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ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES ORGANIZED BY SHELL PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY IN NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study examined community members' participation in conferences organized by shell petroleum development company (SPDC) in Niger Delta, Nigeria. Purposive random sampling technique was used for the selection of 240 community members in SPDC host communities. The data for the study were collected through the use of questionnaire and were analysed using both descriptive (the mean) and inferential statistics (ANOVA). The result showed that impact assessment studies ($\bar{x}$ = 2.8), oil spillage clean-up process ($\bar{x}$ = 2.9), community-based pipeline surveillance ($\bar{x}$ = 3.1) and construction of inter-community roads ($\bar{x}$ = 3.0) were the various conferences community members participated in. The result further showed that SPDC is insensitive to the plight of community members ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8), SPDC uses incinerators to burn wastes; however, in the Niger Delta, the waste from spillage are deposited in a large trench ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6), instructional materials are not provided to schools in host communities by SPDC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4) and scholarship from SPDC is not distributed equally among host communities ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4) were various perception of community members on SPDC environmental degradation impact management. The ANOVA result showed significant difference on the level of community member's participation in conferences organized by SPDC in Niger Delta at P<0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that community member's participated in conference organized by SPDC. Hence, there is need for SPDC to increase her scholarship programme and equally distributed among host communities. Beneficiaries' names should be published on the print media and notice boards within the SPDC cluster communities.

Keywords: Conference, Community, Development. Members, Participation.

INTRODUCTION
Fifty two (52) years after oil was first discovered in Niger Delta communities have professed war on the oil companies they once welcomed due to unsettled developmental agreement with Shell Petroleum Development company (SPDC) and the Government (Okringbo, 2020). This development is due to the extent of damage grieved by those communities as a result of the oil exploration exploitation and exploration (Alao, 2005 cited in Okringbo, 2020). In 2005, the Niger Delta communities sued Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Shell Joint Venture Companies for gas flaring. According to Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria still flare more gas than anyplace in the world though gas flaring had been proscribed under environmental regulations since 1984 (Okringbo, 2020).

In 2002, an international observation team declared the Niger Delta as one of the most violence regions in the world and the higher proportion of the violence in the region is against the oil companies (Alao, 2005).

Following the success recorded by Chevron as a result of its implementation of the Global Memrandum of Understanding (GMoU), Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) adopted the GMoU model in its engagements with communities in its operational areas

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in 2006. The GMoU was adopted by IOCs as a tested strategy of delivering sustainable development to host communities following the conflicts that emanated from previous models of community engagement in the region (Okoroba, 2020). The choice of development intervention in the Niger Delta is influenced by the expected benefits it brings to the stakeholder. Communities typical hope that development interventions will address their socio-economic problems (Muthuri *et al.*, 2012).

According to Nwachukwu and Ekanem (2016), the high percentage of violence is when stakeholders are coerced to participate in programmes organized by SPDC and lack of commitment no her GMoU agreement with host communities. As part of the SPDC GMoU, report presented that host communities in the Niger Delta region have received a total sum of ₦41.10 billion from SPDC of Nigeria within the period of 2006 - 2017 as their involvement in mitigating degraded areas and organizing conferences in the region (SPDC, 2018).

In spite of the various efforts made by SPDC towards human capital development in the region, studies by Nwachukwu and Ekanem (2016), Iheriohanma, (2016), Nwosu and Okringbo, (2016) shows that host community members within the Niger Delta region still complain of continuous exclusion stakeholders in planning programmes that concern their development. It was against this backdrop that this paper seek to assess community members' participation in conference organized by Shell Petroleum Development Company in Niger Delta, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

i. determine the level of participation of community members conferences organized by SPDC; and
ii. assess the perception of the community members on SPDC environmental degradation impact management in the degraded area.

Tested hypothesis of the study was that there is no significant difference in level of community member's participation in conferences organized by SPDC in Niger Delta.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

The study was conducted in Niger Delta Region. The Niger Delta is one of the 10 most important wetlands (Nwachukwu and Ekanem, 2016). The Niger Delta is the world's third largest wetland. Administratively it is made up of nine States being Abia State, Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State, Imo State, Ondo State and Rivers State. The nine states of the Niger Delta cover approximately112, 110 km² or 12% of Nigeria's land mass. It lies between longitude 6.2509 and Latitude 5.2373. The Niger Delta 2006 population of about 31 million people or 22% of the National population is comprised of around 40 ethnic groups speaking 250 Languages and dialects with the major groups being Ijaw people who predominate across the coastal region; the Ogoni and Ikwerre of the eastern region; the Annang, Efik Bokis and Yakurrs people in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States; the Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ishans, Isokos, Urhobos, Ndokwas, in the western region.

The population of the study comprised all community members in the Shell Petroleum Development Company's clustered communities in Niger Delta Region. A purposive sampling technique was used to select Abia, Bayelsa and River State this due to the high incident of oil spillage within these States. Approximately, 220 oil spillage were recorded in Bayelsa and Rivers and 65 percent of SPDC installations are within these States compared to other States in Niger Delta (Nwachukwu and Ekanem, 2016).

Sampling Techniques

The study purposively selected Ukwa West Local Government area (LGA) in Abia State, Ogbia LGA in Bayelsa State and Eleme LGA in River State. Twenty four (24) cluster

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communities within Shell operation were purposively selected. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select 10 community members giving us a sample size of 240community members.

Analytical Techniques

The knowledge of the community members' of SPDC remediated land and water bodies was done using a five-point rating type. The five-point rating type was as follows: Very high knowledge =5; high knowledge = 2, moderate knowledge = 3, low knowledge = 4 and very low knowledge = 5. A mean score of 3.0 and above was seen as very high knowledge, while a mean score of less than 3.0 was regarded as very low knowledge. The hypothesis was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) specified as:

$$\text{F-statistics} = \frac{Between\ group\ mean\ square\ (BGMS)}{Within\ group\ mean\ square\ (WGMS)} \quad \ldots(1)$$

The decision rule was that; if $F_{cal}>F_{tab}$ at ($P\leq0.05$), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis and vice versa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Participation of Community Members in Conferences Organized by SPDC

Results in Table 1 shows the level of participation of community members in conferences organized by SPDC in Niger Delta. The mean rating on a 4-point scale shows that impact assessment studies ($\bar{x}$=2.8), impact assessment report debate ($\bar{x}$=2.7), oil spillage clean-up process ($\bar{x}$=2.9), community-based pipeline surveillance ($\bar{x}$=3.1), construction of inter-community roads ($\bar{x}$=3.0), environmental awareness talk show by SPDC ($\bar{x}$=2.5) and dialogue and peacefull resolution of disagreement with host community within conflict period ($\bar{x}$3.2). This findings implies that community members always participated in conference organized by Shell Petroleum Development Company as part of their Global Memrandum of Understanding (GMoU) with host communities in their various clusters. This is in line with the work of Umeh (2018) who reported that youths participated in community physical infrastructural development projects and impact assessment studies.

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Table 1: Mean Score Responses of the Level of Participation of Community Members in Conferences Organized by SPDC

Level of participation	Abia (n = 80)		Bayelsa (n = 80)		Rivers (n = 80)		Niger Delta (240)	
	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM
Impact assessment studies	2.9	AL	2.8	AL	2.7	AL	2.8	AL
Impact assessment report debate	2.9	AL	2.7	AL	2.7	AL	2.7	AL
Oil spillage clean-up process	3.2	AL	2.8	AL	2.9	AL	2.9	AL
Community-based pipeline surveillance	3.2	AL	3.1	AL	2.9	AL	3.1	AL
Construction of inter-community roads	3.2	AL	3.0	AL	2.9	AL	3.0	AL
Environmental awareness talk shows by SPDC	2.8	AL	2.2	NE	2.5	AL	2.5	AL
Environmental awareness lectures by SPDC	2.7	AL	2.1	NE	2.4	NE	2.4	NE
Environmental awareness debates by SPDC	2.8	AL	2.3	NE	2.4	NE	2.5	AL
Dialogue and peaceful resolution of disagreement with host community within conflict period	3.4	AL	3.0	AL	3.2	AL	3.2	AL
Training of youth in Enterprise development "SPDC Livewire"	1.9	NE	1.7	NE	2.0	NE	1.9	NE
Training of youths on power plant operation by SPDC	2.1	NE	1.7	NE	2.1	NE	1.9	NE
Trains communities members on how to handle oil spills	1.9	NE	1.5	NE	1.6	NE	1.7	NE
Grand mean score	2.8	AL	2.4	NE	2.5	AL	2.6	AL

Note: $\bar{x}$ = Mean responses of community members; RM = Remark; AL = always participated, OCC= occasionally participated, RA = rarely participated and NE = never participated. Decision mean cut-off point 2.5

Source: Field survey data (2018)

Perception of the Community Members on SPDC Environmental Degradation

Results in Table 2 shows the perception community members on SPDC environmental degradation impact management in degraded area in Niger Delta. The mean rating on a 4-point scale shows that SPDC is insensitive to the plight of community members ($\bar{x}$=3.8), SPDC uses incinerators to burn wastes, but in the Niger Delta the waste from spillage are deposited in a large trench ($\bar{x}$=3.6), instructional materials are not provided to schools in host communities by SPDC ($\bar{x}$=3.4), scholarship from SPDC is not distributed equally among host communities ($\bar{x}$=3.4), rural farmers do not receive adequate compensation for degraded land and water bodies ($\bar{x}$=3.5), oil spilled in the soil prevent good yield from the farm and destroys fishes in the water, making self-help difficult for community member ($\bar{x}$= 3.3) and provide funds and fertilizers to farmers ($\bar{x}$=3.4). This findings implies community members had high perception on SPDC environmental degradation impact management in Niger Delta. This finding is in line with Okorobia (2013) who noted that generally, it is unfair and inadequate monetary compensations paid on the surface rights over acquired land (which itself is usually gotten only after serious clashes and sometimes legal battles) is to be counted as part of the economic benefit.

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Table 2: Mean Score Responses of the Perception of the Community Members on SPDC Environmental Degradation Impact Management in the Degraded Area

Perception	Abia (n = 80)		Bayelsa (n = 80)		Rivers (n = 80)		Niger Delta (240)	
	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM	$\bar{x}$	RM
SPDC is insensitive to the plight of community members	3.7	VHP	3.8	VHP	3.8	VHP	3.8	VHP
SPDC uses incinerators to burn wastes, but in the Niger Delta the waste from spillage are deposited in a large trench	3.6	VHP	3.6	VHP	3.5	VHP	3.6	VHP
Instructional materials are not provided to schools in host communities by SPDC	3.7	VHP	3.3	VHP	3.3	VHP	3.4	VHP
Scholarship from SPDC is not distributed equally among host communities	3.7	VHP	3.2	VHP	3.2	VHP	3.4	VHP
Rural farmers do not receive adequate compensation for degraded land and water bodies	3.8	VHP	3.2	VHP	3.6	VHP	3.5	VHP
Oil spilled in the soil prevent good yield from the farm and destroys fishes in the water, making self-help difficult for community member	3.5	VHP	3.3	VHP	3.1	VHP	3.3	VHP
The construction of the oil field roads blocked natural drainages which led to the destruction of several fish ponds among others things	2.9	HP	2.9	HP	2.9	HP	2.9	HP
Provide funds and fertilizers to farmers	3.2	VHP	3.9	VHP	3.2	VHP	3.4	VHP
Oil spilled from SPDC pipeline affects the livelihood activities of rural farmers within the host communities	3.3	VHP	3.9	VHP	3.1	VHP	3.4	VHP
Grand mean score	3.5	VHP	3.5	VHP	3.3	VHP	3.4	VHP

Note: $\bar{x}$ = Mean responses of community member; RM = Remark; VHP = Very high perception and HP = High perception. Decision mean cut-off point 2.5

Source: Field survey data (2018)

ANOVA for Test

Table 3 shows the ANOVA result of the test of significance difference in level of community member's participation in conferences organized by SPDC in Niger Delta. The result on shows that the calculated F-value of 4.585 was significant at P<0.05 and greater than the tabulated F-value of 3.04 at P< 0.05. This implies that there was a significant difference in level of community member's participation in conferences organized by SPDC in Niger Delta. This is in line with the study of Adekola and Oyebamiji (2012) who noted that significant relationship existed between need identification and people's participation in SPDC community development projects. Participation is an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiver of project benefits. This means that where the people do not dictate the tune and direction of community development project through involvement in need identification (dictating what project should be embarked upon) their participation is always minimal.

Table 3: Result of ANOVA for Test of Significance Difference in Level of Community Member's Participation in Conferences Organized by SPDC in Niger Delta

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	$F_{cal.}$	$F_{tab.}$
Between Groups	4.182	2	2.091		
Within Groups	108.556	237	.458	4.585**	3.04
Total	112.737	239			

Note: **significant at p< 0.05; Df = Degree of freedom; $H0_2$ rejected at 0.05 level
Source: Field survey data (2018)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that community members participated in conference organized by SPDC. However, negative perception on SPDC promotion of environmental degradation impact management in the degraded area was very high. There is need for SPDC to increase scholarship programmes equally among host community members and names of beneficiaries published in newspapers, magazines and in various notice boards within the SPDC cluster communities.

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