



## **Corporate Social Responsibility: Case Study of Community Expectations and the Administrative Systems, Niger Delta**

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*Poor community-company relations in the Niger Delta have drawn attention to the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the region. Since the 1960s, transnational oil corporations operating in the Niger Delta have adopted various CSR strategies, yet community-company relations remain adversarial. This article examines community expectations of CSR and the influence of the traditional, political, and administrative systems on community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta region. An overview of CSR, oil industry CSR practices in the Niger Delta, and the methodology used is presented. The findings show that community expectations were framed through the lens of underdevelopment and its implications for the social and economic wellbeing of the indigenes. The implications of the traditional, political, and administrative systems and the network of organizations for CSR in the Niger Delta are discussed. Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Community Expectations Community-company Relations, Sustainable Development, Case Study, Niger Delta*

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Community expectations of responsible corporate behavior often form the basis for community attitude toward business corporations (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). In the Niger Delta, poor community-company relations correlates to several factors including the lack of consideration for the views of the communities and the domination of the oil industry by the government and the transnational oil corporations (Frynas, 2005; Frynas & Mellahi, 2003; Idemudia & Ite, 2006; Ite, 2004). A common occurrence in such politically constructed systems of disparities is that frustration ultimately erupts into violence. The displeased groups revolt against the existing order when they become conscious that the dominant actors systematically thwart their attempts to overcome their plight (Reimer, 2004; Wai, 1978). In contrast, when people claim ownership of an object or process, by virtue of stewardship or having an influence in the process, they protect the object or process.

The increasing global demand for fossil fuel energy highlights the strategic significance of the Niger Delta (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2004). Instability in the Niger Delta has had an impact on the price of crude oil in the international market (Ikelegbe, 2005, 2006; Watts, 2004). The region generates about 5% of crude oil supplies to the United States and exports substantial amounts of crude oil to China, India and other countries (Watts, 2004). According to Watts, the US Congressional International Relations Sub-Committee on Africa acknowledged the significance of Nigerian oil, taking particular note of its strategic value, high quality, and the low cost of its reserves.

The escalation of violence in the Niger Delta has imposed substantial costs on the Nigerian government, the oil corporations and the communities (Congressional Research

Service [CRS], 2012; CSIS, 2004; Idemudia, 2007a; Omeje, 2006). In 2005, Chevron-Texaco lost roughly \$500 million and in 2006, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria lost \$6.8 million per day due to widespread violence in the Niger Delta (Amnesty International, 2005; Watts, 2007). Continuing hostility toward the oil companies indicates that past CSR practices in the Niger Delta left gaps that require further examination of community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta (Idemudia & Ite, 2006; Ite, 2004; Livesey, 2001).

As businesses continue to expand beyond national borders, transnational companies located in developing countries will increasingly be confronted with issues related to sustainable development. Corporations that align business interests with community interests in terms of CSR objectives can minimize the risks and liabilities associated with operating in culturally different regions from their home countries (Bertels & Vredenburg, 2004; Grossman, 2005; Lépineux, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Thompson, 2005). An understanding of local community expectations will aid companies operating in rural communities to integrate community expectations into CSR strategies, and align company and community interests in developing countries.

This article examines community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta in the context of the traditional, political, and administrative systems, drawing from primary research conducted in the region. The goal is to provide an interpretive framework through which a better understanding of the expectations and demands of the various interests groups in the region can be attained. The following sections include a summary of key concepts in the CSR literature and a review of CSR practices in the Niger Delta. Following that is a description of the data collection and analysis procedures. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings and the implications of the administrative systems and the local organizations on community expectations of CSR.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Underlying the CSR debate are two theoretical positions framed around maximizing business objectives or promoting the social and economic wellbeing of society. Proponents of the primacy of business concepts posit that shareholder interest supersedes the interest of all other stakeholders in pursuing business objectives (Friedman, 1970). Adolp Berle, David Silverstein and Milton Friedman support this view (Grossman, 2005). Opponents emphasize promoting human wellbeing through responsible corporate social policies. Proponents suggest a multi-stakeholder approach that incorporates the interests of diverse groups of stakeholders (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005; Newell, 2005). From the multi-stakeholder perspective, stakeholders include customers, investors, interest groups, communities, employees, suppliers, and government regulators. Social welfare theorist Menick Dodd pioneered this concept (Grossman, 2005; Thompson, 2005; Valor, 2005).

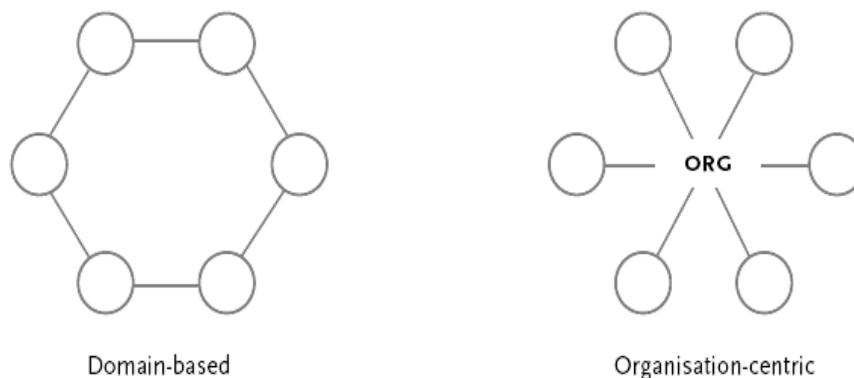
According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, CSR encompasses the activities undertaken by corporations to facilitate economic development (Anderson & Bieniaszewska, 2005). Other authors have used CSR as a broad term encompassing corporate citizenship, corporate accountability, philanthropy, increasing shareholder value, or corporate participation in sustainable development (Amba-Rao, 1993; Frynas, 2005; Valor, 2005). Though the literature addresses CSR

from different perspectives, this article adopts the approach grounded in the notion that business corporations are not only responsible to shareholders but also to all those who might benefit or be harmed by the activities of an organisation (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Carroll (1979) suggested a conceptual framework for categorizing CSR that includes four levels of company obligations: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary. The first level outlined shareholder obligations and the use of resources to improve the organization's profitability. The second level described the legal and regulatory obligations to which organizations must comply. The third level includes a description of the ethical obligations that extend beyond compliance with the law. The fourth level confers discretionary rights on corporations to do the utmost to support social goals. According to Carroll's model, CSR strategies should include three key elements: (a) a basic definition of CSR; (b) evidence of an understanding of the subject for which a social responsibility exists; and (c) a specific philosophy of responsiveness to the subject. Critics argue that Carroll's concept is far too limited for CSR practice in rural communities (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007).

Wood (1991) advanced Carroll's model, adding the dimensions of socially responsible behavior, responsiveness, and performance outcomes to CSR. Wood's model linked CSR to the broader context of stakeholders and social, environmental and managerial concerns (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007). A useful theoretical framework for integrating community expectations into CSR strategies is Bertels and Vredenburg's (2004) domain-based model. The domain-based stakeholder model emphasizes the need for shared responsibility among stakeholders and provides tools that could help organizations identify problems at the level of the domain. The domain-based approach shifts attention from the organization as the focal point for developing strategic plans to a collaborative system in which all critical stakeholders can participate (see also Luetkenhorst, 2004; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). Figure 1 shows a comparison of the domain-based model with the organization-centered model of company-stakeholder relations.

Figure 1. Domain-based and organisation-centric stakeholder collaboration<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: "Broadening the notion of governance from the organization to the domain: A study of municipal water systems in Canada," by S. Bertels & H. Vredenburg, 2004, *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 15, p. 37. Copyright 2007 by *Greenleaf Publishing*. Reprinted with permission.

Grossman (2005) argued that current theoretical frameworks do not adequately address the interests of all critical stakeholders, which includes businesses, governments, and communities. Critics also argue that notions developed solely from research on companies in developing countries cannot produce a sustainable global framework for CSR (Frynas, 2006; Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005; Newell, 2005). For example, Lertzman and Vredenburg (2005) argued that CSR researchers have not paid adequate attention to indigenous people and their relationship with resource industries in the context of sustainable development. Lertzman and Vredenburg maintained that resource extraction in land occupied by indigenous people should conform to the people's desires and needs, not at the expense of their cultures. Similarly, Newell (2005) noted that the case studies used to test CSR ideas hardly reflect the conditions in developing countries. Frynas (2005) argued that the failure to integrate CSR into the larger developmental needs of local communities is the reason CSR strategies have been unsuccessful in developing countries (see also Idemudia, 2007b).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility in the Niger Delta**

CSR initiatives in the Niger Delta go back to the 1960s and 1970s, when the first wave of transnational oil corporations started oil exploration and production in the region. The Royal/Dutch Shell company, operating under the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, began commercial production of oil in the Niger Delta in 1958 (Ukeje, 2004). The company extracts more than half of Nigeria's crude oil (Watts, 2007). SPDC, Exxon-Mobil, Chevron-Texaco, Agip, and Elf operate over 5,284 oil wells and thousands of miles of pipelines traversing the entire Niger Delta region (Ghazvinian, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2006; Ite, 2004; Watts, 2007). The industry expanded in the 1990s, attracting new entrants such as the Statoil/BP Alliance, Total Nigeria, Amoco, Conoco, and Abacon. SPDC, the oldest oil company in the region, started operations in the 1930s; Chevron, Texaco Overseas, Elf and Philip came later in the 1960s; and Pan Ocean Oil and Agip arrived in the 1970s (Evuleocha, 2005; Idemudia & Ite, 2006).

In the past half of a century, SPDC and other oil companies have adopted various CSR strategies. Some of the strategies adopted include philanthropic projects and scholarship awards, cash payments, agricultural projects, schools, healthcare centers, and roads. Several problems suggest that these measures were inadequate over the long term.

First, the approach to CSR adopted by SPDC and other oil companies seem to be predicated on the primacy of business objectives and focused on fulfilling only the most minimal ethical obligations. Underlying this approach is the assumption that the economic goals of business are incompatible with the developmental aspirations of the local communities. Based on this premise, CSR practices seldom varied from legal compliance and providing the "moral minimum" (DesJardins, 2006, p. 211). Reliance on this narrowly defined business focus prevented the oil companies from taking proactive steps in designing and implementing CSR programs. In sum, despite millions of dollars invested in community help projects, CSR practices in the Niger Delta were perceived by observers and the communities as cosmetic attempts to act in a socially responsible manner or actions taken only to protect the companies' reputations (Ite, 2004).

Second, CSR projects were not designed to address urgent economic, environmental and social problems. For example, SPDC's gifts of schools and healthcare

facilities were presented as one-time offers instead of as sustainable projects (Ite, 2004). The continuation of gas flaring, despite calls for reduction, is another example (see Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006). Though the oil companies have attributed reasons for the slow progress to the costs of implementing alternative systems, continued gas flaring suggests a lack of urgency concerning a serious environmental problem (The Economist, 2008; Shell Petroleum Development Company [SPDC], 2005). Ad hoc implementation of CSR projects and the failure of the Nigerian government to respond to the needs of the region left the burden of dealing with the negative consequences of oil extraction on the communities (Evuleocha, 2005; Idemudia & Ite, 2006).

Third, the integration of community development and self-help projects in CSR strategy in the Niger Delta did not occur until the mid-1990s. The evidence suggests that early attempts at community help projects and infrastructure development were reactive (Ite, 2004). The oil companies integrated CSR into corporate strategies only when hostility against the companies intensified.

Fourth, the lack of a coordinated strategic approach to the implementation of CSR produced uneven results that had little impact on the people of the Niger Delta (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The millions of dollars spent on scholarships, schools and agricultural extension projects have had no impact on poverty alleviation or the socio-economic development of the region. The absence of a comprehensive emergency response plan to address oil spills in the region illustrates this point. The oil companies' response to such environmental disasters rarely extends beyond the villages in the vicinity to communities downstream where farmlands and rivers have been equally ruined. The oil companies have also made little effort to extend CSR projects to the poorest and most ecologically devastated communities in the region (Evuleocha, 2005).

CSR practice in the oil industry has evolved, and for the most part, has integrated into a corporate strategy (Idemudia, 2007a; Idemudia & Ite, 2006; SPDC, 2004, 2005). The change in strategy is evident in SPDC's shift in CSR policy from community development to sustainable community development (SCD; SPDC, 2004). SCD was adopted as a new strategy to improve company-community relations in the Niger Delta (SPDC, 2004, 2005). SPDC's new approach emphasized strategic partnerships with the government, international development agencies, and the communities. To demonstrate commitment to SCD, SPDC in partnership with NNPC allocates large sums of money annually to build roads, water, healthcare, education and other programs. Chevron-Texaco, Exxon-Mobil and other oil companies have embraced the use of global memorandum of understanding (GMOUs) to provide development projects in return for a peaceful and secure operating environment (Amnesty International, 2005).

Few studies have examined community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta in the context of the cultural, political and administrative systems. Previous research has concentrated on conflict, community-company relations, and environmental responsibility (Evuleocha, 2005; Eweje, 2006; Idemudia, 2007a; Ugochukwu & Ertel, 2008). Idemudia's (2007a) study showed that a majority of community members assigned responsibility for developing the oil-bearing communities to the oil companies. The reasons for attribution of responsibility include corporate obligation to the communities as hosts and the loss of livelihood due to the impact of oil extraction.

This study goes beyond identification of community expectations of CSR. It provides insights about the administrative systems and shows how the political dynamics

influenced the expectations of the various communities and interest groups in the Niger Delta. The insights revealed in this study might be useful for the oil companies when balancing the interests of all key stakeholders in the region, and may allow for better harmonization of CSR programs (Garvey & Newell, 2005; Grossman, 2005; Thompson, 2005).

### **Researcher Role**

Empirical studies about the Niger Delta are only beginning to emerge. The emerging literature is often framed through the worldview of outsiders who may not grasp the fundamental experience of living in the Niger Delta region. Studies aimed at illuminating the indigenous experience and perspective require more than cursory familiarity with the population. The need to unveil an insider view and my familiarity with the terrain led to this research. The Niger Delta terrain presented serious accessibility problems, but my familiarity with the language, settings, and routines of the people facilitated access and the interviews. The region covers approximately 25,900 square kilometers (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2006). I was able to navigate the terrain with relative ease and accessed remote locations that were only accessible by boat. I played the roles of interviewer, observer, participant and translator (Germain, 1993; Kapborg & Berterö, 2002).

Familiarity with the environment reinforced the social bond between the respondents and me. Such bonding facilitated an understanding of the contexts and expectations of the respondents. Bonding with the respondents also allowed me to immerse myself in the participants' natural world and everyday experiences, both physically and psychologically (Germain, 1993; Hoyt & Bhati, 2007). The study covered the Niger Delta States of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers, as indicated in Figure 2.

The gaps in CSR practice and the dearth of empirical evidence necessitated further examination of the expectations of CSR and the underlying cultural and political factors that influence community expectations. This study provides empirical evidence that supports integration of community expectations and offers insights for a global framework for CSR. The insights gained from the current study were from the most affected in the heart of the Niger Delta.

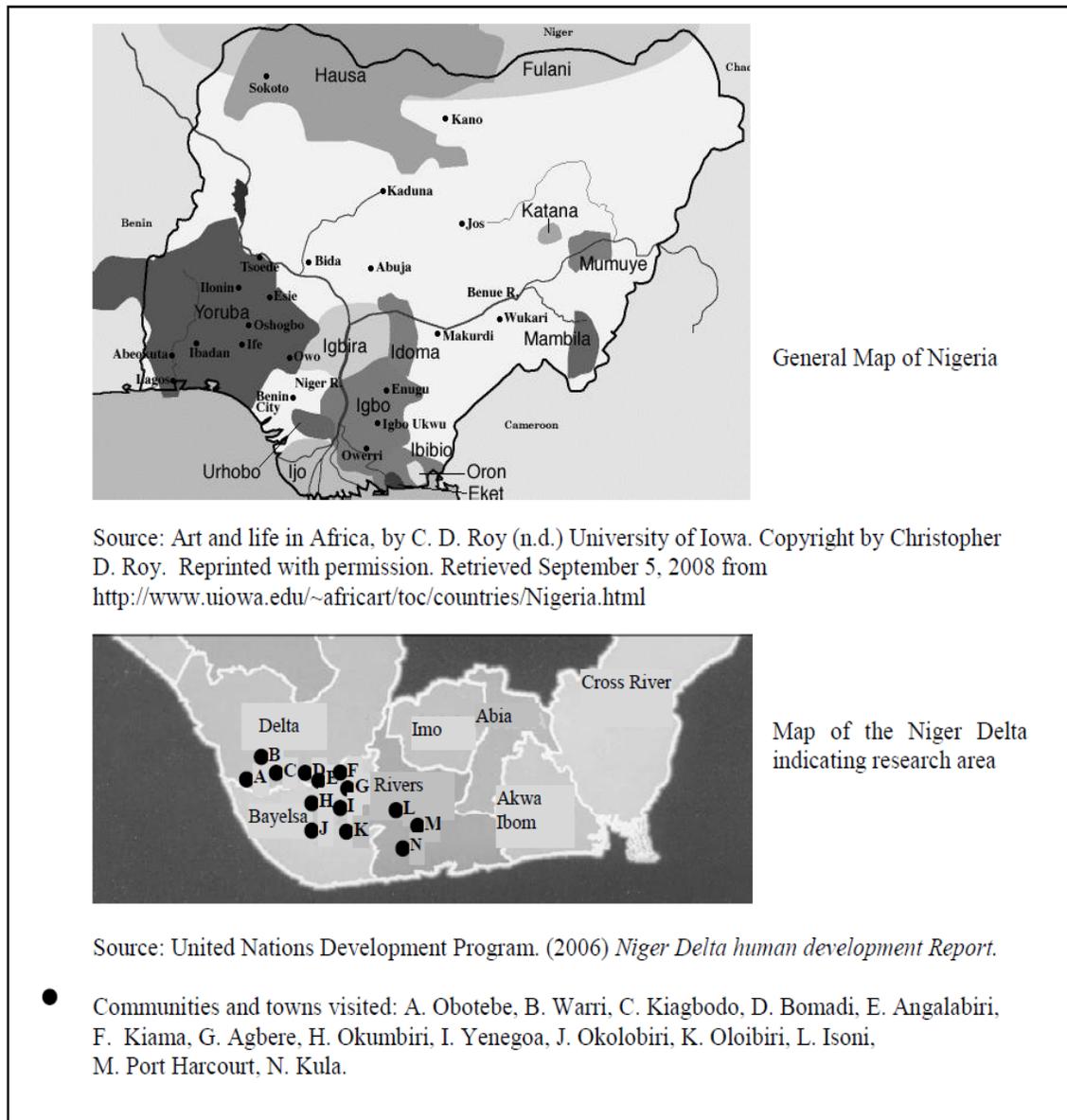
### **Method**

A case study method was used to gain a deeper understanding of the community members' expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta. According to Hentz (2007), a case study can be used to connect a phenomenon to life or social contexts. The approach used in this study focused on getting close, firsthand accounts of the expectations of people living in the Niger Delta. The central question that guided this study was: What societal factors influenced community members' expectations of corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta region? The research question was intended to add depth and unveil the broad range of factors that shaped community members' expectations.

A purposive sample of 20 ( $n=20$ ) participants representing the demographic and ethnic composition of the Niger Delta communities were selected to participate in the study conducted. Neuman (2003) noted that purposive sampling is used to identify

primary participants in a study from a special population or groups of people who are difficult to access. The sample selection was informed by the need to (a) elicit information relevant to the purpose of the study and (b) interview participants who represent the age (20 to 56 and above), gender and ethnic diversity of the region. The sample also included traditional rulers, chiefs, and representatives of the pan-Niger Delta and youth organizations. Figure 2 shows the area covered during the field visit.

Figure 2. Research Area



## **Interview Process**

The interviews were conducted in the Niger Delta region where gatekeepers identified participants in advance. Interviews began with the traditional greetings and foundational questions about the wellbeing of the respondents and their families. The purpose and the nature of the study were clarified for each respondent. A written consent was administered prior to each interview. Sensitivity to the emotional issues involved in political and economic marginalization of the indigenes was demonstrated and respect shown for respondents' perspectives. The financial costs arising from participation in the research were alleviated by paying for phone calls and providing transportation and lunch. Such gestures enhanced the quality of rapport with participants. Approval was secured from the Institutional Review Board of my university prior to the field visit.

## **Ethical Issues**

The respondents were protected by eliminating any identifying information. Strict confidentiality of interviews tapes and transcripts were maintained during and after the interviews. I translated a few interviews that were conducted in both English and Ijaw. (Ijaw is the language of the largest ethnic group in the Niger Delta with an estimated population of 10 million people). The accuracy and authenticity of respondents expressions were maintained by preserving the meanings conveyed (Kapborg & Berterö, 2002). To control for errors and researcher bias, respondents were given the opportunity to review the tapes after the interviews for confirmation of content and accuracy (Creswell, 2002; Morse, 2006; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002).

## **Research Design**

The designed was constructed based on the view that case studies allow flexible data collection for illuminating a phenomenon within its contextual backdrop (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hentz, 2007). The research design incorporated the following elements for conducting qualitative research: planning the research; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data; and theoretical integration and reporting of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hentz, 2007; Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006; Wolf, 2007; Yin, 2003). To examine the expectations of the Niger Delta communities and gain useful insights for CSR policies, community expectation was operationalized through two proxy indicators of the region's political and administrative systems:

1. The community administrative system (the traditional administrative and power structure, leadership, roles played and patterns of influence).
2. The pan-Niger Delta and pan-community organizations (the basic organizing structure, the principal players, roles played and patterns of influence).

## Data Collection

Data were collected in person at suitable locations through a blend of semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and document review. Gatekeepers identified participants in advance and scheduled the interviews to avoid scheduling conflicts. Semi-structured interview questions elicited data related to respondents' quality of life or standard of living; the major problems facing the communities; the relationship between the communities and the transnational oil corporations; and the expectations and perceptions of the communities about CSR. The interview questions were refined as the interviews progressed. Follow-up questions were asked to probe into related areas such as the contributions of the communities to successful implementation of CSR programs. All interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim and reviewed by participants.

Interview data were triangulated with publications by SPDC, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and records of other corporate bodies. Procedures such as member checking, audit trail, and triangulation of respondents' accounts with government and corporate records contributed to the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Meeto & Temple, 2003; Morse et al., 2002). These procedures allowed for flexibility to capture the cultural dynamics and values of the respondents, and ensured scientific rigor. Non-participant observation entailed visits to 14 towns and villages indicated in Figure 2.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed following the principles of content and textual analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Germain, 1993; Morse, 2008; Neuman, 2003; Wolf, 2007). The interpretative framework adopted was built on the notion that social phenomena are investigated and interpreted in qualitative inquiry in an attempt to make sense of the meanings people attach to a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The textual elements extracted from the respondents' answers were linked into initial categories of meaning, from which the broader themes emerged.

The themes identified at the micro-level were grouped based on explicit or implicit meanings of the words or expressions used by the respondents. The process involved reviewing each interview transcript for content affirming expectations or signifying gaps in CSR practices. To achieve the second objective of the study, case profiles of the administrative systems in the communities and the organizations in the region were developed for the major representative groups. Thorne, Reimer Kirkham, and O'Flynn-Magee (2004) noted that conceptualization derived from cases, based on available evidence, provides a credible interpretative framework to understand a phenomenon.

In the next sections, after a brief description of the theme development process, the overarching themes that captured the range of community expectations are presented. After, a case profile of the administrative system in the communities and the organizations in the region follows. The final section presents the implications of the influence of the political and administrative systems, and the network of organizations on community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta and a discussion of the findings.

## Findings

Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted that respondents use language in interviews in ways that conceptualize actions, meaning and direction for the researcher. In the following illustration of the theme development process, respondents' expressions are quoted verbatim, and ellipses points used to indicate where material has been removed to contract the quote; researcher emphases are indicated in italics.

In response to questions about the roles of the oil companies and the problems members of the communities face, a respondent said, "They need to use their dredger and sand fill the land so that we can also have a land above the water level." This statement signified an explicit expression of an expected action related to development. The respondent went on to suggest, "They need to take over schools, hospitals because *people are dying because of bad water and other things.*" The respondent's comments indicate that he expects the oil companies to run the schools in his community. Underlying this overt expectation is a glimpse into the effects of extreme poverty in the communities.

Another example that demonstrates the theme development process is the following comment about the role expected of the oil companies:

They are business men that have come to do business. So they should go back and play the politics they played to rewrite that joint venture; so that they can do their business in peace.

Implicit in this quote is the attribution of power, influence, competence, and effectiveness to business management practices and how these practices should be applied to assist the oil-bearing communities. Another respondent said the following while emphasizing the need to educate the youth and build productive capacity:

I think if you educate the minds, build that capacity, and let them work for themselves, you change the way they live. . . . The economic aspect of the mind must be built and the economic aspect, if built to a particular level, in fact, it will translate to development.

This quote includes themes such as education, capacity building and human development. Through a repeated review of the interview transcripts, rich underlying details relevant to the goals of the study emerged. To focus on themes relevant to the purpose of the study, the range of expectations identified were grouped into four major themes: development, economic empowerment, participation and transparency. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

## Development

A majority of the respondents framed their expectations around corporate responsibility for development. Almost all the respondents expected oil companies to play a significant role in developing the region. Repeatedly, respondents emphasized the need for the oil companies to build infrastructure. For example, a respondent said:

They should be able to provide roads to link the communities, mobility first provide transportation, then aide the local people with some funds to enable them embark on trading.

This quote also indicates that community members expected the oil companies assist the indigenes financially. A general lack of modern infrastructure observed during the field visit reinforced the community member's expectation that the oil companies should be involved in sustainable development. Some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the inequitable distribution of oil wealth which has been used to stimulate human and economic development in other regions of the country. Community members also expected the oil companies to fill the gap created by the failure of the government to develop the Niger Delta.

### **Economic Empowerment**

Most of the respondents indicated that the negative impact of oil exploitation on the environment and decades of neglect have placed them in a relatively weak economic position. Studies show that oil exploitation has had a devastating impact on the environment and the livelihood of the Niger Delta people (see Bougrine, 2006; Douglas, 1998). This means that a majority of the Niger Delta inhabitants can no longer engage in their traditional occupations of fishing and farming; therefore, respondents suggest a government and oil company intervention to stimulate economic activity in the region. A respondent said the following, which attributed the loss of the traditional means of livelihood to the impact of oil exploitation:

*If you have destroyed our fishing, why not teach us modern fishing or provide the fishermen infrastructure that will take them to deep sea fishing. . . . If our farms are polluted why not introduce us to mechanized farming in all the communities.*

The respondent justified his expectation of economic empowerment, but framed his comments rhetorically in an apparent appeal to the oil companies. The quote also indicated the theme of environmental responsibility. Economic indicators of the region support the expectation of external intervention to stimulate economic empowerment. Poverty is pervasive in the Niger Delta. Illiteracy and unemployment are high among the youth in the region and the indigenes are among the poorest in the world. Community members have no access to economic opportunities, clean water and healthcare (Bougrine, 2006; Eweje, 2006; Ukeje, 2004; UNDP, 2006).

### **Participation**

A significant dimension of community expectations was indicated in respondents' desire to participate in making decisions about CSR projects. More than a third of the respondents indicated a desire to have the ability to negotiate with the oil companies, the terms and conditions of operating in their communities, and make decisions about land

allocation. Several respondents expressed a desire to own a stake in the oil corporations. Emphasizing the importance of including the communities as stakeholders in the oil industry, a respondent suggested the following:

*Certain shares in the companies should be given to the host communities to make them part owners of the companies. This will assure the host communities that the oil business is a shared responsibility and allow the communities and the oil companies to work together.*

The respondents who expressed an interest in owning a stake in the oil companies viewed themselves as critical stakeholders in the oil industry and sought active community participation in social policy. Approximately half of the respondents who held this view indicated that the current structure of the oil industry in Nigeria excluded them from participating or making decisions about their communities.

Some of the respondents' perspectives provided context for community member's expectation of CSR and their attitudes toward the oil companies. Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted that context illuminates the circumstances or concerns to which individuals or groups respond. The following comments illustrate context and the emotions the conditions in the Niger Delta aroused:

*When somebody – a group of persons enter our land, we expect our conventions, eh, traditions to be respected. The fact that it is *not respected* is what has caused the rift with the government and their agent, the oil companies. I tell you what; they have to *seek our express permission*. That's how it's supposed to work, and it's *because it is not working* that way, that is *the reason we have this conflict*. Government feels all land belongs to them and even the resources belong to them. *This doesn't sit well with the people*.*

These remarks revealed an expectation of respect for the customs of the communities and reasons for adversarial community-company relations in the region. The respondent's reaction reinforces Lertzman and Vredenburg's (2005) assertion that resource extraction in land occupied by indigenous people should conform to the desires and needs of the people and not at the expense of their cultures. The apparent lack of respect for the customs of the indigenes evoked emotions such as dissatisfaction, frustration, anger, and despair.

### **Transparency**

A noteworthy dimension of community expectation was transparency in community-company engagements. Several respondents described the lack of transparency and honesty in CSR commitments as a major obstacle to peaceful community-company relations. One respondent expressed his feelings about the lack of honesty in community-company relations as follows:

*We discovered that overtime the oil companies have not been sincere to the host communities. They are not very sincere at all. They were not fulfilling their social responsibility. It is only because of the recent restiveness that some oil companies are coming around to perform their social responsibility.*

The quoted response shows that lack of transparency in community-company engagement is a major concern. Other respondents acknowledged that corruption and dishonesty have destructive consequences for both the communities and the oil companies. For example, a respondent indicated that some oil companies pay compensation to those community leaders without the knowledge of other community members. Another respondent noted that community leaders often keep cash payments from the oil companies for themselves and that only the children of the privileged receive scholarships. The scenario described by some of the respondents depicts an atmosphere of greed, surreptitious deals and betrayal of trust. A few respondents acknowledged the influence of politics and corruption in community-company relations, but indicated that corruption among the political and economic elite is hardly a justification to absolve the oil companies of social responsibility.

### **Network of Organizations in the Niger Delta**

Local organizations provided a framework to understand the cultural and political dynamics that drives the expectations of CSR and the demands of the Niger Delta communities. The examination of the network of organizations illuminated the principal players in the communities, the nature of social relationships, and the patterns of influence among the groups. Figure 3 illustrates the network of organizations and the patterns of influence among them.

Three broad organizing units were apparent in the Niger Delta: The traditional political system, pan-Niger Delta or pan-community organizations, and the youth movement, including the militia groups. The next sections present the administrative profiles of these groups.

### **The Traditional Political Structure**

The basic organizing unit was the house or *ware* system and the village that belonged to a larger clan or *Ibe* (Alagoa, 1971). The head of the village, the chief or *Amayanabo*, is assisted by a council of chiefs with representatives from all the houses or *ware* (see also Douglas, 1998). Though the chiefs and elders are treated with reverence, the traditional political system has evolved. In some communities, the village chiefs shared representation with an elected community council. In these communities, the village head and the chiefs were primarily custodians of the traditions and customs, while the community councils ran the affairs of the communities. A typical community council consists of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, publicity secretary and an assistant in each category.

## **The pan-Niger Delta Organizations**

The pan-Niger Delta organizations emerged in the 1990s to amplify the hopes and aspirations of the Niger Delta people, and protect them against perceived political and economic injustice. Organizations such as the Ijaw National Congress (INC), Environmental Rights Action (ERA), the CHIKOKO movement and the various Niger Delta elder's forums rose to champion the cause of the Niger Delta people. As the activities of some of these organizations waned, the INC emerged as the dominant organization.

The INC was formed in 1991 as the representative body of various sectors of the Niger Delta. The organization was established to draw attention to the plight of the people living in the Niger Delta and adopt a coordinated approach to address the problems of the region (Ijaw National Congress [INC], 1996). To discharge its representational responsibilities, the INC is subdivided into national, zonal, clan, and community tiers. The executive organ of the INC consists of members elected from all constituents of the Niger Delta. The national executive council of the INC consists of a president, a vice president, a secretary, a financial secretary, a publicity secretary, a legal advisor and an auditor. The zonal congresses consist of a chairperson, vice chair, secretary, financial and publicity secretary (INC, 1996).

## **The Youth Movement**

In addition to the broad-based pan-Niger Delta organizations, there is a plethora of youth organizations and militia groups representing various constituents at different levels. The youth movement took center stage in the Niger Delta in the 1990s, and their ideas mobilized youth in the region against the government and transnational oil corporations (Douglas, 1998; Ikelegbe, 2005). The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Ikwerre Youths Convention, Urhobo Development Forum (UDF), and Isoko Youth Movement (IYM) typify youth organizations found throughout the region (Douglas, 1998). Each group adopts a different approach in promoting their cause.

Though the pan-Niger Delta organizations play an important political role, the youth movement launched the Niger Delta question into the national and international scene and aroused consciousness in the region. These organizations attract members through mass campaigns and articulating the rights of the indigenes. Prominent among the youth organizations is the IYC. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show a synoptic overview the types of organizations in the Niger Delta.

Since its inception in 1998, the IYC has played a major role in the Niger Delta. The organization has issued several resolutions that assert the rights of the Ijaw people (Tuodolo & Ogoriba, 2002). A resolution adopted by the IYC entitled the Kaiama Declaration (KD) called on the Ijaw people to assert their natural rights and demand ownership and control of their land and resources. The Kaiama Declaration was adopted on December 11, 1998 by Ijo youths under the banner of the IYC. The KD also called for an end to gas flaring, which is a primary source of environmental pollution (Tuodolo & Ogoriba, 2002). Similar to the INC, the basic organizing structure of the IYC and other youth organizations reflect civil democratic values; the executive members are selected through elections. The executive council of the IYC and other youth

organizations consist of a president, a vice president, a general secretary, a financial secretary, a publicity secretary, and a legal advisor.

Under the repressive military regime of General Sani Abacha, frustration in the region intensified leading to the emergence of insurgent youth militia groups. These groups were organized around their leaders whose philosophy is to change the social, political and economic conditions in the region through armed resistance (Ikelegbe, 2005). The various militia groups recruit members through mass mobilization. Others attract volunteers, seduced by a vision of power and freedom. The major militia groups in the region include the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF), and the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), a splinter faction of MEND. Table 3 presents an overview of the major militia groups.

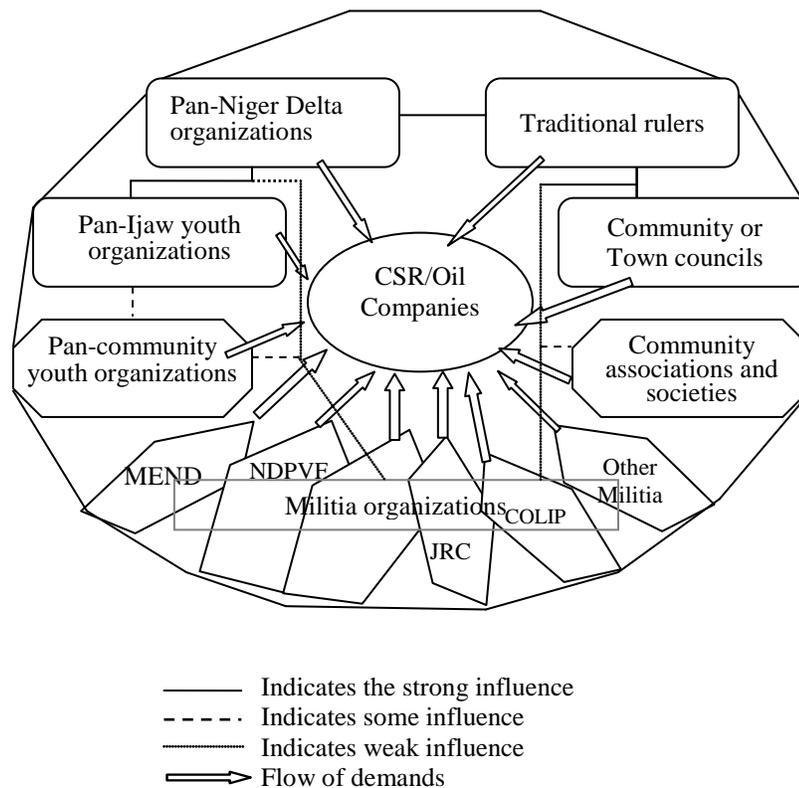
In addition, there are several community associations, societies and women's organizations working on issues, which have a direct bearing on alleviating the conditions of life for the people in the region. National and international organizations also support the local organizations in the Niger Delta by publicizing human rights abuses and environmental concerns. Some of the national organizations that provide moral and intellectual support to the indigenous organizations include the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Women in Nigeria (WIN), Committee on Vital Environmental Resources (COVER), the Center for Nigeria and International Environmental Law (CENIEL) and the Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. Though these organizations and associations adopt differing approaches, they are united in the pursuit of social justice and protecting the rights of the Niger Delta people. More than any other group, the roles of the local, state and federal governments as significant players in the region must be acknowledged and the relevant government authorities included in CSR strategy at the planning stage.

### **Indicators of Expectations of CSR**

The measures used in the study were indicated through the roles played by the indigenous organizations in driving the demands for responsible social behavior. The influence of the Niger Delta organizations were indicated in the roles of the organizations at two levels: (1) through the community councils at the village level and (2) the pan-Niger Delta and youth organizations at the community, regional, and national levels.

The pan-Niger Delta organizations and their allies articulate macro-level concerns of the region. These concerns are then translated into micro-level demands at the community level. For example, development of infrastructure and illiteracy are region-wide problems, whereas locating a power plant, school or healthcare facility take a community turn at the execution phase. These micro-level concerns often become sources of inter-community squabbles; therefore, such projects require a carefully managed approach.

Figure 3. Patterns of influence among the network of Niger Delta organizations



The evidence showed that the pan-Niger Delta organizations play a crucial role in marshalling political support, facilitating dialogue, building bridges across ethnic boundaries, and mediating disputes among the various organizations and splinter factions. The youth movement, which provided the energy that mobilized the communities to act, operated at two levels. One level, represented by the IYC and community-based youth organizations, galvanized entire communities to act against the oil companies. The second level involved the various insurgent groups who have adopted a resistance approach to draw attention to the conditions in the Niger Delta region. Until the introduction of the amnesty program in 2010, these insurgent groups exerted their influence through coercion, kidnapping, hostage taking and violent actions to draw attention to their demands. Some militia groups have laid down their arms in exchange for skills training and promoting peace in the region following the introduction of the amnesty program. Table 4 shows the indicators that suggest association between the administrative systems and the roles of the organizational networks in the region with community expectations of CSR.

The patterns of interaction suggest that some degree of bonding occurs between the pan-Niger Delta organizations, the youth organizations, the community councils, and the traditional rulers that foster a common purpose. The community councils and the traditional rulers rely on the energy and organizing skills of the youth and the various organizations to publicize their demands. Reverence for the traditional system allows the elders and chiefs to mediate disputes.

*Table 1.* Table of Traditional Political System and Community Organizations

Type of organization	Name of organization	Basic organizing structure	Representative structure	Patterns of influence on the public
Traditional or Village governance	Community head or chief	Custom/tradition organized around village heads, chiefs and elders	Town or village	Consensus, dialogue and customs
Community governance	*Community council	Democratic, elected official	Town or village	Consensus, dialogue and cultural affiliation

*Note.* \* Community councils are formed at the village or community level. Most community councils have a chairperson as the head.

*Table 2.* Table of Non-governmental Pan-Niger Delta Organizations

Type of organization	Name of organization	Basic organizing structure	Representative structure	Patterns of influence on the public
Pan-Niger Delta	Ijaw National Congress (INC)	Democratic with elected officials	Represents various constituents of the Niger Delta	Pronouncements, communiqués, resolutions, dialogue, and engagement
	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)	Democratic with elected officials	Represents people of the Ogoni tribe in the eastern Niger Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue

Table 3. Table of Youth Organizations and Militia Groups

Type of organization	Name of organization	Basic organizing structure	Representative structure	Patterns of influence on the public
Youth	Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the dominant Ijaw ethnic group	Mass campaigns, public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	Isoko Youth Movement (IYM) and the Isoko Front	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Isoko tribe in the western Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP)	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Ogoni tribe in the eastern Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	Ikwerre Youths Convention	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Ikwerre tribe in the eastern Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	Egi Peoples Coalition	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Egi tribe	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	Urhobo Economic Foundation,	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Urhobo tribe in the western Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
	Oron National Forum	Civil democratic with elected officials	Represents youth of the Ibibio /Efik tribe in the eastern Delta	Public protests, communiqués, resolutions, and dialogue
Militia	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks
	Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF),	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks
	The Niger Delta Liberation Force	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks
	Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) †	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks
	Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN)	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks
	Coalition for the Liberation of Ikwerre People (COLIP)	Military organized around the founder	Voluntary enlistment	Mass mobilization, armed resistance, communiqués, and guerilla attacks

Note. † JRC is a breakaway faction of MEND.

*Table 4.* The Roles of the Organizations and the Indicators of Influence on Expectations of CSR

Type of organization	Roles of the organizations	Indicators of influence on expectations
Traditional/Community council	Serves as the main point of contact at the community level, identifies community demands and coordinates implementation	Identifies and presents micro-level demands for schools, power plants, roads and healthcare facilities
Pan-Niger Delta organizations	Provides political and intellectual support, coordinates macro level demands, provides communication channels and points of engagement, mediates disputes; builds bridges and forms alliances with political and economic stakeholders	Macro-level demands, attracts resources for regional development, identifies regional and sub-regional projects, such as remediation of environmental damage, economic empowerment, and capability development
Youth movement	Provides energy that mobilizes the communities to act and propagate demands through pronouncements, communiqués, resolutions, and coordinates youth activities. Acts as a point of engagement	Macro-level and micro-level demands, articulates the rights of the indigenes, presents matters affecting youth such as training and employment
Militia groups	Initiates action against oil company and government interests and defends the rights of the region against perceived injustices	Member training, capacity development and rehabilitation

### **Implications of the Presence of Multiple Niger Delta Organizations**

In a stable environment, the presence of local organizations signifies the existence of an organized social and political system, conducive to dialogue and community engagement. Instead, the multiplicity of organizations means that corporate officials have substantial obstacles to overcome. The analysis of the administrative structure and the network of organizations show the complexity of the socio-political system in the Niger Delta. Despite political and administrative reconfiguration after independence in 1960, the traditional structure remains the bedrock of the political system in the region. Each community functions as a semi-autonomous entity not subject to a single traditional authority. This is noteworthy in the sense that most of the people in the region live in dispersed settlements of 5,000 or less people (Ikelegbe, 2006; UNDP, 2006). Historically, though villages and groups of villages belonged to the larger clan,

geographic dispersion limited control over communities by the clan rulers. This situation suggests that information about CSR projects designed to serve several communities must be shared with representatives of all the communities involved.

Naturally, the oil companies relied on traditional rulers and the village chiefs to engage the local communities. The implicit assumption in this approach is that the chiefs have effective control over the actions of their constituents. In reality, most traditional rulers and chiefs, though well respected, have limited power or authority to control the activities of their constituents and less so of the youth.

Bertels and Vredenburg's (2004) domain-based model of CSR provides a framework for formulating inclusive CSR policies that illustrate the salience of understanding the socio-cultural and political dynamics of the region. Bertels and Vredenburg's domain-based approach recognizes an enlarged group of stakeholders with whom organizations must voluntarily collaborate to avoid adverse consequences. The domain-based model identifies turbulent domains, which are characterized by complexity and uncertainty. The multiplicity of organizations and interest groups in the Niger Delta extends the domain of stakeholders to be engaged, and increases the degree of uncertainty corporate officials face. Bertels and Vredenburg argued that recognizing domain-specific characteristics would enable corporations to formulate effective strategies. Thus, an understanding of the cultural and political dynamics of the Niger Delta will allow for better harmonization of CSR programs in the region.

Fulfilling the developmental aspirations of the Niger Delta communities requires engaging the traditional rulers, community councils and the various organizations. Such engagement requires company officials with considerable human relations skills to tackle multiple problems. This will reduce differences and replace frustration with hope for a better future. Meeting the needs of the region also depends on how the communities and the members of the various groups conduct themselves. The findings show that integration of community perspectives will open channels for community-company cooperation.

### **The Research Question**

The data shows that social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in the Niger Delta defined the expectations of individuals and the organizations in the region. The political and economic reality of the Niger Delta is disintegration of the traditional economy, loss of control over land, unemployment, massive poverty, and underdevelopment. These factors and the administrative systems influenced community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta. Thus, expectations of social responsibility were framed to assuage the burdens of a system of disparities, which has created generations of impoverished people in the region.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study reported in this article is subject to the following limitations:

1. The study was qualitative, which relied on interview data; therefore, the accuracy of the interviews depended on the honesty of the participants.
2. The proxy indicators used in the analysis have been a source of contention because they are subject to validation errors (Prakash, 2002). The indicators used in analysis are not reliable measures of causal link between community expectations of social responsibility and the influence of the administrative system and the network of local organizations.

Because the focus of the study conducted was on community expectations of CSR in the Niger Delta region, the findings may not apply to other groups. However, this study addresses the need to understand specific needs of rural communities in which businesses operate and provides a community perspective that would contribute to building a comprehensive framework for global CSR practice.

### **Discussion**

Though no single factor can be adduced as the cause of conflicts between the Niger Delta communities and the oil companies, the evidence suggests that relegation of the expectations of the communities to the background in the decision-making processes was a key factor (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The expectations revealed in this study are consistent with the findings of Idemudia (2007a). Respondents expected greater oil company involvement in human and infrastructure development. The reasons for attribution of responsibility to the oil companies include enormous company resources, the relative power positions of the stakeholders, and the impact of oil exploration on the traditional occupations of the Niger Delta people. However, contrary to Idemudia's negation of oil company insincerity in executing CSR programs, the respondents repeatedly pointed to insincerity, lack of commitment, and manipulation as obstacles to peaceful community-company relations.

Others authors have argued that development is the primary responsibility of the government (Ite, 2004). This view fails to acknowledge the limitations of governments in developing countries. Governments in developing countries have weak institutions and oversight capabilities. For example, NNPC, the government agency that oversees the oil industry, is ineffective and constrained by politics, bureaucracy, and corruption.

Community expectations of CSR drew attention to the relative power imbalance between the communities and oil corporations (Newell, 2005; Valor, 2005). The communities were in a relatively weak power position politically and economically. In contrast, the corporations possessed vast resources, which can be used to gain access to decision makers, land, government security, and other special concessions (Garvey & Newell, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2006; Watts, 2004). Most of the respondents indicated that the current structure of the oil industry in Nigeria is a barrier to community participation in the decision making process. The lack of power severely limited the ability of the communities to mobilize and make demands of corporations constructively (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005; Valor, 2005).

In the new global business environment, international corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have gained importance (Desjardin, 2006).

International organizations have special expertise that the communities and governments in developing countries lack. This expertise justifies greater responsibility. Frynas (2005) argued that corporations have an implied responsibility to protect rural communities from harm resulting from company operations. This suggests that the corporations can seize the moral high ground and use their resources to act for the good of the communities.

The integration of community expectations is fundamental to CSR strategy, requiring collective action in community settings. Community engagement conducted in an environment of mutual respect and cooperation will foster the building of consensus between the oil companies and the principal community leaders (Amba-Rao 1993). This means engaging the traditional rulers, community councils and the various organizations in the Niger Delta, taking into consideration the autonomous nature of the communities in implementing CSR programs.

Scholars agree that national and local context defines expectations of CSR. This means that CSR programs should take into consideration the social, cultural and political characteristics of the Niger Delta region (Frynas 2005; Idemudia & Ite, 2006; Ite, 2004). In the Niger Delta, expectation of responsible social behavior and the aspiration of the indigenes for development are intertwined. It is from the experience of poverty and economic and political marginalization that community expectations extend to the engagement and participation in the CSR process. CSR programs that ignore the expectations, experiences, and characteristics of the region are likely to fail.

Context also defines the scope of institutional responsibility and the impact of corporate activities on the local communities (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005; Naor, 1982). A maximalist approach posits that, considering the power, resources, and influence of transnational corporations, they have a responsibility to provide positive benefits for the communities in which they operate (Desjardins, 2006; Frynas, 2005). In contrast, a minimalist approach acknowledges only minimal duties, duties that have no harmful consequences, or performance of only mandatory duties (Donaldson, 1985). Desjardins (2006) suggested an ethical aspect of maximalist perspective that will allow transnational companies to operate in a country only if the company's activities produce more positive than negative consequences. This view has implications for the Niger Delta in terms of environmental responsibility.

SPDC has maintained a very close relationship with the Nigerian government and has managed this relationship effectively to protect its business interests (Frynas, 2005; 2003). SPDC can extend its influence to fulfill wider environmental and developmental responsibilities than those emphasized in the past under the narrow focus on profitability. The examination of the administrative systems and the indigenous organizations in the Niger Delta showed the complexity of the socio-political system in the region. The existence of multiple organizations, interest groups, and demands presents a tough challenge for coordinating CSR programs; however, these organizations also offer points of contact for community-company engagement.

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