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Community Reaction to Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Multinational companies in Zimbabwe initiate and finance community projects through private partnership but the active involvement of beneficiaries in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes projects so that the felt needs of local communities are met has been queried. The study sought to analyse school capacity programme (SCP) being implemented by Delta Corporation in Macheke, Zimbabwe as a corporate social responsibility programmes and interrogated community participation in such projects. The qualitative methodology was utilised with focus group discussions and key informants interview being used as data collection tools. The availability and purposive sampling was employed to identify the study participants. It was revealed that Delta Corporation crafts its CSR policies at national level aiming at addressing poverty at community level. The study, however, revealed that community participation in CSR projects was obscure and the community leadership only played a passive role at project execution stage. The study recommended that government

should be active in spearheading CSR initiatives through legislation to ensure that corporate social responsibility becomes an obligation for corporation instead of charity.

Key Words: Corporate Social Responsibility, Delta Corporation, school capacity programme, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Naturally, the enquiry of community participation and inclusivity in any developmental programmes is persistently greeted with prevalent dispute. The agenda of multi-level stakeholder engagement is centrally imperative to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda as a whole (International Institute for Sustainable Development-IISD *et al.*, 2004). Although quantification of the positive or negative correlations between community engagement and successful CSR initiatives is not statistically possible, it is commonly accepted that it is futile to undertake CSR initiatives or sustainable development (SD) initiatives without apt community engagement. This means, a meaningful community CSR entails social integration, inclusivity, cohesion and sustainability is imbued in political, economic and social milieus. Corporate Social Responsibility entails the onus of industry to subsidize to ecological pecuniary growth, working with personnel, their kin, the indigenous community, and society at large to develop their standards of living, in ways that are in harmony with business operations (World Bank, 2012). Corporate responsibilities embodied four types, namely economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (Carroll, 2008). In Zimbabwe CSR has been a subject matter cutting across all spheres of life in business, politics and governance. This paper interrogated the CSR provided by Delta Corporation paying more attention on school capacity building programmes. The paper also untangled the issue of community participation and concept of sustainability of school capacity building programmes.

General Overview Corporate Social Responsibility in Zimbabwe

While it is a commendable idea for corporate companies to initiate and finance community development projects through public private partnership, practical involvement of the intended beneficiaries (individuals, groups, communities and societies at large) in project designing such that felt-needs are addressed is still questionable. Many organisations (OK Zimbabwe, Nyaradzo, ZIMRA, Dairibord, Old Mutual and Banks) in Zimbabwe have been active in CSR programmes particularly in education, health, water and sanitation, environment and corporate trainings. This study is focusing on Delta Corporation which is active in various initiatives such as education bursaries, health and social soccer programmes. Delta Corporation is also constructing school blocks in various communities as one of its community plough back programme. However, the issue of CSR ownership in Zimbabwe has never gained a legitimate status as organisations continue to treat it as philanthropy instead of right based obligations (Chaneta, 2013). There is the tendency of doing things *for* and not *with* the community; a notion which questions the sustainability of the CSR project. Sen (2001) argues that doing good for people in the community does not always lead to doing things better. Salient to CSR programmes in Zimbabwe is lack of sustainability discourse due to lean engagement of local communities in CSR projects. Only meaningful CSR must be able to reduce poverty among vulnerable communities (Carroll, 2008; Chaneta, 2013) and it must result in strong sense of ownership which

can only be birthed through integral appreciation of local people's views, values and potentials.

Contribution of public private partnership to the elevation of people's lives in Zimbabwe has become a topical theme in business, politics and government. Balancing the shareholder's expectations of maximum returns against other priorities is one of the fundamental problems confronting corporate management (Kakava et al, 2013; Muzingili and Chidyausiku, 2015). The shareholder must receive a good return but the legitimate concerns of other constituencies (customers, employees, communities, suppliers and society at large) also must have the appropriate attention (Chaneta, 2013). This has also attracted attention of government of Zimbabwe through Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment that has made efforts in trying to make sure that local communities benefit from corporate organisations by amending the Indigenisation Act. Introduction of reforms such as Community Share Ownership Trusts are perhaps reckoned product of such initiative. Despite these efforts, petite attention has been given on how multi-national companies are socially investing fairly into the communities. For Delta Corporation, the involvement of local communities in programmes that concern them has been debatable. This is the same reason why scholars like (Chaneta, 2013; Kakava et al, 2013; Muzingili and Chidyausiku, 2015) believe that, it is time for CSR to go beyond philanthropy in Zimbabwe by embracing developmental fundamentals.

Ncube (2012) argued that dearth of legislation in Zimbabwe has now commanded to a situation where Corporate Social Investment (CSI) by the Corporate Sector is negligible, with only some industry sectors, such as mining having some structures on social responsibility like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). It is also observed that, presently, the only legislation regarding CSR in Zimbabwe is the Environmental Impact Assessment Policy (EIAP) of 1994 and the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act of 2007. The shortcoming of these statutory instruments is that, they are non-mandatory in nature and they do not directly compel corporate organisations to consider CSR as a right based initiative. However, the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act is mandatory in that it requires all companies that are worth USD50 000 and above to plough back their profits into the society (Kasukwere, 2012). It is important to note that, the process of indigenization has been subjected to political polemics at the expense of promoting the welfare of indigenous peoples. Social responsibility is at present so important that the resources of an organisation, if socially invested, can result into socio-economic transformation of benefiting communities. International corporations such as Delta are investing in CSR programmes. However, most of the programmes have remained residual in nature, paying little attention on principle of sustainable development. The important question for this paper is; does doing good always lead to doing better things?

Todaro and Smith (2012) pointed out that the key objective for development should focus on improving the quality of human life. The Dag Hammarskjold Foundation's 'Another Development' manifesto (1975) also extended on the ideas of the development discourse by proposing an egalitarian, poverty-focused strategy which is reminiscent of earlier proponents of community development, placed emphasis on local autonomy, participation and self-reliance. Integrating developmental CSR does not just necessitate sustainability but it also ensures human dignity, acceptance, respect,

wholeness and ethics. In particular reference to Delta Corporation, Mbada Diamond and Barclays Bank, they are implementing projects in areas such as sports, health and education aiming at promoting community development through community participation. Delta Corporation is implementing Schools capacity building project, among others, which is aiming at improving access to education to the under privileged rural communities. In this paper, school capacity building project must be able to answer the following CSR questions:

- Who in the community stands to participate from the CSR projects?
- Does the CSR project empower or does it create dependency?
- Do the CSR projects prioritize community needs?

Study Methodology

The study used a qualitative research methodology. The study targeted people in Macheke Community who live close to Tashinga Primary School. This population comprised of both parents of pupils who learn at Tashinga School and key figures in the community. The researchers used availability sampling to select community members and purposive sampling to select key informants. This is because the study was done during the rainy season and people were not available in their homesteads but in agricultural fields. Three focused group discussions were conducted to gather information from 16 community members and 3 Key Informant (KI) interviews were also carried out with 1 project officers from Delta, and 2 representatives from the local school. The first focus group discussion was composed of 4 women and 6 men (all aged between 25 and 65). The last focused group discussion consisted of 6 local leaders (1 chief, 1 councilor, 2 village heads and 2 builders). These people were undertaking final tads on the classroom block. The researchers used in-depth interview guide which consisted of open ended questions to allow discussion and unlimited feedback from the participants. Data analysis plan was made in which narrative themes were used.

Ethical deliberations of this study were detailed and adhered to. Respondents volunteered to participate in this study. The researchers did not coerce participation but explained that the research was purely for academic purposes. To ensure anonymity, the researcher did not use names of participants on all data collection instruments. Clearance to get entry in the community was also sought from the responsible authorities.

The Findings

Programmes Offered by Delta Corporation and their Pedigree in Community Development

The study found out that Delta corporate offers the schools capacity building programme, education bursary scheme, wellness programme, safety, health and environment, arts and culture. It was established that Delta Corporation was constructing a classroom block at Tashinga primary school in Macheke. Delta Community projects officer confirmed that Delta is constructing a block at Tashinga Primary and is also offering other CSR programmes. The key informant noted that:

Delta Corporation offers the schools capacity building programme, education bursary scheme, wellness programme, safety, health and environment, arts and

culture. Right now, under the schools' capacity building programme we are about to finish a classroom block at Tashinga primary school in Macheke.

The study observed that Macheke community views Delta's programme as a privilege or gift to them not as right. One of the respondents noted that: "Our village head informed us that we were so lucky to have our school being chosen to benefit from Delta's programme out of the whole province of Mashonaland East."

The community did not understand the niche behind CSR programmes. This was caused by lack of a meaningful participation in such activities, especially identifying school capacity building project. The study learnt that Delta Corporate department had the blueprint of the project guidelines, which deviation from them is not encouraged.

The origins and how the Schools Capacity Building Programme operates in the community is only known by Delta Corporation. Delta community projects officer disclosed that:

The Schools Assistance Programme began in 1996 with Delta building a standard classroom block at a school selected in each of the eight rural provinces of Zimbabwe. The company is about to finish a classroom block at Tashinga Primary school in Macheke which is in Mashonaland East Province. In 2003, Delta roped in the Coca Cola Foundation and set up the Schools Assistance Trust (SAT). A few years down the line, the British Embassy came on board as a partner whose responsibility is to furnish the classrooms.

This information was not known by beneficiaries as it is only kept as office information. The beneficiaries are only provided with the information on how the project would be executed. However, participants were divided on Delta Corporation's contribution to community development. It was noted by some participants that, classrooms were already many at Tashinga primary and what was wanted is to donate textbooks and initiate other skill developments projects. Conversely, other participants, notably, community leaders considered school block being important despite lack of enough consultation from Delta Corporations.

Community Perceptions Schools Capacity Building Programme

The study found out that the intended beneficiaries were included at the implementing stage of the Schools Capacity Building Programme. One participant expressed that: "Our village head announced that those who had skills in building or construction were required to register to the school head of Tashinga Primary." Despite lack of participation, some participants noted that, school capacity programme allowed them to use their skills. One builder noted that:

We are the best local builders that are why we were chosen to construct this block. Although the school is ours, we are getting paid because the Company is making a lot of money out of selling beer. Once we finish constructing this block we are done.

The Delta projects officer revealed that; "*The schools' capacity building project aims at capacitating the community through providing labour and other locally available materials.*" Those who were not skilled in building were engaged in other manual tasks such as fetching water, supplying bricks and other necessities for building to professionals.

It was established that the intended beneficiaries of the project participated mostly at the execution stage. There was limited community involvement at identification stage. Without objecting the value of corporate social responsibility by Delta, the study learnt that participatory planning was not fully executed by Delta Corporate in their CSR programmes. One community leader noted that: “We were told by officials from Education and Delta that Delta was to assist the school by constructing a classroom block and that parents were to provide labour and other locally available resources such as bricks and timber.”

Even the community leadership was engaged but passively. Community leadership participated by being told what was going to happen. Participant from Delta revealed that, the issue of community participation is critical but it remains controversial everywhere. Even among the community members, the issue was not clearly understood.

Need Identification: How Delta Identified Tashinga Primary School

The study learnt that, community was not even aware about how their school was chosen to benefit from the Schools Capacity Building Programme. To some participants, the programme came as amazement to them. One of the participants reiterated that: “We were not consulted; we were surprised on how our school was chosen to benefit from this programme.”

There was no grassroots participation during the consultation stage for Delta to come up with this project in Macheke community. On this note, Delta community project officer disclosed that Schools Capacity Building Programme was identified and crafted at national level with consultations from various stakeholders and agents of development. The programme meant to benefit disadvantaged rural schools every year from different provinces and this process rotates such that all provinces would be reached. The community projects officer disclosed that: A need assessment was carried out by the Provincial Education Officer together with Delta Corporate Affairs Management and identified that Tashinga Primary was the neediest school in Mashonaland East province.”

The Delta projects officer confirmed that among its consultation team there was also an auditor whom his task was to validate the project. The study also found out that Delta took an extra mile to validate this project by physically counting the number of pupils at the chosen school (Tashinga School).

However, participants revealed that they were not consulted because of their low level of education, lack of economic, social and political powers. One participant noted that: “As poor as we are, how can we be consulted by educated and rich urban elites to contribute to the development of our community?”

This exemplifies the fact that lack of socio-economic and political powers among the poor villagers was a chief deterrent for them to actively participate in programmes which seek to transform their livelihoods. The study found out that a number of people in Macheke community were unemployed and were living in poverty as revealed by old aged respondent who emphasised that:

There are no jobs in our area, there are many unemployed youths. We suggest that developmental agencies which come in our area with such programmes

aiming at creating employment should create sustainable employment. The energetic group is now unemployed since they finished constructing a classroom block at Tashinga primary our local school which was funded by Delta Corporation.

When participants were asked to arrange their problems in the order of priority, the dip tank was at the top followed by a borehole and the classroom at the third position for the most top ranked problems. To some community members, the construction of a classroom block at Tashinga primary did not address the most felt need of community though programme is important for human capital development.

Sustainability of Schools Capacity Building Programme

There were little reservations regarding the sustainability of school capacity building project. Delta community projects officer noted that Schools Capacity Building Programme is sustainable. Despite this, some respondents lamented lack of community engagement in the identification of community needs. One Village head referred the block as “their building” meaning that the block belongs to Delta Corporation despite the block being built for the community. There was evidence from the study that, non-involvement of locals kills trust, harmonious relationship and confidence in CSR projects. Participants feared that, after building the block, Delta will not maintain it when it starts to age. One of the school authorities noted that:

The school development committee treasury is bankrupt as pupils are even failing to pay their school fees due to poverty and in the event that the block starts to dilapidate it is our plea to Delta Corporation or any other donor to come for our rescue.

This would result in a situation whereby the school would want Delta or another Donor to come for their rescue in the future. It was suggested by local leaders that school capacity building programme should be accompanied by other income generating projects to ensure that school is maintained. Building of school block without other capacity-strengthening programmes was going to affect the sustainability of CSR project. However, local community members were very pleased about the school block. It was established that, school was going to have long term positive impact on their children.

Discussions

There are no reservations that Delta Corporation is contributing positively to the development of Macheke community through school capacity building programme. However, it was established from the study that, the building of school block was considered as the privilege instead of right to the community. It was therefore, learnt that, it was a will of Delta Corporation to build the school block instead of natural obligation to do so. Same situation is observed with CSR amongst businesses in Africa (Kivuitu et al, 2005), which revealed that the most common approach to CSR concerns was through philanthropy, particularly concentrating on unsustainable education, health and environment programmes. However, Kakava et al (2013) and Mathende (2017) are of opinion that, the private sector has currently little or no motivation to engage into legitimate CSR activities since the Zimbabwean government is failing to lead in the process. Ncube (2012) supports that CSR initiatives largely remain patchy,

un-monitored and un-quantified and thus remain 'invisible' in official reporting. Explanations for this scenario include Zimbabwe having no regulatory legislation in place to encourage or regulate the corporate sector to involve local people in social responsibility activities. However, developed nations have legislations and statutes which promote meaningful CSR initiatives; for example, in Denmark they enacted such policies as Danish Financial Statements Act in 2008 and adoption of an Action Plan for CSR (Danish Government, 2008). While Delta corporation is engaging on CSR activities, scholars like (Chaneta, 2013; Mathende, 2017) believe that Zimbabwean corporations do this to get tax exemptions. The feeling in this case is that, what is gained and invested in CSR is not compatible, allowing the corporations to benefit more than the local community.

The study discovered that the community was not clearly conscious of the origins of Schools Capacity Building Programme. Thus, the issue of community participation was contested in the study; where community felt that the programme was imposed on them. These findings revealed that project identification was done by technocrats and designed at technical level to suit all benefiting communities of Zimbabwe. It therefore, confirms to the notion that participatory planning is a fallacy in Zimbabwe's corporate organisations. From Delta, the study learnt that projects are designed at headquarter and community is engaged at the implementation stage. In China, Crowther and Aras (2009) and Frynas' (2005) findings in Nigeria oil Companies, considered non-community participation to be caused by lack of public information in corporate social responsibility programmes to promote community participation. Although Delta is plausibly appreciated for such good social investment but the community participation was not given utmost attention from the inception of school capacity building project. Each and every community has its own social, economic and political make up, which results in them experiencing different problems. Andre et al (2006) attested that, lack of participation may result from undermining value contribution of the community and understanding of the imperativeness of community consultation and public participation. All this demands for harmonious rapport between community and corporate organisations to ensure that CSR projects are appreciated and have long lasting impact on community's socio-economic transformation.

Another major theme that emerged from this study was concept of sustainability of CSR programmes in Zimbabwe. It was established that Macheke villagers were not involved at the consultation level and this made the respondents feel that their felt needs were not properly handled. The beneficiaries from Delta Corporation noted that local school has no other means of maintaining this block in the event that it starts to dilapidate. Previous studies, Carroll (2008), Chattu, (2015) and Kakava et al (2013) pointed out that corporate organisations should go beyond philanthropic attitude to foster development in poor communities through provision of corporate trainings and empowerment. Delta Corporation, like any other corporate organisation in Zimbabwe, should design programmes together with communities to come up with programmes which would create empowerment and sustainability in ameliorating poverty. This has been supported by Todaro and Smith (2012) who proposed that development can only be accepted as such, when the general levels of living is expanded within a community, to the extent that, absolute poverty, degree of inequality of income distribution, the level of unemployment and the nature and quality of educational, health and other cultural services are all improved. The situation in Zimbabwe where beneficiaries are

not practically involved in projects formulation results in them thinking that these programmes are unsustainable gifts to local communities. Lessons from Nigeria Corporate companies point out that, designing of developmental projects without genuinely involving the host community members result in social initiatives perceived as gifts from foreigners and the local people did not have a sense of ownership to such schemes (Frynas, 2005). In this essence, sustainable CSR intends to meet many socio-economic problems facing the communities where the company operates, in order to help improve their quality of life. While, Delta proved to be playing a major role in community development; ignoring other aspect of project sustainability to foster development among the rural, marginalized, impoverished and disadvantaged communities is questionable. In this end, CSR projects in Zimbabwe rightly confirmed the assertion that doing good things does not always lead to doing things better. This, however, does not mean communities are not benefiting from CSR projects; only intervention approaches are still reproachable.

Conclusion

The study found out that Delta corporate offers the schools capacity building programme, education bursary scheme, wellness programme, safety, health and environment, arts and culture. Despite these important programmes, community participation and sustainability of the projects was questioned. In order to enhance community empowerment, CSR discourse has to shift from general philanthropy to robust community involvement to address the important goal of poverty reduction and sustainable community development efforts in Zimbabwe. All stakeholders' approach to community and multi-level stakeholder engagement should be informed by an understanding of the constraints to community engagement in the CSR agenda as a whole. Local communities should be feeling the sense of belonging and ownership to the CSR projects. There is need to sensitize both communities and corporate organisations that, CSR is not a philanthropy but a right based initiative. Therefore, corporate organisations have to consider going beyond mere consultation of local communities. This paper argued that Delta Corporation was divergent to the ideology of popular participation, which appeals for the inclusion of beneficiaries from project conception, where the community identifies its challenges. While doing good is always appreciated; CSR programmes in Zimbabwe should rest on ethical imperatives of community participation to ensure that these projects improve the well-being of communities and make society better for everyone. CSR is, therefore, the obligation that corporations have towards their stakeholders and society in general which goes beyond what is prescribed by law or union contracts.

Recommendations

- **Development of CSR Framework/Act:** Zimbabwe lags behind in terms of legal framework which regulates various organisations on their corporate social responsibility programme. Independent Act or Policy guiding organisations on CSR should be formulated and all corporate organisations should adhere to it. Government should compel organisations to develop ethic driven communities
- **Transparency and accountability of corporate organisation:** It is important to consult and engage the communities from the onset of CSR programmes.

This is essential in keeping the community constantly informed through communication about what is happening in the projects.

- **Adoption of participatory Rural Appraisal Approach (PRA):** PRA should closely involve villagers and local officials in the process. Thus the focus on local people's capabilities as a key resource in facilitating their participation can be ensured. The outcome sought out of PRA is sustainable local action and institutions. In this case, the people should
- **Combine philanthropy and corporate training.** Corporate social responsibility should be woven into the company and community way of living. A successful CSR project should enhance the lives of the community permanently. There is a need to go beyond philanthropy and introduce corporate trainings which can give local communities important life skills.

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