

AJGA 2010055/6303

Sustainable Agriculture in the Niger Delta Region: A Case Study of Finima Community of Rivers State

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(Received April 19, 2010; Accepted June 1, 2010)

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this empirical study is to conduct a baseline survey for further research on a multinational oil company and a host community in the Niger Delta region. An instrument titled Finima Baseline Inventory (FBI) was constructed and administered to family respondents using a stratified random sampling technique. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages as expected of baseline surveys. The survey revealed that before the advent of oil exploration, 80% of Finima community were engaged in fishing while real estate (renting of houses), government/private company employment and contractors were non existence. With the advent of Shell, Mobil and the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas limited (NLNG), 60% of the indigenes of Finima community are now engaged in real estate and 20% as contractors. Fishing is a dismal 2%. The drastic shift from fishing to real estate and contracting is as a result of the neglect of agriculture (poor funding, erratic subsidies etc) and non enforcement of environment laws by the Federal Government and the aforementioned multinational oil company's environmental degradation, exploitation and pollution activities. The study recommends that major role should be assigned to sustainable agriculture and enforcement of environmental laws by the Federal Government when establishing multinational oil company's presence in the Niger Delta region.

Introduction

Finima Community is located on a small island in bonny local Government Area of Rivers State. She is the host community of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (NLNG). NLNG was incorporated on may 17, 1989 and owned by NNPC (49%), Shell Gas B.V (25%) Total LNG Nigeria Ltd (15%) and Eni International (10.4%).

The present site of NLNG used to be the habitable portion of the ancestral home of the Finima Community until in 1990, when she was relocated by the Federal Government through NNPC. The major economic and operational reasons adduced for her relocation were abundance of gas reserves and noise, security, health environmental etc. respectively.

NNPC entered into direct consultation and negotiation with the leaders and indigenes of Finima Community. This culminated with NNPC's letter of 3rd march, 1978 conferring among other things compensation and rent to be paid to individuals and the community. This letter is constantly referred to as the "Finima Legacy" by the indigenes.

Nigeria is blessed with massive reserves of associated and non associated gas estimated in excess of 180 trillion cubic feet to last for 109 years. Geologist however insist she has more gas to be found, if oil companies deliberately explore for gas as opposed to finding it, while in search of oil (NLNG, 2008).

The Niger Delta Region is the source of Nigeria's oil and gas. It covers about 70,000 square kilometres (Iyoha 2005). Nigeria now relies on oil for more than 90% for its export earnings, 30% of its GDP and 70% of its Federal budget resources (Todaro and Smith 2006).

Purpose of the study.

To conduct a baseline survey for further research on Finima Community and NLNG from an agricultural point of view.

Statement of the problem.

Nigerian agriculture has been relegated to a level that seems irreversible as a result of the advent of crude oil exploration in the Niger Delta Region. Agriculture and crude oil exploration seems also to have become mutually exclusive. Any time crude oil exploration is embarked upon this results in the reduction of the farming population and agricultural production. More worrisome is the restiveness of the youths of the host communities, the state governments and the Federal Government which culminates in the declaration of oil war and resource control.

Significance of the study.

It is hoped that the findings of this study would alert policy makers to be wary of development economists and multinational oil companies who assign relatively minor role or no role at all to sustainable agriculture in economic development and believes that industrialisation is synonymous with economic development.

Conceptual Frame work.

Radical changes have taken place in the world within the last two decades in the conceptualisation of sustainable agricultural development, poverty and environmental issues. The Niger Delta Region within the last decade witness and is still witnessing radical changes in unemployment, youth restiveness and corporate social responsibility. The aforementioned economic phenomena are complex and multi dimensional. They also constantly influence each other.

When one is solved, another is resolved. This implies a positive trade-off. However central to these economic phenomena is growth. According to Obadan and Odusola (2001), there cannot be sustained increase in consumption and hence welfare without growth.

The new economic view from what we can decipher is that development is both a physical reality and a state of mind of the society via obtaining a better life (Todaro and Smith 2006). However the world commission on Environment (1987) posits sustainable development to mean meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

There is a general consensus that sustainable development consists of the three closely linked subject areas economic development, environment and social responsibility. Egbon (2005) posits neither the public sector nor the private sector can tackle on its own increasing complex and inter connected socio economic and environmental challenges.

To solve this problem, Iyoha (2005) posits a forging of sustainable partnership among all stakeholders for a truly participatory, people centred and sustainable development.

Farinloye (2006) is of the firm view that oil spillage problems generated the problems of damage to marine wildlife, modification of the ecosystem through species elimination and delisting in biota (Fauna and Flora) succession, decrease in fisheries resources etc. Heig (2007) posits that the Harmful Waste Decree of 1988, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) of 1988 and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of 1992 are not working according to intentions.

The corporate social responsibility in construct is a new coinage but not a new practice. It is also socio-culturally embedded (Kemp 2001, Fig 2005). Consequently, Nigeria needs to redefine its own corporate social responsibility (Amao et al 2006), Egbon (2005) asserts that adaptive or proactive and of late adaptive and proactive strategies have been adopted by the multinationals to “settle” traditional rulers and youths and they failed to work due to lack of trust and recommends interactive strategy. However Ite (2004) posits that although the emergence of memorandum of understanding (MOU) were effective in the 90’s they have gone caput since government has continued to renege on its commitment that it becomes almost impossible for corporate social responsibility investments by the oil firms to contribute positively to their host communities.

According to the Nigeria Energy Digest (2000) many of the restive situations in the Niger Delta have been blamed on what is termed “heinous environmental crimes” of the multinational oil companies. Ogisi, Omotor and Pessu (2002) posit that youth unemployment is the major cause of youth restiveness in Niger Delta Region. The unimaginable attack of Shell’s deep shore bonga oil field can

only spell doom for Nigerian state (Vanguard Newspaper 2008). More dreadful is the declaration of “oil war” by the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (Vanguard Newspaper 2008 B).

Materials and Methods

An extensive review of recent news and literature on the Niger Delta Region was undertaken. The information gathered during this phase of research was used to sketch rough the content of a Pre-Questionnaire Survey (PQS). The PQS was open ended to elicit for information for the structured Baseline Questionnaire Survey (BQS).

Population.

The target population were all the 1978 indigenes of old Finima.

Sample Frame.

The sample frame consists of Finima Ownership Family Structure- Buoye Omuso (Brown) family (87%), Tobin family (8%) and Attoni family (5%). This structure formed the basis of the baseline allocation of 243 bungalows in 1990 in new Finima.

Sample.

The baseline survey designed involved 100 family respondents from the 247 house allocation of 1990. Random sampling technique was employed in the selection of the family respondents and subject to the strict compliance to the Finima Community Ownership Structure, Buoye Omuso (Brown) respondents (87), Tobin respondents (8) and Attoni respondents (5).

Instrumentation.

An instrument titled Finima Baseline Inventory (FBI) was constructed by the researcher. It was a twenty five item structured questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A sought to elicit information on personal bio-data of the elicit information on Sustain Agricultural Development, Poverty, Unemployment, Youth Restiveness, Environmental degradation, Exploitation and Pollution, and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Data Collection.

The instrument was administered by the researcher.

Method of Data Analysis.

Data obtained from the instrument were summarised and subjected to statistical analysis as frequency and percentage distribution.

Results and Discussion.

Table 1 indicates female respondents are the majority by 60%. This is in accord with prior expectation as the Finima Community is matrilineal and culturally women are allowed to marry wives and own off springs of such marriages. Also in the majority (65%) are age 61 and above, have 3-5 children (54%) and without formal education. These statistics suggests engagement in less stressful jobs and low adoption of modern technological practises.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Sex		
Male	40	40
Female	60	60
Age		
Less than 41	10	10
41-60	25	25
61 and above	65	65
Marital Status		
Single	5	5
Married	82	82
Divorced	3	3
No of children		
Less than 3	31	31
3-5	54	54
6 and above	15	15
Level of Education		
No Education	60	60
Primary	373	373
Secondary	5	5
Tertiary	2	2

Table 2: Occupation before 1990 (old Finima) and 1990- June 2008 (new Finima).

Occupation	Before 1990(%)	1990-June2008 (%)
Fishing	80	2
Agro-allied Marketing	15	5
Trading	3	5
Real Estate Landlord/rent)	-	60
Govt/ private company employment	-	10
Contractor	-	20
Unemployment	2	8

Source FBI, 2008.

The majority (80%) of respondents before 1990 were engaged in fishing while 15% were engaged in agro-allied marketing. Trading on non agric and luxury goods accounted for 3% and the unemployed accounted for 2%. Real estate (renting of houses), govt/private employment by companies, and

contractors were non existence. These findings are in accord with Todaro (1998) who opined that majority of the rural dwellers in developing countries engage in subsistence agriculture and are poor not by lack of employment but due to predominance of small farms, low adoption of modern farm practices and consequent low income.

The advent of shell, Mobil and NLNG and the subsequent relocation of the indigenes to new Finima in 1990 witnessed a drastic shift in occupation. Specifically, real estate is now the major occupation (60%), contractors (20%) and govt/private company employment 10%. The unemployment is 8%, while agro-allied marketing and trading account for 5% each. Fishing is a dismal 2%. The factors responsible for real estate boom includes the tremendous influx of NNLC workers from urban areas. Urban-rural migration (Port- Harcourt and environs), reduction in the number of rooms in the various categories of the 247 bungalows (Type 1-7) and the non provision of 50 terrace houses by NNPC as per the “Finima Legacy”. Consequently indiscriminate attachments of rooms were made by landlords to their existing bungalows. To further compound the acute shortage of housing facilities, non indigenes are culturally prohibited from owning houses.

Table 3: Reasons for no longer fishing/ agro-allied marketing

Reasons	Percentage
Real Estate	45
No fish	40
Age	15

Source: FBI, 2008

The reasons adduced by respondents who indicated fishing/ agro-allied marketing before 1990 and are now engaged in other occupation, is reflected on the table 3. Real estate accounts for 45% and no fish accounts for 40% while age accounts for 15%. The shift in occupation is in accord with Iyoha (2005) since the means and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods have been destroyed and still being damaged by the negative impact of oil company activities (sand filling of the three Greeks out of four) and Farloye (2006) with regard to decrease in fisheries (no fish)

Reasons why children are not interested in fishing.

All the respondents indicated their children are not interested in fishing because they prefer NLNG related jobs (oil related jobs which have better pay packages. This is in accord with prior expectation as youths generally do not like stressful jobs which fishing offers and prefer quick money oil related jobs (bunkering, hostage taking, ghost workers etc.)

Youth Restiveness

In old Finima there were no reported cases of youth restiveness. However since the relocation to new Finima in 1990 and the advent of shell, mobil and NLNG there were two protests- 21/09/98 Bonny youths blocked Finima community roads protesting non employment of youths by TSKJ and other sub contractors to NLNG construction of plants and trains and 26/11/98 of finima youths women blocked all community roads protesting erratic cut in electricity contrary to terms of the” Finima Legacy”. In both protests NLNG immediately accede to the wish of the youths and adaptive and proactive strategies were adopted by NLNG which are in accord with the position of Egbon (2005). The third protest in September 2000 during the commissioning of NLNG plant by president Obasanjo, there was agitation for “resource control”.

NLNG so far have been able to accede significantly through interactive strategy in the supply of 24 hours electricity and water and other employment related matters. The interactive strategy is in accord with the positions of Egbon (2005). On Friday June 13, 2008 at about 1.30pm while this survey was in progress the “militants” struck, sporadic shots from AK’s and local grenades lasted for more than two hours. There was no single police/ military presence in Finima community expects those guiding NLNG facilities (Plant and housing accommodations). The principal target was absolutely clear indigenes of Finima community.

Why the militants attacked is still unclear as investigations are still going on. But what is clear is that non indigenes were given two weeks ultimatum to leave Finima community and never to return. All these findings are in support of Ogisi, Omotor and Pessu (2002), and Vanguard Newspaper 2008 and 2008 B).

Environmental degradation, Exploitation and Pollution.

Table 4: Reasons for no fish

Variables	Percentage
Pollution by shell, mobil	65
Sand filling of creeks by NLNG	25
No fishing zone by NLNG	10

Source FBI, 2008

The respondents who indicated no fish in table 3, when asked to justify their reason, 65% indicated pollution by shell and mobil while 25% attributed it to the sand filling of the creeks by NLNG . The present no fishing zone around NLNG plant for security reasons, 10% see it as the source of no fish. NLNG have, however rejected her activities as contributory to a recent fish catch survey which indicated low catch.

Corporate Social Responsibility.

The provision of houses, water electricity, roads, capacity building (micro finance, NLNG scholarship, youth empowerment etc. Community support and donations (1 coaster bus, youth office furnishing , television viewing centre, cemetery fencing, rehabilitation of primary school, and market, construction of nurses quarter etc. by NLNG all respondents agreed have improved their standard of living.

Finima Legacy

Community projects yet to be implemented. All the respondents agree that some projects promised by NNPC are yet to be provided. These include 50 terrace houses, primary school placement, afforestation, dredging of the creeks, upgrading of the number of rooms in each bungalow and employment. These findings are in support of Ite (2004) that government has continued to renege on MOU's.

Table 5A: Area of intervention by NLNG (Individual)

Areas of intervention	Percentage
Monthly salary for persons above 60 years	80
Employment	10
Xmas gifts	10

Table 5B: Areas of intervention by NLNG (community)

Area of Intervention	Percentage
Transportation Boats	90
Annual Party	10

Source FBI, 2008

When asked what other things do you want NLNG to do for you? Eighty percent indicated payment of monthly salary while 10% each indicated employment and Xmas gifts.

When asked what other things do you want NLNG to do for the community impact of shell, mobil and NLNG, and NNPC not providing sustainable fishery development in the conceptualisation of relocating the indigenes and non enforcement of environmental laws by the federal govt. Ninety percent of the respondents would like NLNG to provide transportation boats to the community while 10% would like an annual party (forum) to stay thank you to NLNG.

Conclusion

The continuous decline of agriculture in the Niger Delta Region since the advent of crude oil exploration seems irreversible. Agriculture and crude oil exploration also seems to be mutually exclusive. This baseline survey of Finima Community suggests the irreversibility and mutual exclusiveness of agriculture. The means and opportunities for sustainable fishery/agro-allied marketing were destroyed by the negative impact of shell, mobil and NLNG. The NNPC non inclusion of sustainable fishery development in the conceptualization of NLNG and non enforcement of environmental laws by the federal government were also contributory to the drastic shift from fishery (80%) before 1990 to its present dismal 2% (June 2008).

Drastic improvement in the standard of living, urban and rural migration and improvement of corporate social responsibility of NLNG accounted for the relative peace. Although there were three non violent youth restiveness since 1990, these were proactively, adaptively and interactively handled by NLNG. However the only militant attack on June 13, 2008 and the Finima Legacy issue (unresolved MOU) are still a source of intension that falls squarely within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

The interaction between sustainable agricultural development, poverty unemployment, youth restiveness, corporate social responsibility and the environment are complex and multidimensional. They all constantly influence each other and when one is solved some others are simultaneously resolved. This implies that the trade-off between them is positive.