The basic aim is to generate goodwill among specific individuals or generate the goodwill of people, who are essential to the general well being and profitability of an organisation (Okoroafor, 2008).

For Okiyi (2003, p. 21) corporate social responsibility stems from an organisation feeling obliged and with a conscience, put back into society and at most times its immediate society what it has taken from it, without expecting a reward or social consideration while executing her other obligations in the society. When this is done, it is expected that the community will have no option than to accept the organisation and work in harmony with it.

Baumol (1999) offers meaningful insights for proper understanding of the goals of corporate social responsibility where he argues that “the company pays a high price for operating in a region where education is poor, where living conditions are deplorable, where health is poorly protected, where property is unsafe and where cultural activities are all but dead. These circumstances are all more expensive than corporate giving”.

The execution of corporate social responsibility does not afford an organisation undue advantage for advertisement or image/ego massaging. The organisation should be content with a “warm glow” and the belief that social responsibility is (an obligation) a good business (Black, 1989, p. 10). The import is that when an organisation contributes meaningfully in solving its host community’s development problems, the community or public in turn will contribute to the growth of the organisation by offering safe investment climate that will guarantee the realisation of the organisation’s corporate goals (Nwodu, 2007).

The magnitude of an organisation’s actual CSR package delivery can deepen or weaken the organisation’s relationship with its host communities. Corporate social responsibility therefore is simply the soul of public relations practice which corporate organisations must exploit to excel or ignore to their peril (Ekanem, 2013). The bottom line is that CSR goals should aim at promoting social change that touches on all aspects of the lives of members of a company’s publics. To act in a socially responsible manner therefore a corporate organisation should do the following:

- i) Obey and respect policies, laws and legislations aimed at protecting public welfare, safety, and environment.
- ii) Execute and champion infrastructural, economic and physical development of its publics/host communities like construction/renovation of roads, building & equipping of hospitals, schools, provision of bore holes, electricity etc.
- iii) Engage in social development programmes like free education, free medi-care services to the citizens of the host communities, creation of job opportunities, skill acquisition centers etc.
- iv) Identify with the socio-cultural values and activities of the host communities by observing them and often times sponsoring the dominant cultural festivals of the community.
- v) Participate in civic responsibilities by identifying with the less privileged ones in the host communities.
- vi) These days, it is common to identify with youth groups by donating sports trophies, encouraging youth activities and creating a common ground for mutual interactivity with young people.
- vii) Environmental sustainability is a good means of CSR practice. It includes recycling, waste management, water management, using renewable energy sources, creating greener supply chain (Nwabueze, 2011), among others.

2. CSR: An Off-shoot of Public Relations (PR)

It is very necessary to venture into discussions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by first explaining its root with public relations (PR) and the role it (PR) plays in the health of an organisation. This lies in the fact that corporate social responsibility does not operate in a vacuum nor does it emanate from the blues. It is a concept in public relations (Nwabueze, 2006), which has been enshrined in the modern business ethics and espoused universally by responsible corporate bodies, organisations, governments and individuals. It becomes imperative to note that corporate social responsibility is a practice that stems from the philosophy of give and take practiced by corporate organisations.

Without equivocation therefore, one can say that the hub of any organisation’s success is the ability of its public relations practitioners to create a good rapport between the organisation and its publics. These publics cut across both its internal (staff) publics and external (host communities, publics, governments, customers, among others). Public relations play an indispensable role in our day to day activities; be it at individual, organisational, community and/or societal levels (Nwosu & Nkamnebe, 2006).

Public Relations is one of those frequently involved human activities that does not enjoy a universally acceptable definition. Thus, public relations according to Nwosu (2003) is a deliberate, planned and sustained programme of action and regular two-way communication between an organisation, (government, business etc), individuals and their publics that are aimed at positioning the organisation as credible. Nwabueze (2006) states that public relations is an organised, planned and strategically approached activity which steer the public into a willing loyalty to an organisation's dealings, businesses operations and actions. Nwodu (2006) sees public relations as a philosophy of management that aims at achieving greater understanding between the management of an organisation and those affected by the activities of the organization. And of course, one cannot exhaust the definitions in this all important discipline without taking a look at the Mexican Statement (1978) which states that public relations is the art and science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organisation's leaders and implementing planned programmes of actions which will serve both the organisations and publics.

A synthesis of the above definitions points to the fact that public relations is a holistic, planned and systematic approach aimed at harnessing individual, organisational, and government programmes of actions with a view to meeting the demands of its various publics as well as creating and sustaining a credible reputation for itself. It is holistic in that public relations as a concept cannot be pinned down to corporate organisation alone. This is especially so as Nwodu, (2007) succinctly says, "There is public relations at the individual's sphere of life, there is public relations at the corporate organisational and government levels, and there is public relations at the community level". The summary is that public relations pervades in virtually all aspect of human endeavours.

2.1 The Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Over the decades, the concept of CSR has continued to grow in importance and acceptability. Corporate social responsibility otherwise known as social investment (Nwabueze, 2006, p. 226) is variously called corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, social performance or sustainable responsible business (McWilliams and Siegel, 2000). Whatever name called, the term corporate social responsibility can be seen as a management concept whereby companies integrate their social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. Corporate social responsibility is a company's prompt response to a community's (especially the community playing host to the company) interest which could be social, physical (environmental), cultural or economic (Nwodu, 2007).

Corporate social responsibility has been brilliantly defined as "a commitment to improve the well-being of community through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources" (Philip, Kotler and Lee, 2005, cited in Asemah and Edegoh, 2014, p.147). By implication, CSR is the way through which companies manage business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. Asemah and Edegoh (2014) aver that CSR "is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families, as well as, of the local community and society at large" (Asemah and Edegoh, 2014, p.147). Ismail (n.d), sees CSR as "the strategies corporations or firms conduct their business in a way that is ethical, society friendly and beneficial to community in terms of development" and in a closely related definition, the United Nations (2007) refers to CSR as "the overall contribution of business to sustainable development" (as quoted in Asemah and Edegoh, 2014, p.147). CSR "is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (the European Commission, cited in Asemah and Edegoh, 2014, pp.147-148). Corporate social responsibility, in its broadest sense, delineates the relationship between business and society and the role business plays in sustainable development. Therefore, the crux of CSR is that a corporation, company or business entity incurs responsibility to society beyond profit maximisation and beyond meeting the minimal requirement stipulated by the law.

Corporate social responsibility gained prominence in the 1960s and has remained a term used indiscriminately by many to cover moral and legal responsibility more narrowly construed. The concept is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of social, environmental, and economic imperatives (triple-bottom-line approach), while at the same time addressing the expectations of stakeholders and shareholders. In this sense, it is important to draw a distinction between CSR, which can be a strategic business management concept and charity, sponsorship or philanthropy. Even though the later can also make a valuable contribution to poverty reduction, directly enhance the reputation of a company and strengthen its brands, the concept of CSR clearly goes beyond that.

A properly implemented CSR can bring along a variety of competitive advantages such as enhanced access to capital and markets, increased sales and profits, operational cost savings, improved productivity and quality,

efficient human resources base, improved brand image and reputation, enhanced customer loyalty, better decision making and risk management process.

Proponents argue that corporations make more long term profits by operating with a perspective; while critics hold that CSR detracts from the economic role of business. Henderson (2001) questions the 'lofty' and sometime "unrealistic" expectations in CSR. Some argue that CSR is merely a window-dressing or an attempt to pre-empt the role of government as a watchdog over powerful multi-national corporations. Political sociologists became interested in CSR in the context of globalisation, neo-liberalism, and of late capitalism. Adopting a critical approach, sociologists emphasise CSR as a form of capitalist legitimacy and in particular point out that what has begun as a social movement against uninhibited corporate owner has been co-opted by and transformed by corporations into a 'business model' and 'risk management device, often with questionable values (McWilliams, Siegel, Wright, 2006).

2.2 CSR Approaches: An Overview

A more common approach to CSR is corporate philanthropy. This includes monetary donations and aid given to local and non-local, non-profit organisations and communities, including donations in areas such as; the arts, education, culture, sports, housing, health, social welfare, and the environment among others, excluding political contributions and commercial sponsorship of events. Some organisations do not like a philanthropy based approach as it might not help build on the skills of local populations, whereas, community-based development generally leads to more sustainable development (Rosenberg, 2002).

Another approach is garnering increasing corporate social responsibility interest. A business needs a healthy, educated workforce, sustainable resources and adept government to compete effectively. For a society to thrive, profitable and competitive business must be developed and supported to create income, wealth, tax revenue, and opportunities for philanthropy. Many approaches to CSR pit businesses against society, emphasising the cost and limitations of compliance with externally imposed social and environmental standards. CSR acknowledges trade-offs between short term profitability and social or environmental goals but focuses more on the opportunities for competitive advantage from building a social value proposition into corporate strategy (Henderson, 2011).

2.3 CRS and Harmonious Relationship with Host Community

There is no gain saying the fact that achieving harmonious relationship between an organization and its host community is the core of public relations practices. In this sense, harmonious relationship with host community may be seen as the ability of an organisation's public relations practitioners to create a rapport by identifying with the needs of the communities playing host to it with a view to ameliorating their suffering via provision of social cum infrastructural amenities such as: scholarships to promising youths of the communities, employment opportunities to members of the communities, construction of bridges linking towns and villages, healthcare facilities, evacuation of wastages etc. Identifying with the host community demands that corporate organisations should work closely with their host communities in order to sufficiently understand and contribute immensely to the concrete priority needs of such communities and by extension achieve harmonious relationship with the communities (Nwodu, 2004, p.185). This harmonious relationship according to Nwodu (supra) is needed to enhance the corporate objectives of any business concern, as such could hardly be achieved in a climate of violence. Nwodu (2007, p.217) further avers:

Knowing the community implies understanding the community's socio-cultural values; economic and environmental problems; and the core development needs of the community. It also entails understanding the community's expectations of corporate citizens operating within its locality and what to do to strike a balance between the needs or desires of the community and what the corporate citizen can actually offer.

From the foregoing, it can be said with certainty that an organisation's CSR activity and PR is a three-way communication working simultaneously, each complementing the efforts of the other, all geared towards achieving one goal - credit and/or reputable image to the organisation.

3. SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc in Perspective

SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company ("SAPLAT") is a leading indigenous oil and gas exploration and development company with a strategic focus on Nigeria, listed on the Main Market of the London Stock Exchange (LES:SEPL) and Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE:SEPLAT). The company was successfully listed in April 2014 in both markets becoming an inspiring benchmark for other companies.

The company was formed in 2009 by two Nigerian E & P companies (Shebah E & P and Platform Petroleum Limited) which registered SEPLAT as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the acquisition of the assets. Subsequently a French independent company; Maurel & Prom joined these two founding partners to make its 2010 landmark acquisition of its three major assets. Presently, the company has a broad ownership base following its listing in London and Nigeria Stock Exchanges.

SEPLAT operates Oil Mining Leases 04, 38 and 41, a portfolio of onshore producing oil and gas leases located in the Niger Delta which the company in a landmark transaction acquired 45 per cent participating interest from SHELL and its partners. SEPLAT was awarded operator of these assets. Since acquisition, SEPLAT has quadrupled gross oil production from the assets from 14,000 barrels a day to 60,000, in addition to growing its oil reserves. The company has made significant investment to substantially increase its gas production in the next two years from its current production of 120MScfd. The company also has a 40% participating interest in the Umuseti/Igbuku Fields (OPL 283) based on its agreement with Pillar Oil on 1st June, 2013.

SEPLAT is highly community focused and actively seeks to interact and engage with her host communities. Through its initiative, 'the SEPLAT Model', SEPLAT has built a strong mutual relationship with its host communities resulting in trust and confidence amongst these stakeholders and a stable operating environment. This relationship has been boosted by an existing Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) which the company signed in December 2010 with its communities establishing a trust fund for community projects.

To continue to nurture its relationship with its communities as partners, SEPLAT maintains a proactive engagement with its communities, promotes initiatives that drive local capacity building, supports host community participation and enhances quality of life of persons in these communities. The communities have benefitted from a range of programmes, which include but not limited to provision of free quality healthcare, community development programmes execution, skills training educational programmes, scholarship and grants; and development of local infrastructure. Contrary to the norm, SEPLAT established its operations base office within its host communities, as a clear reflection of the depth of commitment and level of the trust and relationship she has with communities.

SEPLAT has a rich diverse and experienced board of directors which provides on-going counsel and oversight to the business. The company also boasts of highly skilled professionals running operations of the company in line with sound ethics and corporate governance practices (<http://septlatpetroliem.com/about-us/>).

3.1 SEPLAT'S Community Relations Practice

SEPLAT, a highly responsible and accountable corporate citizen, recognized at inception that peaceful coexistence with host communities and indeed with stakeholders will be vital to operational success and sustainability. Consequently, it embarked on an outreach to promote the philosophy of "Shared Value" in what is acknowledged by industry watchers as a landmark achievement. Shortly after the company commenced operations in 2010, it signed a Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU), regarded as a model, with host communities.

- The GMOU outlines the obligations to both parties and provides the framework for the mutually desired relationship between the parties:

For the communities:

- SEPLAT accepts to embrace the philosophy of participatory partnership.
- Consideration of employment opportunities for qualified/competent indigenes
- Consideration of competent local contractors to tender for contracts
- Support for capacity building
- Community empowerment and sustainable development.

For SEPLAT:

- The communities give assurance of constant security of persons and assets
- "Freedom to operate" (i.e. assurance of no disruption to company operations)
- **Base Office Location:**

While other operators and oil service companies were hurriedly relocating offices from the region, SEPLAT established her Base Office in Sapele (centrally located within OMLs 4, 38 & 41) amongst the host communities. This is locally acknowledged as a bold statement to commitment to partnership with host communities.

- In addition to the GMOU, there are several social impact programs within the communities such as;
 - Safe Motherhood: Educational/awareness campaign on pre-natal, maternity, nutrition and healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

- “Eye can see” campaign: Optical screening and treatment of persons with impaired vision.
- Scholarships and educational quiz competitions among school pupils to promote environmental awareness among the youths.
- Proactive engagement with the traditional hierarchy within the host communities and demonstration of culture of respect, transparency and empathy
(<http://seplatpetrolium.com/investor-relations/>).

3.2 SEPLAT’s Corporate Social Investment

SEPLAT recognises the importance of seeking to integrate with local communities and maintaining good community relations with the host communities in the areas in which it operates. As a measure of its commitment to the host communities, the company has entered into the GMoU with the communities in Edo State (in which OML 4 is situated) and Delta State (in which OML 38 and 41 are located). The GMoU provides a framework within which the company and the host communities work together to encourage sustainable community development by, for example, encouraging the use of community labour and to improve essential infrastructure, such as health centers, schools and water projects.

Under the GMoU, the communities have set up a community development committee (“CDC”) which is made up of representatives from each of the host communities. The CDC is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the development programmes. The CDC and the Company have also set up a trust fund account through which development projects are funded. The company has agreed to set aside funds per annum to be disbursed by the company for such projects on a bi-annual basis.

Under the GMoU, SEPLAT allocates funds for community projects on a bi-annual basis, based on levels of production and time without incidents of vandalism or sabotage to the pipeline. In addition, the GMoU is aimed at promoting cordial relations between the company and the local communities based on securing mutual benefits from achieving certain objectives, and specifically from the promotion of sustaining development, peaceful coexistence and security. Under the GMoU, the local communities have undertaken to provide a peaceful environment enabling the company and its employees, contractors, subcontractors and agents to work and have access to the company’s facilities free from any disturbance, interruption, threat, violence or invasions.

SEPLAT’s Community Relations and Corporate Affairs Departments drive the formulation and implementation of all various policies and activities. These departments hold regular meetings with various stakeholder groups to strengthen relationships with them, listen to their mutual concerns and find ways to address them. The company also produces CSR report card at the end of every financial year, which shows details of all the company’s social responsibility programme initiatives and impacts on the communities where the company operates, which is an important component of the company’s oversight functions.

In addition, the company has in place a community relations policy which applies to all her staff and is designed to promote the company’s philosophy of sustainable development through various guiding principles, including the promotion of dialogue with local communities, supporting local businesses, community outreach schemes and improving environment management policies.

The company’s Health, Safety, Environment and Communities’ Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the community relations policy (<http://seplatpetrolium.com/corporate-responsibility/>).

3.3 HSS – Health, Safety, Security and Environment

HSE Policy:

SEPLAT is committed to conducting business to the utmost local and national HSSE & CR standards and to international Best Practices in the Oil & Gas industry.

As policy, SEPLAT accords the highest regard to:

- The safety and security of person (company, contractor and public).
- The preservation of the environment.
- Peaceful coexistence with host communities and the public.
- Compliance with company rules, applicable local/national statutory regulations and industry codes of practices.

The foregoing commitment is informed by the belief that these are integral to efficient profitable and sustainable business management.

Flowing from the Management-System, routine activities are planned to address the 4-points of the HSE Policy i.e.

- **Safety and Security of persons**
 - Periodic health screening/survey of staff and contractor employees
 - Company-wide active incident prevention campaign program
 - Implementation of safe work procedure system
 - Incident reporting and investigation procedure (to track performance and share lessons learnt towards averting repeat).
 - HSE induction program and competency training and awareness campaign
- **Environmental Preservation**
 - SEPLAT ensures good environmental stewardship through the implementation of an approved Environmental Management Plan (EMP).
 - Conduct weekly monitoring of the quantity of effluents, emissions and groundwater against statutory/international limits.
 - Implement approved waste management plan
 - For project, conduct applicable Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies and thereafter ensure periodic Environmental Evaluation Studies (EES) to monitor impact of our operations and implement mitigation measures as appropriate (<http://seplatpetroleum.com/operations>).

4. Key Areas of SEPLAT's CSR Practices

- i) **Safe Motherhood Programme:** This initiative target expectant women to promote their well-being during pregnancy and at child delivery. The programme focuses on selected themes aimed to inform and educate recipients, while creating for them awareness on crucial prenatal care for safe delivery.

The maiden programme was in 2011 and it also ran in 2013 addressing “Nutrition in Pregnancy”, “Hygiene in Pregnancy” and “Danger Signs in Pregnancy”.

Since the commencement of the programme, over 6,500 expectant women in the areas of company's operation have received ante-natal screening, mosquito nets, nutritional supplements and “Safe Motherhood Delivery Bags” which contained items required for child delivery. The company has also donated maternity drugs to the healthcare and clinics in the area to ensure continued wellbeing of the women (<http://seplatpetroleum.com/corporate-responsibility/safe-motherhood-programme/safe-motherhood-photo-gallery/>).

- ii) **Eye Can See Programme:** This programme provides optical screening and treatment, including surgeries, to members of the host communities with eye ailment. SEPLAT Eye Can See Programme made a debut in 2012 and also held in 2013. Over the course of the programme, over 12, 000 patients were tested and screened, over 8,300 spectacles provided, about 768 cataract surgeries and about 6 corrective surgeries carried out(<http://seplatpetroleum.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/eyeCanSee.jpg>).(<http://seplatpetroleum.com/eye-can-see-2014-photo-gallery/>).
- iii) **Pearls Quiz:** SEPLAT PEARLS Quiz is one of the educational corporate social responsibility programmes of the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) and SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc. The programme is designed to stimulate learning and academic excellence through healthy competition amongst all public and private secondary schools in Delta and Edo States and reward outstanding performance in the area. SEPLAT is helping to raise the standard of education in the two states through the programmes. PEARLS stand for Promoting Exceptional and Respectable Leaders.

The programme was introduced in 2012. The maiden edition of the competition attracted 1,741 Secondary Schools in Delta and Edo States while in 2013, the programme attracted 1,802, schools. The top 15 students in the competition are usually rewarded with scholarship award while the winning team receives the star prize including a brand new school bus, a trophy, scholarship, certificate of participation and other gifts. The first and second runners up schools receive project based cash prizes, trophies, scholarship and other gifts (<http://seplatpetroleum.com/pearlz-quiz-photo-gallery/>)

- iv) **NPDC/SEPLAT**

Undergraduate Scholarship Awards

The Nigeria Petroleum Development Company Limited and SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc Joint Venture as part of its Corporate Social Investment Programme announced the commencement of its

inaugural undergraduate scholarship awards. The scholarship award is open to qualified and interested second year undergraduates of Nigeria Public Universities (<http://seplatpetroleum.com/carrer/>).

5. Conclusion

This paper has holistically analysed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as not only an off-shoot of public relations practice but also a critical tool in achieving harmony with host communities. In the cause of the study, the very essence of corporate social responsibility in the health of any organisation was highlighted. As an activity of PR, CSR determines the existence, profitability and sustainability of an organisation. This is true given the fact that without CSR an organisation may not operate in a safe environment and may go into extinction. An organisation needs effective PR matched with adept CSR actions to stay healthy and viable especially in a competitive market. This, apart from having direct influence on the sales and profitability of the organisation, it also act as a synergy to enhanced favourable and/or reputable corporate image and by extension compel loyalty to it by its numerous publics and/or consumers. In a nut shell, CSR is the hub of public relations practice of any smart organisation.

SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc. as a smart corporate organisation has trail blazed in the adoption of an unprecedented CSR model even as an indigenous company. This has indeed spoken volume for the company as well as placed it high and above its contemporaries in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. SEPLAT has proven that our indigenous companies have the depth, adept, dexterity and capacity to excel in business while adopting international best practices in the area of CSR. The organisation has demonstrated in unequivocal terms that it is a good corporate citizen.

5.1 Recommendations

In view of the importance of CSR in an organisation, the following recommendations are made;

1. Corporate organisations should as a matter of necessity work closely with their host communities with a view to identifying with their core needs via release of corporate social welfare packages.
2. Communities playing host to organisations should create a platform under which the corporate citizens operating in their localities can identify with them.
3. Corporate organisations should see themselves as stakeholders in the development of their host communities.
4. Organisations should always be proactive in their approach to managing their reputation.
5. Organisations should always release their social responsibility package to their host communities at and as when due.
6. Organisations should always engage community leaders to a roundtable talk to know their expectations of the organisation.
7. Organisations should see themselves as corporate members of the communities.
8. Organisations should create a platform where the youths of their host communities can interact with them.
9. Finally, the study implores other organisations operating in Nigeria to take a cue from SEPLAT Petroleum Development Company Plc in developing a CSR model with an aim to promoting cordial relationship with their host communities.

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