

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AS PANACEA FOR PEACEFUL CORPORATE- COMMUNITY CO-EXISTENCE: THE INDORAMA PETROCHEMICALS COMPANY MODEL IN AGBONCHIA-ELEME COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, industrial disharmonies and irreconcilable infractions between multi-national organisations and hosts communities in the Niger Delta have been a recurrent decimal. This happens as a result of suspicions and accusations by host communities alleging that multi-national organisations operating in their neighbourhoods do not honour memoranda of understandings signed with them. In the light of the foregoing, this study investigated the community relations model used by Indorama Petrochemicals Company Limited in Agbonchia-Eleme Community to unravel the reasons for the seeming industrial harmony between the community and the company. The objectives of the study were: to examine the community relations activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community; ascertain the level of acceptance of the community relations programmes of Indorama-PCL by the Agbonchia community among others. The research design for the study was survey. The instruments used were questionnaire and interview. A sample size of 318 was used for the study. Simple percentages and average mean scores were used in the data presentation and analysis. The study found out that Indorama-PCL has performed creditably through the implementation of agreement on employment of indigenes, payment of royalties, free health care services, scholarship awards, road constructions/rehabilitations, arts and culture promotion, skills acquisitions and other empowerment schemes. Based on findings, the study recommended the need for institution of a joint project monitoring team from the community and the company and adoption of one community trusted communication channel between the company and the community.

KEY WORDS: Community relations, Mutual relationship, Host community, Corporate organisations.

Introduction

Industrial disharmonies in the Niger Delta are not a novelty. What is industrially novel in the Niger delta since 2006 is that the Indorama Petrochemicals Company has redefined community relations with an approach that has ensured a seeming peaceful coexistence between the organisation and the Agbonchia community. Frankly, since the Indorama Group took over the management of the defunct Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited, the story of incessant community/company rifts in the gigantic petrochemicals complex has drastically simmered down. The above narrative confirms that an active and comprehensive community relations activity is not only capable of sustaining an organisation's good taste and sense of judgement but can also virtually transform an image-battered organisation to a good community citizen. On a more limited scale, small businesses also achieve community prominence and engender goodwill by sponsoring local sports teams, community festivals or other local events. Community support may be financial or may take the form of employee participation in rendering services like free medicals, counseling or other advocacies that have direct bearing on the community.

Organisations are therefore, recognized as good community citizens when they support programmes that improve the quality of life in their community which includes environmental programmes, employment and empowerment opportunities, scholarship award, sponsorship of events, crime prevention, clean-up and beautification. Other vital areas of community relations activities are urban renewal projects, performing arts programmes, social and educational programmes, children's activities, community organisations, and construction of development projects.

Good community relations activities offer corporate organisations a wide range of benefits. For instance, they give communities, employees and other publics, a reason to be proud of the organisation, which increases loyalty and in turn lays the bedrock for industrial harmony and may also help to reduce labour and production costs. An organisation with a happy community and a good reputation in the eyes of its publics is likely to attract highly qualified new employees. It is also true that good community relations can also be beneficial in times of crisis, such as a fire disaster or a plant closing, by rallying the community around the affected organisation. Based on this premise, this study sets out to examine the community relations activities of Indorama/Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited by Agbonchia-Eleme, Rivers State since 2006.

Brief Profile of Indorama Petrochemicals Company Limited

The Indorama-Petrochemicals Company Limited, originally known as Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited, a polyolefin producer was established in 1988 and was then temporarily located in Port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State, Nigeria. Construction at the permanent site at Eleme, a suburb of Port Harcourt, began in 1991 by a consortium of Messrs Chiyoda Corporation, Japan Gasoline Corporation (JGC), and Kobe Steel Group, all of Japan, Technimont of Italy and Spie Batignolles Construction Company (Spibat) of France, as a 100% subsidiary of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

The Indorama Group (an Indonesian worldwide conglomerate) took over the gigantic Eleme Petrochemicals Company facility via a privatization process at the instance of the Federal Government of Nigeria, which began in May 2005 and was completed in May 2006. The Indorama group on assumption of control of the facility conducted the first Turn-around Maintenance (TAM) from 17th May 2006 until the end of September 2006. After the completion of all planned activities, the plants were operational as from the 15th day of September 2006. Barely a month after, was the re-commissioning of the newly privatized and revitalized EPCL by the then President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, on the 12th day of October 2006.

The Eleme Complex, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, comprises an olefins unit, a polyolefin unit and a captive power plant and other supporting units. The company is designed to produce 240,000 metric tons of polyethylene per year, and 95,000 metric tons of polypropylene per year. To produce these resins, natural gas liquids are cracked in an M.W. Kellogg (USA) licensed olefins plant. Indorama-PCL is strategically positioned to feed the growing demand of plastics in Africa. The complex consists of a gas feed cracker unit and two main downstream plants. The total production is over 550 KTA of world-class olefins and polyolefin. Indorama-Petrochemicals is poised to become one of the leading suppliers of polyolefin on the African continent.

The IPCL plant is situated on 400 hectares of land and potential expansion capabilities. Though Indorama-PCL is principally situated on Agbonchia community's soil, there are other co-host communities such as Elemenwo, Akpajo, Aleto, Okerewa, Njuru and Akpakpan, whose portions of the land also make up part of the hundreds of hectares which the company occupies. Agbonchia community is one of the ten ancient agrarian clans of the Eleme ethnic nationality and is located on latitude 4.7947222/4 47'40.9992" and longitude 7.1225/7 7'

20.9994''. The Eleme and English languages are used for communication purposes. Source: Community Relations Department, Indorama-Petrochemicals Company Limited.

Statement of the Problem

Indorama-Petrochemicals Company Limited began operations in Agbonchia/Eleme in October 2006 after successfully implementing the first turn-around maintenance (TAM) which resuscitated the moribund Eleme Petrochemicals Company Limited. The revamping of the plant enabled it to produce at full capacity since its inception in 1995. As part of the hand over process of the company to the Indorama Group in 2006, some indigenes of Agbonchia community are of the opinion that there was a mutual understanding with the host community that the company would make provisions for stable electricity, pipe-borne water, health facilities, scholarship awards, construction of roads and drainage, employment opportunities and award of running contracts for the people as part of its community relations activities. The management of Indorama-PCL on its part agreed that it pledged some commitments to the host community in consideration of the lethal nature of its production processes.

However, several years have passed and a cross section of the people of Agbonchia community believes that Indorama-PCL has fulfilled the promises made to the people of the community, others believe otherwise claiming that after several years of Indorama-PCL's operation in the community, potable water, stable electricity, educational facilities, employment opportunities, award of running contracts and construction of sustainable roads and drainage were still not feasible as promised. They accused Indorama-PCL of being insensitive to the plight of the community and vowed to go all out to correct the injustices meted on their people.

Indorama-PCL on its part says it has executed many developmental programmes in Agbonchia community. A claim some observers vehemently refute claiming that what Indorama-PCL claims to have done is not commensurate with the gains the company has received within the years of its operations in the community. It is on this premise that the researcher decided to carry out an assessment of the community relations model of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community since 2006 to ascertain the true position of the matter.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the community relations activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community.
2. Assess the level of commitment of Indorama-PCL to its community relations activities/programmes in Agbonchia community.
3. Examine the effectiveness of the communication channels used by Indorama-PCL in its community relations activities in Agbonchia community and;
4. Ascertain the level of acceptance of the community relations programmes of Indorama-PCL by the Agbonchia community.

1.1. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the community relations activities/programmes embarked upon by Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community?
2. What is the level of commitment of Indorama-PCL to its community relations activities/programmes in Agbonchia community?
3. How effective are the communication channels used by Indorama-PCL in its community relations activities/programmes in Agbonchia community?
4. What is the level of acceptance of the community relations activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL by the Agbonchia community?

Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the academia will benefit from this work as it has tested the theory guiding the study and provided the needed literature for researchers willing to carry out further investigations in this area of study. Practically, this study will assist Indorama-PCL and other multinational organisations in fashioning their community relations policy plan and implementation strategies. It will also serve as a yardstick for measuring the success of the community relations programmes of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community.

Scope of Study

This study focused on the community relations activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community, Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Stakeholder theory by Edward Freeman posits that organisations have stakeholders who naturally, are classified as individuals and groups that benefit from it or are adversely affected by the organisation's operations. According to Freeman and Hunt (1984), the stakeholder theory recognises the diverse groups

and individuals that are affected in one way or another, by the activities of an organisation. The theory stipulates and recommends the ways by which the collective interests of stakeholders would be catered for by the management of an organisation. The stakeholder theory therefore, posits that every legitimate person or group involved in the activities of an organisation is a stakeholder for the sake of benefits, and that the priority interest of every legitimate stakeholder is not self-evident (Furneau, 2006). The stakeholder theory could be identified by the following characteristics: It is descriptive, it offers a model of the organisation, it is instrumental, it offers a framework for investigating the links between conventional firm performance and the practice of stakeholder management, it is fundamentally normative, although stakeholder theory possesses the above characteristics, it is more fundamentally normative. Stakeholders are identified by their interests and all stakeholders are considered to be intrinsically valuable (Amodu, 2012).

Taking into consideration the above expositions of the stakeholder theory in assessing the Agbonchia community publics, it suffices to say that the Agbonchia community is a diffused public. Firstly, they are able to recognise that there is a problem, and the problem is that they are both economically and physically disadvantaged by the operations of the organisation they play host to. They also recognize the need for the problem to be resolved amicably before it deteriorates to a restive situation.

Concept of Community Relations

Community relations refers to the different methods corporate organisations use to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the communities in which they operate. It is basically an aspect of public relations defined by the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) many years ago as a deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics (Ohiagu 2015). The paramount feature of community relations is that when an organisation accepts its corporate social responsibility and invests actively in the well-being of its host community, it gains a number of long-term benefits in terms of community support, loyalty, and goodwill. Community involvement by an organisation builds public image and employee morale, and fosters a sense of teamwork that is essential for long-term success.

Community relations therefore, refer to the various methods an organisation uses to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with

the community in which it operates. The underlying principle of community relations is that when a company accepts its civic responsibility and takes an active interest in the well-being of its host community, then it gains a number of long-term benefits in terms of community support, loyalty, and good will. Community involvement builds public image and employee morale, and fosters a sense of teamwork that is essential in long-term success. Community relations is one important aspects or functions of public relations. Most scholars roundly define community relations as a public relations function; an organisation's planned, active and sustained participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the organisation and the community.

According to Adekunle (2017), community relations is the collaboration between a company or an organisation and people in the area of its operations. The organisation and people of the host community should maintain a relationship which is peaceful and based on good neighbourliness. Wilcox et al (2015) agree there are usually a sense of mutual dependence between the publics and organisations. In other words these organisations cannot survive or operate effectively without the understanding and support of members of the communities, while in some cases, communities may find it difficult to survive without the service and co-operation of these organisations. That is to say that the organisation and communities have to cultivate and sustain good relations and understanding between each other.

Wilcox et al (2015) again, stresses that organised groups usually take a lead in good relations cultivation and sustenance. They do this not only by discharging their responsibilities to the publics concerned, but by also getting involved in such publics' activities as cultural and social participation, educational and health development and other such activities which portray the organisations as good neighbours, good friends and relations. Community relations also includes providing information of various kinds about the organisation, maintaining a two-way information flow between the organisation and community leaders and avoiding actions that can make the organisation look bad in the eyes of the community.

According to Ajala (2001) a good community relations policy emphasizes good neighbourliness and an accommodating disposition in the discussion of community needs and problems. Multinational oil companies ought to take their support for the oil producing communities seriously. She appreciates that efforts in

this regard are meant to augment what government is already doing for the communities through various agencies.

The foregoing agrees with the views of Godam and Okon (2021) that, community relations is a public relations sub-set in an organisation's planned, active and sustained participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance the environment to the benefit of both the organisation and its publics. Community relations can also be described as the interaction between an organisation and members of the community in which the organisation operates. To ensure smooth activities during operations, such organisations and people in the communities should maintain a relationship which is peaceful and based on good neighbourliness.

Community Relations Activities/Programmes

According to Ajalla (2001), organisations can become involved in their host communities in any number of ways. Some recommended ways toward increasing community involvement include: taking an active interest in community problems; sponsoring youth activities; participating in local government development programmes; joining business and service groups; purchasing materials and supplies from local companies; encouraging community education and culture; making offices or other facilities available to community organisations; supporting local charity drives; and taking part in civic activities.

Adekunle (2017) discusses a number of specific programmes designed to increase a small business visibility and prestige within a community. For example, the company might volunteer to develop a civic project, like a charity drive or auction. In addition, the small business owner, or another company representative, could give talks before the local chamber of commerce or civic association. The organisation could also invite community groups to tour its plant or offices, or could make its facilities available to such groups for meetings or events. Alternatively, the company could prepare an informational videotape about its products, services, employment policies, and overall mission and make this resource available to the community. Informational brochures and newsletters might also be distributed to civic and government leaders. Another way to improve community relations might be to beautify the organisation's surroundings with a fountain, sculpture, or garden, so that it becomes a local landmark. Whichever types of community relations programmes are used, it is important to keep the media informed about the organisation's activities.

Again, Adekunle (2017) stresses that for a small organisation, community relations should involve more than just an annual contribution to charity. Instead, the small organisation owner should become personally involved in the programmes, and should encourage employees to participate as well. An organisation's employees should try to represent it well in all their interactions – from practicing good manners on the road while driving an organisation's vehicles to treating customers and even visiting salespeople with courtesy. In order to motivate employees to be good representatives of the organisation, a small organisation owner should take whatever steps are needed to boost morale. These might include maintaining an open-door policy, setting up a complaint box, or recognizing employees who are helping the community.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Basically, corporate social responsibility means that an organisation's business model should be socially responsible and environmentally sustainable. By socially responsible, it means that the company's activities should benefit the society and by environmentally sustainable it means that the activities of the company should not harm the environment. John (2001) sees corporate social responsibility (CSR) as 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 that of the local community and society at large.

Corporate social responsibility is also referred to as corporate citizenship, social responsibility, responsible business and sometimes as social opportunity. Ajala, (2001) states that corporate social responsibility is all about, banking on the goodwill of the society and sees it as being responsive or sensitive to the problems, yearnings, aspirations, needs, joys and misfortunes of the society. In other words, corporate social responsibility is the concern that business has for the welfare of the society. Corporate social responsibility has a long tradition in social sciences as well as in other fields, especially, economics, philosophy, law and theology. There is no consensus on what exactly the social responsibility of organisations includes (Hasan 2016). Corporate social responsibility has been described as the obligation of organizations to be accountable for their environment and stakeholders that go beyond financial means. Godam and Okon, (2021) argues that the idea of corporate social responsibility is that corporate entities and their hosts are no separate entities but are intangibly interwoven for their benefits. Holmes and Watts (1999) see corporate social responsibility as 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 and of the local community at large.

Indicators and Forms of Conflict.

Conflicts manifest in several forms depending on the nature of its root-cause(s). Some that have occurred in oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta region are usually violent. Conflicts could even result to war. Therefore, organisations that operate improperly planned and sustained community relations programmes stand the risk of imminent conflicts in the waiting. Aggrieved members of the community out of frustration could cause a lot of impediments to the smooth operation of the organisation. It is indispensable therefore, that organisations as a matter of policy provide a platform where representatives of the community, can dialogue with the organisation to avert conflicts. Godam (2014) agrees that sabotage is a form of manifestation of conflicts. Sabotage activities according to him include; digging up, puncturing and setting ablaze of pipelines, barricading company premises and access routes to production sites, and hijacking of company vehicles and staff are forms which communities manifest conflicts..

Amodu (2012) concurs that the most notorious form of manifestation of the conflict has been that of protest demonstration by the oil-bearing communities. This is usually followed by grave counter actions from Nigerian state security agents. The Umuechem disaster of November 1, 1990, is a typical example in protest demonstration. The protesters of Umuechem in Rivers State demanded that Shell Petroleum Development Company should provide the community with electricity, pipe-borne water, hospital, secondary school, scholarship for their children and employment for the people. SPDC however, invited Mobile Police Squad to halt the protest. The police squad, acting like an invading army, sacked the whole community, leaving many dead. It is therefore, imperative for every organisation to apply proactive measures to issues relating to host communities. This is because in the event of any breakdown of law and order, the organisation may not only lose man-hours but may also lose human lives and reputation too. Bringing the aggrieved parties to dialoguing would definitely cost less than the replacement of damaged company equipment or settlement of bereaved families over lost lives in the event of any crises.

Empirical Review

An empirical study related to this study is reviewed in this sub-head.

Amodu, (2012), in his study entitled “Relations between multinationals and host communities in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region: A stakeholder perspective” drew the population of his study from the indigenes of Eruemukohwarien in Edo State, Tisun and Kolokolo in Delta State and Omoku and Obrikom in Rivers State. The researcher selected Shell (SPDC) Agip and Chevron because of the scale of their operations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which, in turn, places some degree of expectation on them in terms of social responsibility. This study set out to examine the behaviour of Shell, Agip and Chevron by taking into consideration the nature of their relationships with their host communities.

The objectives of the study were to examine the community relations programmes of the selected organisations in the selected host communities; ascertain the level of commitment of the selected organisations to their community relations programmes and determine the communication channels used by the selected organisations in their community relations programmes.

The sample size of the study was 595, consisting 182 respondents from Eruemukohwarien 36, 22 from Tisun, 36 from Kolokolo, 283 from Omoku and 72 from Obrikom communities. The respondents were randomly selected.

The researcher used survey design for the study. Instrument used was the questionnaire. The findings showed that in assessing strategies for peaceful coexistence with the host communities and multinational’s corporate social responsibilities, Agip was perceived to have contributed the highest score of 51.2% to community development. In the respondents’ perception of multinational oil companies’ positive influence on their communities, Agip scored 35.1% was also perceived to have the greatest influence on its host communities. Again, respondents were asked to state their views concerning oil companies fulfillment of promises, once more, Agip maintained its lead among the three companies. Respondents perceived that Agip fulfilled its promises by a score of 54.2%. This result shows that the cordial approach adopted by Agip in its community relations programmes is responsible for the wide range of success recorded by the organisation.

According to respondents, Agip is ever ready to negotiate with aggrieved parties as long as they are part of its operational areas. It is also observed that the organisation’s readiness to negotiate would have been in futility if the promises were not fulfilled. According to the results, Chevron Nig. Ltd. was perceived as the least committed organisation followed by Shell Petroleum Development Company Limited (SPDC). The empirical study by Amodu (2012) is related to the

present study. First, the study is on community relations. Second, the study applied the survey design and the questionnaire and interview were the research instruments used. Third, the reviewed study had similar objectives to the present study which borders on identifying the community relations programmes/activities of the companies or organisations, the channels of communication used by the companies to reach the host communities, the level of commitment to the execution of the programmes by the companies and the level of involvement/acceptance of the programmes by the host communities.

Methodology

The study adopted survey as its design. The population of the study was 48,890 which account for the projected population of the entire inhabitants of Agbonchia-Elleme according to the 2006 census. The sample size of the study was 370 based on Philip Meyer's population sampling procedure at 95% confidence level. The instruments used were the questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire used contained section A with 5 items meant to capture demographics of respondents while section B contained 27 items designed using 5-point Likert scale format. The questionnaire was distributed using systematic random sampling technique based on a skip interval of 3 on inhabitants in selected areas of Agbonchia Community. The final samples used stood at 318 out of 341 samples retrieved as 23 samples suffered various forms of casualties. The data collected from the field in section A of the instrument were presented in simple percentages, frequencies and tables; while those collected from section B of the questionnaire were analyzed using the weighted mean score. Using the mean criterion to grade the acceptance of the items on the questionnaire was simple and interesting as any item that scored 3.0 mean and above was accepted while those items that scored 2.9 mean and below were deemed as rejected by the respondents. The interviews conducted on the Head, Community Relations Department of Indorama-Petrochemicals Company Limited were qualitatively analysed.

Table 1: Meyer's Population Sampling Procedure

<u>Population Size</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>
Infinity	384
500,000	384
100,000	383
50,000	381
10,000	370

5,000	357
3,000	341
2,000	322
1,000	278

Source: Stacks and Hockings (1992) *Essentials of communication research*.

Results and Discussions

Table 2: Community Relations Programmes/Projects Sponsored by Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia Community as identified by respondents

Items	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1	Total score	Respondents	Mean x (3.0)	Remarks
Scholarship Awards	128	101	9	50	30	1251	318	4.0	Accepted
Potable Water	0	21	12	98	187	503	318	1.6	Rejected
Road Constructions	235	49	14	0	20	1433	318	4.5	Accepted
Electricity Supply	30	21	4	169	94	678	318	2.1	Rejected
Payment of Royalties	209	82	27	0	0	1454	318	4.6	Accepted
Skills Acquisition	85	105	24	74	40	1105	318	3.5	Accepted
Employment of Indigenes	37	69	34	69	82	862	318	2.7	Rejected
Arts and Culture promo	35	98	69	82	34	972	318	3.1	Accepted
Free Medicals Programmes	175	86	10	17	30	1313	318	4.1	Accepted
Educational Facilities	30	61	25	97	105	768	318	2.4	Rejected
Award of Contracts to Indigenes	65	61	38	74	80	911	318	2.9	Rejected

Source: Field Survey. Average Weighted Mean Score = 3.2

The data presented in Table 2 depicts the community relations programmes initiated by Indorama-Petrochemicals Company Limited in Agbonchia-Elleme Community. Out of the eleven items (1-11) put forward for responses, six items were accepted with an average weighted mean of 3.2. The responses from the community people infer that the community relations programmes initiated by Indorama-PCL were familiar to their host community.

Table 3: Indorama-PCL'S Commitment to Community Relations Activities in Agbonchia community

Items	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1	Total score	Respondents	Mean X	Remarks
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Indorama-PCL Consults regularly with Agbonchia community before embarking on projects/programmes	85	78	44	68	43	1048	318	3.3	Accepted
The quality of projects/programmes executed in Agbonchia community is always high.	0	90	6	86	136	686	318	2.2	Rejected
Indorama-PCL does not complete their projects/programmes as scheduled	19	41	13	113	132	656	318	2.1	Rejected
Indorama-PCL has fulfilled its part of the MOU signed with the Agbonchia community	0	29	147	75	67	774	318	2.4	Rejected

Source: Field Survey. Average Weighted Mean Score = 2.5

The data presented in Table 3 depicts the commitment of Indorama-PCL to its community relations programmes in Agbonchia-Elemente Community. Out of the four items (1-4) put forward for responses, only one item was accepted with an average weighted mean of 2.5. The responses from the community people infer that the Indorama is not committed to the implementation of its community relations activities in Agbonchia-Elemente Community.

Table 4. Communication channels used by Indorama-PCL in its community relations programmes/projects in Agbonchia community

Items	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Score	Respondents	Mean X	Remarks
We are satisfied with The Paramount Ruler as our official channel of communication with Indorama-PCL	28	40	24	103	123	701	318	2.2	Rejected
The Project/Programmes Advisory Committee (sub-committee of CDC) is the proper medium to communicate with Indorama-PCL	93	132	36	42	15	1200	318	3.8	Accepted

The use of Youth and Women Associations by Indorama-PCL as a communication channel is very ok with us.	30	25	48	107	108	716	318	2.3	Rejected
The local Government Council is also an appropriate channel to communicate our demands to Indorama-PCL	0	21	42	121	134	586	318	1.8	Rejected

Source: Field Survey. Average Weighted Mean Score = 2.5

Data presented in **Table 4** depicts the Communication Channels used by Indorama/EPCL in the implementation of its community relations programmes in Agbonchia-Elemente Community. Out of the four items (1-4) put forward for responses, only one item was accepted with an average weighted mean of 2.5. The responses from the community people infer that the communication channels used by Indorama/EPCL in the implementation of its community relations activities in Agbonchia-Elemente Community are not effective.

Table 5: Assessment of Respondents' Gratification of Indorama-PCL's Community Relations Programmes/Projects in Agbonchia-Elemente Community

Items	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1	Total score	Respondents	Mean X	Remarks
Agbonchia community is happy with Indorama-PCL's programmes/projects	77	83	32	59	67	998	318	3.1	Accepted
Indorama-PCL's projects/programmes has solved our problems to a great extent	63	126	18	80	31	1064	318	3.3	Accepted
Indorama-PCL's relationship with Agbonchia community is cordial	63	97	16	78	64	1021	318	3.2	Accepted

Source: Field Survey. Average Weighted Mean Score = 3.2

Data presented in **Table 5** depicts the level of acceptance of the programmes/projects initiated by Indorama-PCL in the implementation of its community relations programmes in Agbonchia-Elemente Community. All three items (1-3) put forward for responses, were accepted with an average weighted mean of 3.2. The responses from the community people infer that the people are

happy with the quality of programmes initiated by Indorama/EPCL in the implementation of its community relations activities in Agbonchia-Eleme Community.

Discussion of Findings.

Research Question 1: What are the community relations activities/projects embarked upon by Indorama/EPCL in Agbonchia community?

To answer this question, the management of Indorama-PCL had stated unequivocally in an interview with the researcher that it had carried out not less than eleven community relations activities/programmes in accordance to the bilateral agreement reached with stakeholders of Agbonchia-Eleme Community contained in a memorandum of understanding on assumption of the production facility.

Data available from Table 2 depict that out of eleven items put forward for assessment by respondents under research question one, six items were accepted as either functional or on-going projects/programmes sponsored by Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia community. Five items' were rejected based on respondents' unawareness of such projects due to poor publicity within the community or for reasons of seemingly nonexistence of such projects in the community. Therefore, Indorama-PCL to a good extent, based on a weighted mean score of 3.2, have carried out an encouraging performance in the area of provision of social amenities to the Agbonchia community though there is still room for the company to do more in this regard

The outcome concurs with the views of Ajala (2001) which posits that, how an organisation is perceived depends on the genuine assessment of its publics. To answer research question 1, data available show that respondents recognize a good portion of the community relations activities/programmes put forward by Indorama-PCL and therefore, affirm that the company actually carries out some developmental programmes/projects in the community.

Research Question 2: What is the level of Commitment of Indorama-PCL to its Community Relations Activities/Programmes in Agbonchia Community?

Indorama-PCL on its part had stated in an interview with the researcher that it was very committed to the implementation of its community relations activities/programmes in Agbonchia-Eleme community but data available in **Table: 3** does not agree with Indorama-PCL that it is totally committed to the implementation of its community relations activities in the community. Contrary

to its claims the data from field survey depict a paltry 2.5 average weighted mean score. This goes to show that organisations should not take their host communities for granted because, whatever, the organisation does is noted by the community. This scenario agrees with Ajala (2001) that corporate organisations should always bear in mind that the essence of public relations in corporate organisations is to create a favourable disposition in the minds of the publics of the organisation in such a way that the organisation is seen as a corporate friend, neighbour or companion by their publics. If for any reason the publics of an organisation does not see the organisation as a corporate friend due to a lack of mutual relationship; then the organisation's image in the eyes of the publics will not be good. This situation will in the long run dent the image and reputation of the organisation.

To answer the research question, data available showed a 2.5 average mean score depicting that the organisation has not shown enough commitment to the implementation of their community relations programmes in the community. What is commitment in this context? A company can be said to be committed if it honours all agreements reached with stakeholders regarding developmental issues in the community. It can also be committed if it completes its scheduled programmes/projects in record time. A company can also be seen to be committed when it cares about the general welfare of the host community. A company cannot be seen to be committed when it is busy conniving with a few community leaders to shortchange the larger community members.

Research Question 3: How Effective are the Communication Channels used by Indorama-PCL in the Implementation of its Community Relations Activities/Programmes in Agbonchia-Eleme Community.

To this effect, Indorama-PCL had clearly outlined the four communication channels it uses in the implementation of its community relations activities/programmes in Agbonchia-Eleme community and according to them, the four channels such as Traditional Ruler, Youth and Women Associations, Project/Programme Advisory Committee and the Local Government Area Council very effective in the process. However, data available in Table 4 does not agree with the claims of the company as the field survey states an average weighted mean score of 2.5. This is because out of the four items put forward only the Project/Programme Advisory Committee was accepted while the remaining three were rejected. The implication is that only the project/programme advisory committee was seen as a credible source of communication between the community and the company.

The foregoing results depicted the desire of the people to have a kind of people oriented communication with Indorama-PCL. This explains the acceptance of the “project advisory committee”, a sub-set of the community development committee of the community as their preferred channel of communication and rejection of the other three items. It may be that the people preferred to have a representation that they believe are closer to the realities on ground in terms of developmental challenges of the community and not an elitist oriented representation that may eventually abandon the community to their fate. To answer research question 3, it can be unequivocally stated that the preferred communication channels used by Indorama-PCL in the implementation of its community relations channels were not effective. This is because only one item out of four items presented was accepted by the people.

Research Question 4: What is the level of Acceptance of the Community Relations Activities/Programmes of Indorama-PCL by the Agbonchia Community?

Indorama-PCL had clearly stated in an interview that the Agbonchia community was very pleased with the level of implementation of its community relations activities/programmes in the community. Data presented in **Table 5** agrees with the company’s claim that the community was happy with it and that the level of acceptance of its programmes/projects among the community populace was high. To this effect, all three items put forward for responses, were accepted with an average weighted mean of 3.2. This result infers that the people are indeed gratified with the quality of programmes initiated by Indorama-PCL in the implementation of its community relations activities in the community.

It is clear that the three items under research question 4 were accepted by respondents’ as their individual mean score was above 3 points each inferring that Indorama-PCL had an acceptable mutual relationship with the people of Agbonchia community. This assessment by the Agbonchia community is in contrast to the generalized view of Daukoru, when he made an allegation that “The companies give what they like to give, and not always what is relevant, to the people” (Eppah, 1998) portraying a dictatorial scenario. Thus this result has vindicated Indorama/EPCL from such companies that do not carry along their host communities from the planning to implementation stages of their community relations activities/programmes.

To answer research question 4, it can be deduced from above statistics and dialogue that the level of acceptance of the community relations

activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia-Elemo community is very high among the people of the community.

Conclusion

This study assessed the community relations activities/programmes of Indorama-PCL in its host, Agbonchia-Elemo community. Findings indicate that the company initiated 11 community relations activities/programmes though only six was overtly recognized by respondents. The other five were adjudged to be either inconspicuous or nonexistent. Data available also showed that the organisation was not committed to its community relations activities/programmes. The study also showed that the organisation used all four communication channels claimed by their managements in the implementation of their public relations strategies however, only one was adjudged as effective by respondents. Data available also showed that the community relations activities/programmes initiated by Indorama-PCL in Agbonchia-Elemo were overwhelmingly accepted by their host community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Indorama-PCL should establish a community relations project/programme assessment unit consisting of representatives from the community and the company to monitor and evaluate the quantity and quality of jobs and services done in the host community.
2. Indorama-PCL should step up employment and award of contracts to indigenes of Agbonchia community according to the mutual agreement reached with the community at the take-over of the facility in 2006 to strengthen mutuality. This is also an index of commitment on the part of the company.
3. In addition to the community development committee, Indorama-PCL should hold periodic town hall meetings with major stakeholders in the community to share ideas on the overall development of the host community and should not use the paramount ruler as the premium channel since the people do not support it.
4. All new community relations projects/programmes by the company should be given wide publicity to ensure that the people know the sponsor of such project/programme in the community since there are other intervention agencies carrying out developmental projects in the community.

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