Community Relations Strategies and
Conflict Resolution in Selected Kingdoms in Niger Delta Region

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ABSTRACT

The degree of violence in Nigeria's Niger Delta has become endemic and are too far-reaching to be ignored: for the inhabitants of this area, there are constant environmental hazards and security threat, The study, therefore, examined the community relations strategies used by oil companies in managing the crises in the Niger Delta. The study population comprised the community relations units of oil companies in the Niger Delta (among which Shell, Chevron and Agip were selected) and the indigenes of Omoku and Obrikom communities in Rivers State and Eruemukohwarien, Tisun and Kolokolo communities in Delta State. Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (key informant interview and focus group discussion) methods of data collection were employed. The respondents for the survey were randomly selected while those for the interviews and focus groups were purposively selected. The study established that conflicts between oil companies and host communities had serious implications for the two parties and that the community relations strategies adopted by the selected oil companies were not adequate in preventing and resolving conflicts in the Niger Delta. That was because there was a lacuna between the strategies the oil companies believed host communities preferred for conflict resolution and the ones actually preferred by those communities.The research, therefore, recommend that to reduce conflict between oil companies and host communities in the Niger Delta, companies should be mindful of conflict propelling factors identified by the respondents and stated in the work, they should improve on their community relations strategies in order to impress the community and most importantly, they should introduce grassroots approach to the implementation of their strategies.

Introduction

The discovering of oil and gas and subsequently the oil exploration and exploitation processes have, however, brought with them the degradation of the environment, thereby impoverishing the host communities and endangering lives, tapping into the oil reserves requires the construction of rigs, industrial facilities and power plants; it also involves prospecting, exploring and drilling of crude mineral oil, these result in the degradation and destruction of life-supporting ecological systems and natural resources.

Apart from the destruction of vegetation during the exploration and production phases, the flaring of associated gas in the process of extracting the crude oil poses a threat to human life, Unburned carbon is often transported into the homes and working areas of the Niger Delta inhabitants. Also, whenever it rains, thick soot is washed off roofs and other surfaces, causing water pollution, which is believed to contain harmful chemicals that affect the fertility of the soil, some gas flaring sites in the Niger Delta have been in existence for more than 30 years running 24 hours a day. Hence, about 35 million tons of carbon dioxide and 12 million tons of methane are released in a year (Alao, 2005).

About 52 years after oil was first discovered at Oloibiri, the Niger Delta communities have declared war on the oil companies they once so readily welcomed. This development is due to the extent of damage suffered by those communities

as a result of the oil exploration processes. They also consider there to be inadequate compensation by the oil companies and/or gross neglect of the region by successive Nigerian governments.

In 2005, the Niger Delta communities sued NNPC, Shell, Exxon, Chevron, Total and Agip joint venture companies for failure to stop gas flaring. According to Environmental Rights Action (ERA), though gas flaring had been prohibited under environmental regulations since 1984, Nigeria still has more gas flared than anywhere else in the world (F.O.E., 2005). According to Rizvi (2005), environmentalists estimated the amount of gas associated with crude oil that is wasted daily at about two million cubic feet. They stress that the wasted gas contains a mix of toxins that pose severe health risks to human populations. The author further notes that child respiratory diseases, asthma, cancer, and premature deaths are increasingly becoming the lot of a vast majority of Niger Delta residents, due to the massive gas flaring.

Consequent on the complex nature of the problems in the Niger Delta, members of the community have embraced violence as a means of curbing the excesses of oil companies, getting at the government and attracting international attention amongst others. According to Ogbogbo (2004), the various joint venture agreements entered into by the Federal Government and transnational oil companies indicate an increase in the parties involved in the crises. The government

is perceived to have abandoned its responsibility to its citizens while the oil companies are believed to have failed to demonstrate corporate commitment to the welfare of their host communities.

Hence, the oil companies have been categorized as foes, thereby increasing the number of parties to the conflicts. This view was corroborated by Ron Van den Berg, the Chairman and MD of Anglo Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria when he remarked that since the communities could not attack the government, they attacked the oil companies instead ("Niger Delta Situation," 1999). In 2002, an international observation team declared the Niger Delta as one of the most volatile regions in the world (Alao, 2005). Since a higher percentage of the violence in the area is against the oil companies, it becomes imperative for the companies to re-evaluate their relationships with their host communities, that is, re-engineer their community relations strategies.

The degree of violence in the Niger Delta has become endemic, characterized by 33 cases of kidnapping recorded between January 2006 and February 2007, with over 200 victims being mostly expatriate oil workers. There were also about 12, 770 cases of vandalism, particularly of oil pipelines and installations, recorded in Nigeria between 2000 and 2007 with most of them occurring in the Niger Delta (Nwankwo & Ezeobi, 2008).

The implications of the Niger Delta crises are too far-reaching to be ignored: for the inhabitants of this area, there are constant environmental hazards and security threat, while for the Nigerian government, over N150.5bn in revenue was lost in eight years (Nwankwo & Ezeobi, 2008); there was also a drop of more than 20% in oil exports between April 2006 and October 2007 (BBC News, 2007). The global community is not excluded from the effect of the crises; the crude oil price on the world market was raised to $100 per barrel in January 2008 (Arowolo, 2008 as cited in Alabi, 2008) and later to about $120 a barrel in April 2008. The worst hit of all the victims of vandalism and kidnapping, however, are the oil companies. More than 95% of the kidnap cases mentioned above involved oil workers, and the installations of oil companies were the target of most of the vandalism. It is noteworthy, however, that the degree of these occurrences varies across different oil companies (Aaron & Patrick, 2008). Onua (2007) describes it as a sort of revenge on the multinational oil companies.

This study is on community relations strategies used by oil companies to resolve crises in the Niger Delta. It focuses on the specific techniques involved in building a good relationship with host communities. The oil companies under consideration in this study are Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Chevron and Agip. The study population is restricted to Omoku and Obrikom communities in Rivers State and Eruemukohwarien, Tisun and Kolokolo communities in Delta State.

Inconsistencies in goals. While allowance may be made for pockets of indeterminacies in all human goals, too many unjustifiable inconsistencies in the goals set by individuals or groups in a society may become a source of conflict. One of the major dimensions of the crises in the Niger Delta is the failure of the government and multinationals to remain committed to their various promises of development in the area.

1) Increasing desire for autonomy or authority by the different individuals or groups in the community. Conflict ensues when a former subordinate individual or group attempts to secede or exert authority over a wider range of issues. Any effort by the erstwhile dominant party to maintain the status quo may lead to conflict. In Nigeria for instance, this cannot be better exemplified than by referring to the civil war. In 1967, the Southeastern province of Nigeria attempted secession by declaring the Republic of Biafra. The Federal Government resisted this attempt and this led to the war that lasted till 1970.

2) Scarcity or inadequacy of resources to meet the needs of the various components. Conflict evolves when the resources that are required to meet specific needs are scarce, and more importantly, when the few available are not evenly distributed. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of Nigerian universities has, on several occasions, embarked on strike actions to protest that the educational sector in Nigeria has been allocated too little money in recent years. The above scenario describes a conflict based on scarcity of resources.

The Political Dimension of the Niger Delta Crisis

According to Omoweh (2010), the Niger Delta crisis is the crisis of the Nigeria state, that is, its policy in respect to natural resources and the mode of surplus extraction from the mining sector. He explains that the crisis is a political one and its origin can be traced to "the path the state took to development inclusive of its type of capitalist development in the mining sector" (p. 12). Omoweh (2010) describes the Nigerian state as the political leadership of the country. He considers it ironic that the tiny fraction of the hegemonic political class, which lead the nation's development and controls the state political power, is naturally interested in perpetuating itself and reproducing its class rather than thinking of the people and their wellbeing. Consequent on the need for the state to survive before pursing development, it devised some strategies to protect itself, which includes the adoption of defensive radical posture that is driven by pretence to be interested in the wellbeing of the people, whereas, it is to side with capital to exploit them. The crisis ensued as a result of the contention between the dominant class, which struggled for power and resources to survive, and the subordinate groups in the society who also claimed their right to survival. Omoweh says that the crisis is made more pronounced by the state's mode of extraction of surplus from the mining sector. He explains that the state uses its political power "to amass wealth, because of its weak productive base" (Omoweh, 2010, p. 14). The individuals entrusted with the management of the state use the political office to accumulate profit, rather than to invest in entrepreneurship and development.

Oil Dimension of the Crisis

In February 2007, Nigeria celebrated fifty years of oil exploration, but Agagu and Adu (2008) note that observers have opined that in spite of Nigeria's oil wealth, the performance of the sector has not been impressive. Aiyetan (2008) cited Rilwan Lukman, the former Minister of Petroleum in Nigeria and the former President of OPEC, to have said that oil is both a blessing and a curse in Nigeria. In the same vein, Ezeobi (2008) describes Nigeria's years of oil exploration as 50 depressing years of oil. Agagu & Adu (2008) observe that only few individuals and companies have benefited from oil so far, while several other communities and millions of people have been underdeveloped and impoverished. They further argue that there has been unprecedented development in several communities due to the activities of the oil industry.

The oil industry has in no small measure helped to propel other industries since the time oil assumed great ascendency in industrialization. Among the countries that have benefited from the oil industry are Dubai, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Britain and Singapore, among others. Although Nigeria has also benefited from the industry through oil boom in the global market, the Niger Delta, which forms the bedrock of the country's oil exploration and exploration, has no semblance of development which can be linked with the oil industry.

In 1969, Nigeria's military government under the leadership of General Gowon abrogated the 1914 Colonial Minerals Ordinance, thereby opening a fresh chapter in the state-oil bond by formally transferring the control and ownership of oil to the state. Nigeria proceeded to join OPEC in 1971 and in the same year established its own oil industry, acquiring up to 60 per cent equity ownership in all operating oil companies.

Critical Issues on the Niger Delta Crises

Mbembe (2001) raises the question as to why oil is so frequently the epicenter of violence. Watts (2009), in an attempt to answer this question, says that in states in which oil is a national resource, the states' geography and the centralization of oil revenue through the state joint venture usually combine to create new sorts of governable spaces. These spaces are characterized by a ferocious struggle of access and control of rent.

Ako, Okonmah & Ogunleye (2009, pp. 111-112) critically analyse two conflict eras in the Niger Delta; the oil palm era and the crude oil era. They draw four parallels between the two eras as follows:

1. Both palm oil and crude oil are significant to the global industrial process. Following the industrial revolution in Europe, palm oil became highly sought after because it was required to process the lubricant for the maintenance of industrial machinery. It was also used in the production of domestic products such as soaps and margarine. On the other hand, the crude oil is the major energy source in the contemporary world. Its uses include the fuel for airplanes, cars, home heating and lubricants for home and industrial uses.

2. There is similarity between the parties to the conflict in both periods. The parties to the trade during the palm oil era included the local communities that established themselves as middlemen in the trade, European interests, as represented by international capital, and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Also, in the crude oil era, the stakeholders include the host communities, foreign capital and the Federal Government. Another similarity is that the government and the foreign capital in both eras cooperated to protect their economic interests through the exploitation of the region.

3. There is a similarity between the causes of conflict in both eras. The underlying factors to the conflict in the palm oil and crude oil eras were issues related to indigenous recognition and participation of the people in the Niger Delta (Okonta, 2000).

4. In both eras, the state used repressive means to suppress the restiveness of Niger Delta inhabitants. During the palm oil era, the government used its controlled security agencies, which included the military, to continually protect the interests of the foreign capital. For instance, the British naval forces, under the instruction of Royal Niger Company, attacked and leveled the trading city of Brass, to maintain the company's monopoly over the palm oil trade, which the town was known for (Bassey, 2006). Again, the Human Rights Watch (1999) presents a catalogue of similar examples in which the Nigerian security forces and oil companies collaborated to suppress the resistance of the local communities.

Shell Nigeria (SPDC)

Shell Nigeria is a subsidiary of the Royal Dutch Shell plc, which has its headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands, and its registered office at the Shell Centre in London, United Kingdom. According to the Global 500 list, Shell is the largest energy company and the second company in the world as measured by revenues. The Royal Dutch Shell Group was created as a result of the merger between the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company and Shell Transport and Trading Company Ltd of the United Kingdom in February 1907. The merger was necessitated by the need to compete globally with John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, which was then the predominant US petroleum company. According to the terms of the merger, 60% of the new group was given to the Dutch partner while the remaining 40% went to the British. Prior to the merger, the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company was a Dutch company that was founded by Jean Baptise August Kessler and Henri Deterding in 1890, at the time King William III of the Netherlands granted it a royal charter for Working of Petroleum in the Dutch Indies. Shell, on the other hand, was a British transport and trading company founded in 1897 by two brothers, Marcus Samuel and Samuel Samuel. The initial commission of the company was eight oil tankers for the purpose of transporting oil.

Shell took control of the Mexican Eagle Petroleum Company in 1919, while in 1921, Shell-Mex Limited was formed, which marketed products using the "Shell" and "Eagle" brands in the UK. As a result of economic difficulties, among other reasons, Shell-Mex merged its UK marketing operations with the operations of British Petroleum in 1932, resulting in the creation of Shell-Mex and BP Ltd. The new company traded for 43 years before the brands separated in 1975.

In 1936, the Royal Dutch Shell Group founded Shell D'Arcy, which was the first Shell Company to operate in Nigeria, hence, the company started business in Nigeria in 1937. The company was granted Exploration Licence in November 1938, which allowed it to prospect oil throughout Nigeria. Not until January 1956 did the company drill its first successful well at Oloibiri, in the present Bayelsa State, in the Niger Delta, where oil was discovered at commercial quantity. The first oil shipment from Nigeria was moved in February 1958, and by April 1961, Shell's Bonny Terminal was commissioned, which was followed by the commissioning of Shell's Focados Terminal in September 1971.

Other historic landmarks of Shell Nigeria include the first Participation Agreement that was signed in April 1973, through which the Federal Government of Nigeria acquired 35% shares in the oil companies; second Participation Agreement signed in April 1974, through which the government increased its equity to 55%; third Participation Agreement signed in 1979, that saw the government, under the auspices of NNPC, increase its equity to 60%; and also the August 1979 Participation Agreement in which BP's share holding was nationalized and NNPC acquired 80% of the equity, leaving Shell with 20% (Shell, n.d.).

Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC)

Agip is an Italian company with the original Italian name Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli, which means General Italian Oil Agency. It is an automotive gasoline and diesel

retailer that was established in 1926. The process that birthed the company started in 1924, when there was the famous *affair Sinclair* Scandal. A US oil company, Sinclair Oil, entered into a 50 year long agreement with the Italian Ministry of National Economy that led to it being issued a permit to conduct oil research in the country.

Had the agreement been upheld, Sinclair and the Italian State would have entered into a joint venture with 40% of the capital coming from the State's property, Sinclair Oil incurring the entire expenditure, and 25% of the profits going to the Italian State. The agreement was, however, controversial because the opposition suspected the government of corruption. Consequent on the turn of events, the Government of the Kingdom of Italy issued a royal decree on April 3, 1929, which ordered the establishment of Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli (Agip, n.d.). The company was created to conduct all activities involving industry and the commerce of petroleum, also created in form of joint stock companies.

Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL)

Chevron Corporation is an American multinational energy corporation with its headquarters in San Ramon, California, and has active operations in more than 180 countries. The company engages in every aspect of the oil, gas and geothermal energy industries, which also includes exploration and production. Traditionally, Chevron traces its roots to the oil discovery in Pico Canyon, north of Los Angeles. As a result of the discovery, there was a formation of the Pacific Coast Oil Company in 1879, which was Chevron Corporation's oldest predecessor.

Initially, Chevron was known as Standard Oil of California, or SoCal, which was formed in the midst of the antitrust breakup of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company in 1911. Saudi Arabia granted SoCal a concession in 1933 to find oil, and it was found in 1938. SoCal discovered the world's largest oil field in Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s. In 1984, Standard Oil of California merged with Gulf Oil, which was the largest merger in history as at the time. SoCal divested many of Gulf Oil's operating subsidiaries under the antitrust regulation and sold some Gulf subsidiaries as well as a refinery located in eastern US.

Afterwards, Standard Oil of Californian changed the name to Chevron Corporation. Chevron merged with Texaco in 2001 to form ChevronTexaco. The label was changed back in May 2005 to simply Chevron, after which it merged again with Unocal Corporation in August 9, 2005. Consequent on Unocal Corporation's extensive South East Asian geothermal facilities, Chevron became the biggest supplier of geothermal energy in the planet (Chevron, n.d.).

Multinationals and Corporate Social Responsibility

Those responsibilities include helping to prevent pollution, providing jobs for minorities, enforcing policies that are in the interest of all employees and generally enhancing everyone's quality of life. Hence, social responsibility can be defined as a concept whereby organizations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on stakeholders such as customers, employees, shareholders, communities, and the environment. An aspect of corporate social responsibility that has, in recent times, gained attention in academic discuss is community involvement. Bronn (2006) explains that community involvement is all about building a relationship between an organization and its immediate environment.

There are two general descriptions of community, and they are the narrow and the broad descriptions. Carroll & Buchholtz (2000) describe community in terms of the immediate locale of the organization, which includes the town, city or state in which it operates. Cannon (1994), on the other hand, not only equate the state with the community, but also acknowledges that the community of an organization has been broadened, sometimes to include the region, nation, and even the world. This current study will, however, associate with Carroll and Buchholtz's description of community, since the major focus is the host communities of the oil companies.

Conflict Resolution and Public Relations

Conflict resolution has been a part of human experience for centuries. Although this is factual, Burton (1993) argues that it is relatively recent in scholarly discourse. He points out that some scholars interchange "dispute" with "conflict." According to him, settlement refers to the negotiated or arbitrated results of disputes while resolution refers to the result of a conflict situation. Hence, there is "dispute settlement" and "conflict resolution". He, however, goes on to say that though dispute and conflict may refer to different conditions and scope of human relationships, they operate on the same principles and can be used interchangeably. According to Wilmot & Hocker (1998), there are several modes of intervention and they include facilitation, mediation, counselling and therapy, conciliation, quasi-political procedures, informal tribunals, arbitration of different types and criminal and civil justice systems. In practise, these modes are usually combined for conflict resolution. Otite (2001) states that conflict resolution carries out a healing function in societies. This occurs by providing the opportunity for parties involved to examine alternative pay-offs in the situation. By so doing, normalty is restored to the society thus facilitating discussion. It also places the parties in the conflict in a situation in which they can choose alternative positive means for resolving their differences. Otite further explains that consensus-building, social-bridge reconstructions, and the re-enactment of order in the society are achieved through conflict resolution.

The process of conflict resolution focuses on the rebuilding of broken-down relationships, and this falls within the purview of public relations. Public relations practice has become well known in recent times because of the great assistance it offers in crises resolution. Because of the complexities of the world today, it is certain that organizations and people cannot avoid trouble and violence. Wherever there is violence and trouble, wise counsel is required (Seitel, 2007). Conflict is the outcome of unchecked degeneration in human relationships, and according to Folarin (1998), it evolves in stages; first we have an issue, then it evolves into conflict, and finally into a crisis.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory posits that in a society or an organization, each individual participant and/or group struggles to maximize certain benefits and this inevitably contributes to social change. This change may include political struggles and revolution. The theory focuses on the idea that personal or group's ability has a role to play in exercising influence and control over others in producing social order. Hence, conflict theorists believe that there is a continual struggle between all different elements of a particular society. According to Wallace & Wolf (2006), conflict theory evolved as a major alternative to the functionalist approach to analyzing a society's general structure. Ritzer (2003) also observes that apart from the theory's origination in reaction to

structural functionalism, it also has other roots that include Marxian theory and works of Georg Simmel on social conflict. Conflict theory provided an alternative to the functionalist approach in the 1950s and 1960s. Although it was superseded by a variety of neo-Marxian theories after the 60s (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), it has become increasingly popular and relevant in modern sociology (Wallace & Wolf, 2006).

Functionalists consider societies and social institutions as systems in which equilibrium is created through the interdependence of all the parts. They do not deny the existence of conflict; however, they believe that the society evolves means of controlling it. This forms the basis of functionalist analysis. Conflict theorists, on the other hand, perceive the society in a different light. Contrary to functionalists' view of the existence of interdependence and unity in the society, conflict theorists view the society as an arena where groups contend for power. For conflict to be controlled, one group must be able to, at least temporarily, suppress its rivals. Conflict theory focuses on the shifting balance of power among competitors in the society, rather than the creation of equilibrium through interdependence and cooperation (Wallace & Wolf, 2006).

This Marxist perspective has been specifically applied to international organizations/multinational corporations, which are the focus of this study. According to Pease (2003), Marxists argue that international organizations are products of hegemony. However, traditional Marxists and Gramscian Marxists have two separate notions of hegemony, thereby leading them to different conclusions on the nature of international organizations. While traditional Marxists tend to equate hegemony with military and economic dominance, Gramscian-inspired Marxists claim that it is the relation of consent to political and ideological leadership (Simon, 1982). Both the traditional and the Gramascian Marxists perspectives can be applied to this study, though in varying degrees. The notion of the traditional Marxists is applicable, more so when we consider that the Multi-national companies (MNCs) actually dominate the economy of the countries (e.g. America and Japan), but particularly the communities, in which they operate. This they do by taking over the means of production of the communities, while the people live on compensations. The oil companies, however, did not dominate the Niger Delta through the use of force, at least at the initial stage. Military force was introduced much later with the rise of vandalism and militancy.

Conclusion

The community relations strategies adopted by the selected oil companies are not adequate in preventing and resolving company-community conflicts in the Niger Delta. The most important reason for this is the lacuna that exists between the strategies the oil companies believed host communities preferred for conflict resolution and the ones actually preferred by those communities. The gulf seemed to have consumed efforts made by the companies, thereby leaving little proof of their responsibilities to their hosts. The lack of grassroots approach also reduced the effectiveness of the strategies, since oil companies quoted large sums of money being spent on development and host communities said they got none of it. The communities' representatives appropriated the fund earmarked for development while the companies believed that since they represented the communities, they were delivering the benefits. Hence, a grassroot approach would serve as a check for the excessiveness of community representatives.

Meanwhile, the key oil-producing states of Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers have all varied significantly in their levels of violence over the last decade, while Akwa Ibom, with its growing offshore production, has joined the ranks of troubled states. The international community and local civil society need a greater common body of knowledge about the conflict's drivers, sparks, actors, dynamics, and trends, as well as its local versus regional features. Finally, donors with vital interests and a desire to intervene should develop a realistic unified theory of change for ending Niger delta conflict. For all the slow progress being made, as with governance work, today most parties working on conflict in the area are working in isolation, with no well-sign posted roadmap for how their efforts should change or be combined. Research should draw on their experiences, and from work outside Nigeria. Relevant questions to inform the resulting theory should include what effects the present reforms at the state and local levels are having; what development processes are positively affecting conflict trends; and what attempts at working together have and have not worked, and why. Answering these questions could ultimately inform the creation of a coordinated and multilateral strategy for a coalition to support anti-conflict work in the region over five to ten years.

Over the last decade most stakeholders effectively treated conflict in the Niger Delta as a short-term risk to be managed. The Nigerian government, the oil industry, and the international community are increasingly feeling the consequences of this approach. As the value of the delta's oil climbs, potential gains and losses have increased massively from the grass roots all the way up to global markets. While some causes of the Niger Delta conflict remain localized, the days when violence in the region could be called a local issue are long gone. It is time the international community recognizes the need to engage more fully in this region, where effects are measured in millions of people and billions of dollars, in terms of both the continuing damage from violence and the benefits that could come from ending it.

Recommendations

The study has shown that good community relations strategies are indispensible if conflicts between oil companies and host communities would be resolved. Having examined the relationship between the selected oil companies and communities, the following recommendations are made:

i. The oil companies should pay specific attention to the factors identified by the communities as being responsible for the occurrence of conflicts. For instance, the companies should be mindful that the performance of the government in the state or country in which they operate would have immense implications on the perception they enjoy from their host communities. Hence, they should use their strategic economic position to encourage or pressure rise the government into being responsible. Also, the oil companies should make efforts to spread their contributions to all the communities in the Niger Delta rather than paying too much attention to the restive ones. This is because some of the conflicts that occurred were due to the need for attention by some of the communities.

ii. The community members should be properly enlightened by NGOs, which are more readily accepted than the government, on their rights as individuals and their roles in national development. This will prevent them from being used by deceptive politicians as tools for winning elections. It would also protect them from some influential community leaders who may incite the people to protest for their own

ends. This is because the people would seek out information and facts for themselves before they act, rather than depending on the instructions of some privileged class.

iii. The oil companies should note that some of the communities in which there were little or no conflict occurrences did not attribute their seemingly peaceful disposition to the oil companies' community relations strategies. Rather, they attributed it to their respect for their elders, peaceful heritage, fear of God and respect for the law. This, therefore, challenges the oil companies to work harder on their strategies. It also gives an insight into the areas the companies can explore to maintain a good relationship with the communities.

iv. Both the oil companies and the communities should constantly bear in mind the double edged consequences of conflicts; hence, they must be avoided at all cost. The companies must not be seen to be covertly instigating communal conflicts so as to make more profits while the communities are busy warring.

v. Considering that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the community relations strategies of the oil companies, more efforts should be made by the companies to improve on their strategies. Since the communities are the recipients of such efforts, it would be risky for the companies to ignore their feelings.

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