

An Investigation of The Social Amenities Provided In The Host Community Of Rivers Vegetable Oil Company Limited (Rivoc), Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT : *This research work assessed the corporate social responsibility activities of Rivers Vegetable Oil Company Limited (RIVOC), Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in Elekahia, its host community. Two items of corporate social responsibility (education and social amenities) were the parameters used. The research design was the survey method while the sampling technique was the purposive sampling method. Data for the research were gathered using structured questionnaires. Findings from the research showed that the image and reputation of the company were poor due to the company's failure to undertake some community development projects particularly in the sponsorship of educational programmes such as scholarship awards and building of educational infrastructural facilities. The study recommended the establishment of a functional Public Relations (PR) department in the company to assist in building the image of the company through the articulation of corporate social responsibility programmes on education and provision of other social amenities to the host community.*

KEYWORDS: *Amenity, Community, Public, Relations, Responsibility, Vegetable.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Several scholars and authors have posited that companies should assume certain responsibilities in their host communities in order to garner positive image. One of the ways through which a corporate organisation can achieve a favourable image as posited by Anuforo (2007) and Wokemezie (2010), is by being responsive to its community neighbours through the provision of basic social amenities. Indeed public relations practitioners with foresight (Asongu, 2007), have recognised that socially responsible behaviour helps to cultivate a good reputation and favourable image in a company's host community. They recognise that the relationship that exists between a company and its host communities is a give-and-take relationship. This in public relations parlance is known as corporate social responsibility. It is against this background, predicated upon the nonchalant attitude of numerous companies towards the provision of social amenities to their host communities that this study is premised. It was aimed at investigating the performance of RIVOC in the provision of social amenities, particularly in the educational sector of its host community.

1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

As the words corporate, social, and responsibility suggest, corporate social responsibility (CSR) covers the responsibilities that companies have to the societies within which they operate. It concerns itself with what a company could do to make its immediate communities better in terms of living conditions, social facilities and other requirements. It is a concept that enables for a wider perspective of how to conduct business, thereby strengthening the link between a company and its publics. It addresses the issue of how a company can create sustainability by behaving in a responsible way where a high responsiveness to the environment is crucial. According to Ikpeama (1989 p.9) and Carrol (1991), CSR is a management strategy which seeks to plan and manage an organisation's relationship with all those involved or affected by its activities. The need to play a part in community affairs, according to Black (1989, p172), is now generally accepted by industries and this takes a number of forms. This kind of participation in community affairs does much to establish a company as a good corporate neighbour. Peak (1991 p.117) and Garriga and Domenec (2004), posit corporate social responsibility as a public relations tool that institutions use to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of itself and the community, while McCombs (2002) posits that CSR refers to a company linking itself with ethical values, transparency, employee relations, compliance with legal requirements and overall respect for the communities in which they operate. This explains why it is seen as a vital tool in improving the corporate image of some of the world's largest corporations.

1.2 Brief history of RIVOC

Rivers Vegetable Oil Company Limited (RIVOC) was established by the Rivers State Government in 1973 as a state owned company. Located in the Elekahia axis of the Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State, the company was established essentially to extract crude palm kernel oil. It became operational in 1977. Two years after commissioning the plant, the company was shot down as a result of management and technical problems which resulted in colossal financial losses to both the company and the Rivers State Government. In July 1988, the Rivers State Government privatised the company in accordance with the Federal Government's privatisation and commercialisation policy. Following its privatisation, ownership of RIVOC shifted from the Rivers State Government to the Nigeria Engineering Works Limited, Port Harcourt, a company owned by the Birla Group of India. Birla Group which had the majority share also had other shareholders namely Kanem Farms Limited, Birla Associates Pvt Limited Singapore, Maxwell Resources Limited and Risonpalm Limited (RIVOC, 2006a).

Within six months, the new management successfully refurbished the crucial machinery of the company's rundown plant. With the reactivation exercise completed, the Solvent Extraction plant was re-commissioned for production in early 1989. Presently, RIVOC operates seven active major plants and is the third largest vegetable oil processing company in Nigeria and a manufacturer of Fast Moving Consumer Goods. It is also the single largest producer of crude palm kernel oil and palm kernel extraction in the country. The company's brands of products include Refined Palm Kernel Oil, Refined Palm Olien, Bakery Fat, Margarine, Toilet Soaps, Laundry Soaps and Detergent Soaps (RIVOC, 2006b).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The researcher employed a survey method research design in which he made use of the purposive sampling technique. The method tried to elicit the perception of the host community on the company as a good corporate citizen.

2.2 Population of the Study, sample and Sampling techniques

The population of the study comprised a total of 500 males and females aged twenty-five (25) years and above made up of chiefs/elders, elites/opinion leaders, women groups, youth bodies and social clubs that reflect the mind of the people. They were drawn from Elekahia, the host community of RIVOC. The Krejcie and Morgan's (1970, p.30) prescription (Table 1) below and Asika (2006), were adopted to assign the sample size.

TABLE 1: Krejcie and Morgan's (1970, p.607) prescription of sample size for different population at 95% confidence level

S/NO	POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE	S/NO	POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE
1	50	44	15	260	155
2	75	63	16	280	162
3	100	80	17	300	169
4	120	90	18	400	196
5	130	97	19	500	217
6	140	103	20	1000	278
7	150	108	21	1500	306
8	160	113	22	2600	322
9	170	118	23	3000	241
10	180	123	24	4000	351
11	190	127	25	5000	357
12	200	132	26	10000	370
13	220	140	27	50000	381
14	240	148	28	100000	384

2.3 Research Instruments

The instrument adopted were short-structured questionnaires designed using the close-ended approach that generated quantitative data.

2.4 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered on the sampled population of the respondents (500) drawn from among chiefs/elders, elites/opinion leaders, women groups, youth bodies, and social clubs in the community.

Four hundred and sixty-seven (467) copies of the questionnaires, representing 93.40% were retrieved from the respondents.

2.5 Method of Data Analysis

Simple percentages and frequencies were employed in data presentation and analysis. The highest percentage of respondents represented the majority view of the respondents.

III. RESULTS

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: Does RIVOC provide social amenities in its host community?

The above research question was split into sub-questions (i) - (iii) to elicit responses from the respondents in the performance of RIVOC in the provision of social amenities.

- (i) How regularly does RIVOC initiate community development based projects in your community?

The table below (table 2), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 2: Response on community development based projects.

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Very Regularly	0	0
Regularly	3	0.6
Not Regularly	13	2.8
Never	429	91.9
Not certain	22	4.7
TOTAL	467	100.0

The table above showed that no respondent said very regularly, 3(0.6%) respondents indicated regularly, 13 (2.8%) respondents indicated not regularly, 429 (91.9%) respondents indicated never, while 22 (4.7%) respondents were not certain.

- (ii) Please tick as many physical projects as have been provided by the company in your community?

The table below (table 3), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 3: Response on Provision of Social Amenities

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Classroom block	-	-
Science block	-	-
Administrative block	-	-
Electricity	16	3.4
Road	3	0.6
Water Supply	15	3.2
Health Centre	-	-
Town Hall	6	1.3
All of the above	-	-
None of the above	427	91.5
TOTAL	467	100.0

From the above data, no respondent ticked classroom block, science block, administrative block, health centre and all of the above respectively, 16 (3.4%) respondents ticked electricity, 3 (0.6%) ticked road, 15 (3.2%) ticked water supply, 6 (1.3%) ticked town hall, 427 (91.5%) ticked none of the above.

- (iii) Does the company sponsor other community based projects?
The table below (table 4), summarize the responses of the respondents

TABLE 4: Sponsorship of other community based projects.

Response category	Number of respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Yes	-	-
No	452	96.8
Uncertain	15	3.2
Total	467	100

The table above showed that no respondent said yes, 452 (96.8%) respondents indicated no while 15 (3.2%) respondents indicated uncertain.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Does the company support the host community by awarding scholarships, building classroom blocks and other physical structures in schools located in its host community?

The above research question was split into sub-questions (iv) - (xii) to elicit responses from the respondents in the performance of RIVOC with particular reference to the provision of infrastructural facilities in the educational institutions as well as awarding of scholarships.

- (iv) In terms of educational support to your community, tick as many items as have been provided by the company?

The table below (table 5), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 5: Response on educational support to the community

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Classroom block	-	-
Administrative block	-	-
Science equipment	-	-
Scholarship award	17	3.6
Sets of computers	-	-
All of the above	-	-
None of the above	450	96.4
TOTAL	467	100.0

Data displayed in the above table showed that 17 (3.6%) respondents indicated scholarship award, 450 (96.4%) respondents indicated none of the above while no respondent indicated classroom block, administrative block, science equipment, sets of computer and all of the above respectively.

- (v) Has RIVOC awarded scholarships to indigenes of your community within the last ten years?

The table below (table 6), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 6: Response to scholarship awards to indigenes

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Yes	21	4.5
No	410	87.8
Uncertain	36	7.7
TOTAL	467	100.0

The table above shows that 21 respondents (4.5%) said yes, 410 respondents (87.8%) said no, while 36 respondents (7.7%) said that they were uncertain.

- (vi) If yes, how many?
The table below (table 7), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 7: Response on number of scholarship awards to indigenes

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Above 200	0	0
Above 150	0	0
Above 100	0	0
Below 50	16	3.4
None	451	96.6
Total	467	100.0

The data in the above table showed that no respondent said above 200, above 150, and above 100 respectively. 16 (3.4%) respondents said below 50 while 451 (96.6%) respondents said none.

- (vii) What category of scholarship was awarded?
The table below (table 8), summarize the responses of the respondents.

Table 8: Response on the category of scholarship award

Response category	Number of Response	Percentage Response (%)
Post Graduate	-	-
Undergraduate	-	-
Post Primary	13	2.8
All of the above	-	-
None of the above	454	97.2
TOTAL	467	100.0

Table 8 above, indicated that no respondent said post graduate, undergraduate and all of the above respectively. 13 (2.8%) respondents said post primary while 454 (97.2%) respondents indicated none of the above.

- (viii) Has RIVOC built classroom blocks in your community schools?
The table below (table 9), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 9: Response on classrooms built in the community.

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Yes	0	0
No	451	96.6
Uncertain	16	3.4
TOTAL	467	100.0

From table 9 above, no respondent indicated yes, 451 (96.65) respondents indicated no and 16 (3.4%) respondents indicated uncertain.

- (ix) If yes, were they built in the secondary or primary schools?
The table below (table 10), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 10: Response on where classrooms were built

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Secondary	-	-
Primary	-	-
None	467	100
TOTAL	467	100.0

The table showed that all the 467 (100%) respondents indicated none.

(x) How many classroom blocks were built?

The table below (table 11), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 11: Response on number of classrooms built

Response category	Number of Response	Percentage Response (%)
Six	-	-
Five	-	-
Four	-	-
Uncompleted	-	-
None	467	100
TOTAL	467	100.0

All the respondents (as shown in table 11) above, agreed that RIVOC has built no classroom in the community.

(xi) Apart from classroom blocks, has the company built any other structure in your community schools?

The table below (table 12), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 12: Other structures built in the community schools

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Yes	0	0
No	417	89.3
Uncertain	50	10.7
TOTAL	467	100.0

The table above (table 12) showed that no respondent said YES, while those that said NO were 417 (89.3%) as against 50 (10.7%) that were uncertain.

(xii) If yes, mention the structures?

The table below (table 13), summarize the responses of the respondents.

TABLE 13: Response on structures mentioned

Response category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Response (%)
Science Block	-	-
Admin Block	-	-
Assembly Hall	-	-
Craft Centre	-	-
All of the above	-	-
None of the above	467	100
TOTAL	467	100.0

The table above (13) showed that all the respondents indicated that none of the above mentioned structures have been built by the company.

IV. DISCUSSION

RESEARCH QUESTION I

Research question 1 was analysed using tables 2 – 4 above. The results from the tables showed that RIVOC has not assisted the host community in providing social amenities. The implication of the above is that the company has failed to be socially responsible to its host community. The company's practice negates Ajayi's

(1999, p.75) and Wokemezie's (2010), advice that every organisation has a responsibility to participate more actively in the affairs of its local communities both as a matter of self-interest as well as a demonstration of concern for the welfare of the society at large.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

From the distribution of responses in tables 5 – 13 above, responses as to scholarship awards to indigenes of the host community showed that the company has performed badly, an indication of the monumental failure of the company's CSR practice. For instance, data contained in table 9 above showed that 21 (4.5%) respondents agreed that the company awarded scholarship to indigenes of the community, 410 (87.8%) respondents said no whereas 36 (7.7%) respondents were uncertain. In the same vein, RIVOC has not built classroom blocks in any of the schools located in its host community. This is shown in table 12 above as 451 (96.6%) respondents also said no. The company has failed to contribute to the manpower needs of the community by neglecting the sponsorship of education in its host community and the ultimate result is poor image perception by the host community. On the strength of the above findings, we can say that there is no significant impact on the host community from the company's CSR programmes. As a result of this corporate irresponsiveness of the company, their host community perceive them in bad light.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the corporate social responsibility activities of RIVOC and how it has affected the company's image and reputation in its host community. There is no doubt that the company has failed in its CSR activities and has as a result earned a battered image for itself. As a company, it has failed to assume some responsibilities for the consequences of its operation in its host community. Based on the research findings, it is evident that there is total lack of mutual relationship between the company and its host community. The company should realise the need to play a part in the community development of its host community. It is only when the company assumes such responsibility that it would enjoy mutual relationship in its host community. This is so because CSR is a part of corporate activity that cannot be neglected or glossed over any more by the company.

It is hoped that the company would develop a good corporate citizenship as continuous failure would further put the company in the doldrums of battered image which ultimately may engender community agitations.

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