

THE NECESSITY OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INTERVENTION BY THE NIGERIAN OIL SECTOR*

Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is simply a company's sense of responsibility towards activities that benefits its stakeholders, of which women are part of the key stakeholders. They are the most valuable untapped resource. Significant research has shown that a substantial difference exists in the distribution of risks and benefits offered by oil and gas industries. Meanwhile, measurement of these risks and benefits shows that men tend to benefit more than women while the risk factors tend to affect women more. Among the risk factors are health and environmental risks, issues of property rights of women, poor economic opportunities and negative impacts on community and gender relations. There exists plethora of potential benefits that will be derived in promoting women sensitization and economic empowerment within O&G industries. Meanwhile, it is a well-known rhetoric that women make a lot of contribution to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability as well as enhancement of national development. In order to enjoy these positives, it then becomes a necessity to further promotion of women empowerment. This paper therefore advocates for economic empowerment of women through CSR intervention which is an area that has remained insufficiently explored even though established as one of the major goals of the UN Millennium Declaration (MDGs). Promoting women empowerment through CSR-led activities can help in attainment of a better and well balanced society. To achieve these feats, the present study became a necessity in order to propagate the need and the role of corporate organisations in the O&G industries regarding the implementation of Women Empowerment through CSR. CSR-led women empowerment yields a great deal of benefits to compliant companies. This could be in form of a more inclusive development, greater diversity, increased productivity and better corporate images of firms as gender champions. Finally, this study therefore recommends empowerment of women by multinational companies especially those in the O & G industry by provision of women education and promoting the welfare of women politically, economically, socially as well as information and awareness on health aspects through their CSR policies and programmes.

Keywords: Women Gendered Corporate Social Responsibility, Women Empowerment.

1. Introduction

Extractive industries account for a significant share of the public finances of many African countries, Nigeria inclusive. Research shows that they contribute only about one percent of the continent's labour force.¹ In other words, only a limited populace enjoys the benefits of employment from this sector of the economy. It is also shown that there are substantial gender gaps in the accessibility of opportunities and wealth generated in oil sector of the economy.² Evidence also suggests that gender bias exists in the distribution of risks and benefits within this sector.³ Measurement of these benefits as well as the risks of Oil and Gas industries (O&G) are often carried out at the community level. In other words, this shows that men tend to benefit more than women from the industry while the risk factors tend to affect more women than men.⁴ Unfortunately, there are no distinguishing parameters as there is no existing data on their gender-specific impacts. Among the risk factors are health and environmental risks, issues of property rights of women, poor economic opportunities and negative impacts on community and gender relations.⁵ Meanwhile, there exists plethora of potential benefits that will be derived in promoting women sensitization and economic empowerment within O&G industries. These potential benefits could be achieved through the implementation of corporate social responsibility policies by the O&G industries. Hence, there is the necessity of finding adequately effective measures on how women's access to economic opportunities can be increased for the purpose of enhancing national development.

Economic empowerment of women through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) intervention is an area that has remained insufficiently explored. CSR has been acclaimed as one of the key ways of reducing gender inequality, especially by facilitating women's empowerment.⁶ According to Roberts,⁷ 'women are our most

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¹ 'Women's Economic Empowerment in the Oil and Gas Industries in Africa,' *Policy Tool Series*: African Natural Resources Centre: African development Bank, p.7

²*Ibid*, p.6

³*Ibid*.

⁴*Ibid*.

⁵*Ibid*.

⁶ Lauren McCarthy, 'Empowering Women through Corporate Social Responsibility: A Feminist Foucauldian Critique' [2017] 27(4) *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 603–631.

⁷ Roberts, A. 2015. The Political Economy of 'Transnational business feminism.' *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17(2): 209–231.

valuable untapped resource'. This has also been echoed throughout international bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, and within national government policies (affirmative action). This potential for empowering women towards contributing to social, economic, and environmental sustainability is a well-worn rhetoric in development circles, now imported into CSR.⁸ According to McCarthy,⁹ women's empowerment through CSR is now an established facet of international practice. The strategies of implementing CSR by means of engaging in 'women's empowerment' has already been imported by popular international businesses such as Coca-Cola, Vodafone, Walmart and many others part of their CSR efforts in value chains. (ICRW, 2016).¹⁰ It has also been propagated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) through its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). CSR-led women empowerment yields a great deal of benefits to compliant companies. This could be in form of a more inclusive development, greater diversity, increased productivity and better corporate images of firms as gender champions for the compliant industries. To enable businesses to achieve this feat, the present study became a necessity in order to propagate the need and the role of corporate organisations in the O&G industries regarding the implementation of Women Empowerment through CSR. The study also intends to proffer a practical guide to multinational corporations operating in the Nigerian O&G sector whose economic involvement impacts greatly towards capacity building and all-in development of the women folk. The focus of this study also intends to provide an institutionalized knowledge which will be leveraged on by policymakers in making giant strides in tackling diverse developmental challenges of the nation.

2. Concept of CSR

The concept of CSR is an open and vague concept where no boundaries or limits can be set. It is an elusive term with a multiplicity of definitions. One of the fundamental problems encountered in the definition of this concept is due to lack of a generally accepted definition and also the use of academic frameworks to measure its influence and spread. CSR is highly subjective and the meaning ascribed to it, is dependent on each writer's area of specialization. Even till presently, no universally acceptable definition is achievable. However, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as 'the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large'.¹² The European Commission in its Green Paper of 2001 defined it, as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.¹³ Being socially responsible means not only fulfilling legal expectations, but also going beyond compliance and investing 'more' into human capital, the environment and the relations with stakeholders'.¹⁴ The International Labour Organisation also defined CSR as '...a way in which enterprises give consideration to the impact of their operations on society and affirm their principles and values both in their own internal methods and processes and in their interaction with other actors. The Social responsibility of corporations is a voluntary and enterprise-driven initiative and this refers to activities considered to exceed compliance with the law'.¹⁵ According to ISO 26000¹⁶, CSR is the responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that: (a) Contributes to sustainable development, health and the welfare of society (b) Takes into account the expectations of stakeholders (c) Is in compliance with applicable laws¹⁷ and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and (d) Is integrated through the organisation and practiced in its relationships'.

⁸A.Cornwall, A., & N.A. Anyidoho, 'Introduction: Women's empowerment: Contentions and Contestations' [2010] *Development*, 53(2): 144-149.

⁹ Lauren McCarthy, *op cit.* p.604.

¹⁰ *The business case for women's economic empowerment: An integrated approach*. Washington, D.C.: ICRW

¹¹ Tania Akter. 'How Women Empowerment as a Corporate Social Responsibility Topic can be taken as Competitive Advantage to stay Competitive in the RMG industry?' [2012] 17(10) *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 2319-7668.

¹²M. Blowfield and J. Frynas 'Setting New Agendas: Critical Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Developing World' [2005] 81(3) *International Affairs*, 499. See also E.O. Ekhaton, 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Chinese Oil Multinationals in the Oil and Gas Industry of Nigeria: An Appraisal' [2014] 28(28) *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, 119; Das Santanu. 'Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives Taken for Rural Development in India.' [2015] 4(3) *Sumedha Journal of Management*, 4.

¹³ Why Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Matters? <<https://www.pi-slice.com/en/news-from-the-field/article/why-corporate-social-responsibility-csr-matters>> accessed 14 June, 2018.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵In Focus Initiative Corporate Social Responsibility: Strategic Orientations <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb295/pdf/mne-2-1.pdf>> accessed 14 June 2018.

¹⁶ International Standard Organisation 26000 Guidance on Social Responsibility.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

3. Concept of Women Empowerment

Anatomizing the term ‘women empowerment’ evinces two broad concepts: gender and power. According to WHO, gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes¹⁸ and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men.¹⁹ Power simply means the ability or capacity to do something or act in particular way. According to the World Bank, empowerment is defined as ‘the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes’.²⁰ Rowlands (1995) defines empowerment as the process by which people, organisations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context,²¹ (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives,²² (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others²³ and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community.²⁴ Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights. Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one's without power gain greater control over their lives. This means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology.²⁵

4. Women Empowerment through CSR

In addressing this, the question ‘can CSR programmes be a vehicle for empowerment of an average Nigerian woman?’ becomes pertinent. Answering this question is an uphill task, since divergent opinions exist regarding how women enablement could be achieved. Women empowerment emphasizes empowering women in various ways such as financial, social, cultural, legal and political. Educational achievement and economic participation are key factors in ensuring the empowerment of women.²⁶ Empowering women is all about encouraging self-empowerment, self-esteem and personal growth. To successfully achieve this goal, sustained efforts and investment of economic resources are seriously required not only by the government but also intensified efforts of the other economic sectors especially the O&G industries are very much required. Organizational goals of igniting women empowerment should be done through inspiring courageous women to break free from the shackles of limiting belief patterns and societal conditioning that have kept women suppressed and unable to see their true inner worth and power. This objective is achievable through implementing CSR in a systematic manner.

5. Justifications for Women Gendered CSR in Nigeria

Society’s development without development of women is unimaginable.²⁷ Enormous benefits abound when women receive adequate empowerment. The World Economic Forum opines that women’s advancement can help tackle ‘five global problems of: demography, leadership, food security and agriculture, sustainability and scarcity, and conflict’.²⁸ It is argued that women, as mothers, home managers and community-influencers can provide routes out of poverty not just for themselves but for their families, communities, and even nations.²⁹ There is also growing evidence that increasing women’s empowerment leads to national economic growth.³⁰ When women are empowered, their entrepreneurial potentials will be ‘unleashed,’ creating more sustainable businesses, thereby helping families and communities prosper.³¹ Over the last forty years a significant body of work has shown how women have been a disposable resource for business,³² with the illusion of personal economic choice. Women could be empowered through education (cf. Nike’s *Girl Effect*),³³ or even empowered as adults within value

¹⁸IFMSA Policy Document Ending Gender-Based Violence. Retrieved <https://ifmsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GS_MM2020_Policy_Mental-Health-amended-1.pdf> accessed 30 July 2020.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ World Bank. 2011. *World development report 2012: Gender equality and development*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank; K. Wilson, ‘Race,’ Gender and Neoliberalism: Changing Visual Representations in Development [2011] 32(2) *Third World Quarterly*, 315–331.

²¹ J. Rowlands, ‘Empowerment examined’ [1995] 5(2) *Development in Practice*, 103,101–107.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ K. Swarnalatha & R.K. Anuradha. ‘Corporate Social Responsibility towards Women Empowerment’ [2017] 3(3) *International Journal of Applied Research*, 303-307.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸World Economic Forum (WEF). 2013. *Five challenges, one solution: Women. Global agenda council on women’s empowerment 2011 – 2012*. Geneva: WEF.

²⁹ World Bank. 2011. *World development report 2012: Gender equality and development*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

³⁰ E. Duflo, ‘Women empowerment and economic development’ [2007]50(4) *Journal of Economic Literature*, 1051–1079.

³¹ Coca-Cola Company. 2012. *Sustainability Report 2011/2012*.

³² R. Pearson, ‘Beyond women workers: Gendering CSR’ [2007] 8(4) *Third World Quarterly*, 731–749.

³³ The Girl Effect is a global movement launched by the Nike Foundation. It is about the unique potential of adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world.

chains.³⁴ These are evidences of outstanding business benefits of investing in women empowerment. More so, women employed in value chains can sometimes earn better incomes, learn new skills, and gain confidence and autonomy.³⁵ Corporate-led women's empowerment is achievable the most when women's innate qualities are motivated. This 'power within' usually is drawn out by an external party, such as a businesses or NGOs. In order ensure that women are truly to be empowered, one of the basic requirements which is adequate education and proper exposure to the economic conditions is a necessity.

6. CSR Initiatives for Empowering Women

This section shows how the CSR activities of corporations in the O&G sector can help in promoting women empowerment and the major strategies that could be adopted to achieve them are stipulated below. Here are the key strategies that could be taken up by the organizations in order to encourage women empowerment.

Education

It is ideal to motivate deserving women in education and promote women participation in politics. This could be achieved by encouraging girl child education through female scholarship awards and observing the principle of affirmative action in political appointments and employments.

Health

The second initiative after education is health. Education is the foundation to health consciousness. Knowledge obtained from education impacts the health and hygiene outlook of a woman. An educated woman will be focused in staying healthy and will also tend to go for higher education and achieve more in life. Health and hygiene can be measured by following all the medical standards of BP, cholesterol, proper height and weight, proper nutrition, sugar level etc. Also, the availability of basic sanitation facilities, improved child development and prevention of infant mortality can be achieved if education experience is obtained.

Financial Assistance

This entails provision of opportunities for economic independence through the means of encouraging women's savings and credit groups as well as support self-help groups.

Skills

Education also helps the women in having a skillset which they can use enhance their earning. Earning here means a job or a business which generates a constant source of revenue to the women. Once they have constant revenue, they will achieve financial stability (measured in terms of the revenue earned).

Self Confidence

A financially stable woman will be self-confident and it is only if a woman is educated that she will know about her rights and laws protecting her interests. A woman with thorough knowledge of all her rights can be good leader and an inspiration for other women. Hence, crimes against women will be reduced if she is strong and aware of her rights.

7. Legal Frameworks on CSR-Led Women Empowerment

Nigerian Minerals and Mines Act (NMMA) 2007

The enclave mentality and attitude of the extractive industries, especially in the developing countries as well as the need to balance varying interests of all stakeholders especially the community and manpower development logically calls for legislative intervention.³⁶ Hence, this is the basis of the Community Development Agreement (CDA)³⁷ as enshrined in the NMMA Act 2007, being the principal law governing the solid minerals sector of the Nigerian economy. The NMMA, in enshrining the CDA as part of the body of laws aimed at directing mining companies within Nigeria towards a proper recognition of the community as an important stakeholder in the business of mining has extended the corporate aim of mining companies in Nigeria beyond the maximisation of profit for shareholders to the creation of social value for all stakeholders. Section 116 of the Act³⁸ makes it mandatory that the mining companies that have approved mining licenses, negotiate an agreement with the community where the mining operation is to commence. The law makes commencement of operations subject to the CDA. This requirement inevitably makes the mining industry to interact with an important stakeholder who directly bears the impact of mining operations³⁹. This provides an opportunity for the concerned corporations and

³⁴ Coca-Cola's *5by20 Policy*.

³⁵ M. Maertens & J. Swinnen, 'Are African high-value horticulture supply chains bearers of gender inequality?' [2010] Rome: The World Bank.

³⁶A. Akinsulore, 'The Effects of Legislation Corporate Social Responsibility in the Minerals and Mines Sector of Nigeria' [2016] (7) (1) *Journal of Sustainable Development & Policy*, 105.

³⁷ Community Development Agreements (CDA) are agreements reached between host communities and mining companies to provide some social facilities to aid in the economic, social and general development of their host community.

³⁸Nigerian Minerals and Mines (NMMA) Act 2007.

³⁹A. Akinsulore, *op cit*, 107.

the respective communities to promote women empowerment through the CDA. The CDA is expected to cover such areas as: educational scholarship, apprenticeship, technical training and employment opportunities for indigenes of the communities;⁴⁰financial or other forms of contributory support for infrastructural development and maintenance such as education, health, or other community services, roads, water and power;⁴¹assistance with the creation, development and support to small-scale and micro enterprise;⁴²agricultural product marketing;⁴³methods and procedures of environmental and socio-economic management and local governance enhancement. These highlighted areas are designed to confer social and economic benefits on the host communities from the mining company as it proceeds with its mining activities.⁴⁴

Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act

With the introduction of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act 2010, new responsibilities were placed on International Oil Companies (IOCs) to ensure the inclusion of 'local content' in their project plans with minimum content requirements that have been approved for each project during bids.⁴⁵This Act has far-reaching implications for the O&G sector because section 1 states that 'it shall apply to all matters pertaining to Nigerian content in respect of all operations or transactions carried out in or connected with the Nigerian O&G industry'. The inclusion of a requirement to submit an annual Employment and Training Plan showing anticipated skill shortages in the Nigerian labour force is an attempt to influence the implementation of UN millennium developmental goals (promote gender equality and empower women) by the Nigerian government through this scheme.⁴⁶

ISO 26000 Guidance on Social Responsibility

ISO 26000 Guidance on Social Responsibility is an International Standard providing guidelines for social responsibility and was launched in 2010. It provides guidance rather than requirements unlike some other well-known ISO standards; for the implementation of CSR. Instead, it helps in clarifying what social responsibility is; helps businesses and organizations translate principles into effective actions and shares best practices relating to social responsibility, globally. It is aimed at all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size or location.⁴⁷ The goal of ISO 26000 is to contribute to global sustainable development, by encouraging business and other organizations to practice social responsibility to improve their impacts on their workers, their natural environments and their communities.⁴⁸ ISO 26000:2010 stated that organizations take into consideration societal, environmental, legal, cultural, political and organizational diversity, as well as differences in economic conditions, while being consistent with international norms of behaviour.⁴⁹

United Nations Millennium Declaration

The United Nations Millennium Declaration was signed in September 2000 by 191 UN member states where they agreed to achieve the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This declaration commits world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The MDGs are derived from this Declaration, and all have specific targets and indicators.⁵⁰

The Eight Millennium Development Goals are:

- i. to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- ii. to achieve universal primary education;
- iii. to promote gender equality and empower women;
- iv. to reduce child mortality;
- v. to improve maternal health;
- vi. to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
- vii. to ensure environmental sustainability; and
- viii. to develop a global partnership for development.

⁴⁰Section 116 (3)(a), NMMA.

⁴¹Section 116 (3)(b), *Ibid.*

⁴²Section 116 (3)(c), *Ibid.*

⁴³Section 116 (3)(d), *Ibid.*

⁴⁴A. Akinsulore, *op cit*, 106.

⁴⁵Sections 7 and 11 of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Development Act 2010 respectively

⁴⁶Section 29(a)(ii), *ibid.*

⁴⁷ISO 26000:2010 Guidance on Social Responsibility. Retrieved from <<https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html>> accessed 29 November 2018.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/about/en/> accessed 01 August 2020.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Empowering women socially, economically, educationally, politically, and legally appears a herculean task, but can be made possible with dedicated and determined effort of family, society, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs and government to eradicate the deep-rooted problem of disregard for women. Promoting women empowerment through CSR-led activities can help in attainment of a better and well balanced society. However, achieving women empowerment through these activities requires the concerted effort of the organization as well as the society in order to find the women in distress and to offer them a helping hand. Only if women are educated, they will understand the laws and rights protecting their interests. So, it is clear that education and health play a vital role in empowering women. Empowering women contributes to informed decision-making, poverty alleviation, improved income and even gives women the exposure of the world crisis issues such as global warming, deforestation and resources constraints. More so, investing in women spreads economic opportunities, creates stronger communities and, as a result, a broader base of consumers and potential employees. The diversity of 'gendered' CSR practices could be reflected through increased awareness of the Nigerian women and investment in women's empowerment programmes, which are usually in the forms of multi-stakeholder initiatives or public-private partnerships involving corporations, NGOs, governments, and funding bodies such as the IMF.⁵¹ Empowerment can be operationalized through scholarship and motivating women participation in education, politics and sports. Companies also enjoy certain benefits by investing CSR-led women empowerment such as training and promoting education for women. Such benefits include higher productivity, increased sales, positive brand image. Finally, this study therefore recommends empowerment of women by multinational companies especially those in the O & G industry by provision of women education and promoting the welfare of women politically, economically, socially as well as information and awareness on health aspects through their CSR policies and programmes.

⁵¹ M. Bexell, 'Global Governance, Gains and Gender: UN-Business Partnerships for Women's Empowerment' [2012] 14(3) *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 389-407.