

## **Exxon-Mobil and Corporate Social Responsibility in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: Past and Present**

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### **Abstract**

The main aim of this study was to assess the up to date role of Exxonmobil in the development of host State, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. As the company's policy is that of being a good corporate citizen, it has identified, supported and operated a planned and sustainable programme of community development in the State. Through quantitative facts, the study has revealed that in the past (Mobil) has made great contributions in the area of physical infrastructure namely; road construction, water, electricity, health facilities etc. However, following the merger between Exxon and Mobil now Exxonmobil, the company's policy shifted from physical infrastructure to capacity building and economic empowerment. This is evident in various training and support programmes embarked upon by the company. The study has further revealed that there will always be a difference between State/Community expectations and what Exxonmobil can provide. Based on this, the work has recommended that Exxonmobil should keep on discussing ways to close such gap. Moreso, Exxonmobil should balance infrastructural provision with capacity building. One should not be made to suffer.

**Keywords:** Exxon-Mobil, Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State, Corporate responsibility

### **1. Introduction**

Social responsibility is an issue that most organizations feel committed to. The concept reflects the things a company should for the community within which it operates, which often times go beyond meeting its obligatory requirements.

In more than three decades of operation in Nigeria, Mobil Producing Nigeria, operator of the NNPC/MPN Joint Venture has consistently demonstrated a high level of social responsibility through various community assistance programmes undertaken by the company. This range from road construction to provision of potable water and electricity, upgrading of educational and health facilities, environmental protection activities, sundry support to professions and civil society groups and recently, capacity building initiative (Mobil Community News, 2005). With the merger of Mobil and Exxon now known as Exxonmobil, one would expect more in their corporate social responsibility. This work intends to appraise Exxonmobil activities both past and present in Akwa Ibom State.

### **2. The Study Location**

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. Akwa Ibom State is one of the thirty-six States in Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was created on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1987. There are 31 Local Government Areas including Uyo the State Capital. The State is strategically located at the Southeastern corner of Nigeria between latitudes 4°30' and 5° 33' North and longitudes 7° 30' and 8° 25' East (see Fig.1). It is sandwiched between Abia and Rivers States to the West, Cross River State to the East, Abia State to the North and Atlantic Ocean to the South (Daniel, 2012).

### **3. Conceptual Meaning**

There is no clear-cut definition of what Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) comprises. Every company has different CSR objectives though the main motive is the same. The term corporate social responsibility came into common use in the late 1960s and early 1970s after many multinational corporations formed the term stakeholders, meaning those on whom an organisation's activities have impacted. It was used to describe corporate entity beyond the shareholders as a result of an influential book by Edward Freeman, (1984).

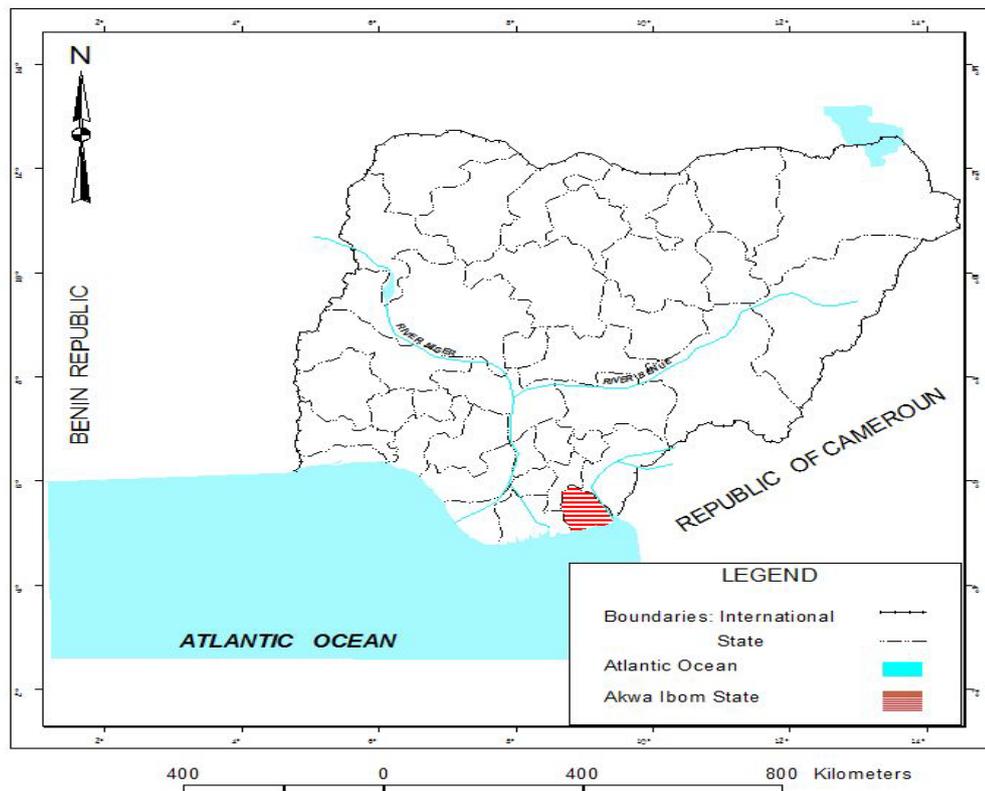


Fig. 1: The Location of Akwa Ibom State on the map of Nigeria

Wood (1991) opines that Corporate Social Responsibility also called corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, social performance or substantial responsible business/responsible business is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. It functions as built-in-self-regulating mechanism whereby a business monitors and ensures its active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standard and international norms. He observes further that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a process with the aim to embrace responsibility for the company's action and encourage a positive impact through its activities in the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and other members of the public sphere who may also be considered as stakeholders.

Corporate Social Responsibility is seen as a 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 the local community. It is one of the newest management strategies where companies try to create a positive impact on the society while doing business, (Corporate Social Responsibility <http://www.mallenbaker.net/csr/definition> Retrieved 28th Sept. 2012).

Social responsibility is a duty every individual or organisation has to perform so as to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystem which could imply sustaining the equilibrium between the two. It pertains not only to business organisations but also to everyone whose any action impacts on the environment. This responsibility can be positive, by avoiding engaging in socially harmful acts, or active, by performing activities that directly advanced social goals, (<http://inni/pacinst.org/inni/corporatesocialresponsibility/> standard definition retrieved 28th Sept. 2012).

In a general sense Komblum and Julian, (1980) observed that when most people in a society agree that a condition exists which threatens the quality of their lives and their most cherished values, and also agree that something should be done to remedy this condition, that condition is defined by sociologist as a social problem. In other words, the society's members have reached a broad consensus that a condition that affects some members of the population is a problem for the entire society, not just for those who are directly affected. This condition therefore requires social policy to address this social problem.

Hill (1997) sees social policy as activities which influence welfare. According to him, whilst non-state bodies may be described as having 'policies' a generic expression 'social policy' is primarily used to define the role of

the state in relation to welfare of its citizens. In the light of these, it is observed that provision of social services is not only governmental but also involves non-governmental organisations. This work is to examine the role of corporate bodies in social welfare administration with particular reference to Exxonmobil in Akwa Ibom State.

#### **4. Historical Development of Mobil Now Exxonmobil in Akwa Ibom State**

Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) is the second largest oil producer in Nigeria. It started business in the country in 1955 as Mobil Exploration Nigeria Incorporated (MENI) in December, 1961. After unsuccessful exploration efforts in the former western and northern regions, MENI was granted two offshore oil prospecting licenses (OPLs) in the then South Eastern State. In early 1964, MENI made its first discovery. The prospecting licenses were converted to four oil mining licenses in 1968 and by the end of that year a total of 50 exploratory wells and its appraisal wells had been drilled.

In June 16, 1969, Mobil Producing Nigeria was incorporated to take over and continue the business of MENI. MPN began production of crude oil in February 15, 1970 in the offshore areas of South Eastern State, now Akwa Ibom State with a profit ratio of 40 (Mobil) to 60 (Federal Government). In February 1985, after 15 years of production, MPN hit the One Million Barrel mark. In April 1991, MPN struck another landmark when, along with its Joint Venture Partner, the NNPC, signed loan agreements for about 900 million US dollars with international lenders to develop and produce its Oso field condensate, reserves estimated at about 500 million barrels, (EMN, 2006 and MPN, 2010).

December 1999, witnessed the merger between Exxon and Mobil Corporations. This brought together three major companies in Nigeria, Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EEPNL), Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc (MON) and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU). The three companies have notable history, proven experience and strong records of contributions to Nigeria's development. EEPNL and MPN are the upstream subsidiary companies of Exxonmobil in Nigeria. Exxonmobil Corporation (Exxonmobil) is the world's premier petroleum and petrochemical company, operating to the highest standards of financial and technical excellence, business ethics, safety; health and environmental awareness. Exxonmobil has over 84,000 employees and a presence in some 200 countries and territories, (MPN, 2010).

The company's overall contribution towards the country's economic and social development has followed closely in the wake of its production growth. It was the recognition of this contribution that it won, together with its parent and sister companies – Mobil Oil Corporation and Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc, the 1985 Honour Award of the Nigeria chamber of commerce. MPN was also the first corporate citizen to win the honour award of the society of Occupational Health Physicians of Nigerian (SOHPON) etc., (Akpabio, 1990 and EMN, 2006).

#### **5. The Role of Exxonmobil in the Development of Akwa Ibom State: The Past and Present**

Exxonmobil public relations activities are derived from the philosophy of its parent company, Mobil Oil Corporation, and its contributions to the welfare of the host communities. This philosophy is based on being a good corporate citizen by supporting and identifying with worthy causes in the country, especially in the immediate vicinity where it operates. Following this guiding principle, Exxonmobil operates a planned and sustained programme of Community Development in Nigeria. In Akwa Ibom State, where its field operations are based, Exxonmobil in partnership with Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation are said to be making effective and desired contributions to the social and economic lives of the people; among such contributions are the provision of pipe-borne water, electrification, assistance in health-services and roads projects, capacity building etc, (Akpabio, 1990).

At this point, our focus is specifically on comparing the activities of this company before (Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU)) and after (Exxonmobil) to see whether the merger has enhanced or mitigated the company's philosophy of being a good corporate citizen in the host state, Akwa Ibom State.

#### **6. The Past: Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited**

In more than three decades of operation, Mobil producing Nigeria, operator of the NNPC/MPN Joint Venture has consistently demonstrated a high level of social responsibility through various communities/state assistance programme undertaken by the company. This range from road construction to provision of potable water and electricity, upgrading of educational and health facilities, environmental protection activities, sundry support to professions and civil society groups. (MPN, 2006).

Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited corporate responsibility in Akwa Ibom State took centre the stage from 1980s. Initially its corporate responsible citizen revolved around the oil producing community notably Ibeno, Mkpanak, Eket, Esit Eket and Onna Local Governments. But later it extended to other parts of the state. An examination of some projects undertaken will suffice.

### 6.1 Projects

In 1980, the Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) said to have been founded by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited Joint Venture was commissioned in Akwa Ibom State, (Akpabio, 1990). The three piece package aimed at improving the quality of life of rural communities in the state comprised nineteen water wells, immunization and Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) centres. The project was executed under the auspices of the United Nation International Children Education Fund (UNICEF). Other projects include:

1. Eket urban electrification;
2. Mkpanak village electrification;
3. Pipe borne water, airstrip villages, Eket;
4. Mkpanak water supply;
5. Atibe water supply and electricity, Eket;
6. Mkpanak erosion control; and
7. Hand-pump Borehole Water supply to Ibeno and Esit Urua-Eket

### 6.2 Science/Laboratory Equipment for Secondary Schools

1. Etinan Institute, Etinan
2. Girls High School, Eket
3. Secondary School, Okat, Onna
4. National High School, Etebi
5. Ikono Ibom Comprehensive Secondary School, Ikot Ayan, Ikono
6. Independence High School, Essien Udim
7. Comprehensive Secondary School, Edeobom I, Nsit Ubi um
8. Methodist Boys High School, Oron
9. Secondary Grammar School, Ibeno
10. National Association of Akwa Ibom State Students, University of Uyo, Uyo.
11. Nigerian Union of Pensioners, Eket
12. Eket Public Library (MPN, 2009).

### 6.3 Health

Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited has donated medicines to various health institutions in Akwa Ibom State. It has also built and equipped a health centre at Mkpanak, a village adjacent to its operation terminal. The following Health Institutions in Akwa Ibom State here benefited from Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited.

1. Emmanuel General Hospital, Eket
2. St. Luke's Hospital, Anua
3. General Hospital, Iquita Oron
4. Mary Slessor Hospital, Itu
5. Psychiatric Hospital, Eket
6. General Hospital, Ikot Ekpene
7. General Hospital, Etinan
8. Mercy Hospital, Abak
9. General Hospital, Ikpe
10. Government Medical Centre, Akai Ubi um
11. General Hospital, Ikot Okoro
12. Infectious Diseases Hospital, Ikot Ekpene
13. General Hospital, Ikot Abasi
14. Leprosy Hospital, Ekpene Obo, Etinan
15. Primary Health Centre, Uquo
16. Methodist Hospital, Ituk Mbang
17. Health Centre Oron
18. Motherless Babies Home, Idung Iniang Eket, (Akpabio, 1995).

Other projects are shown against their local government area are shown in Table 1. The quantitative facts shown in the Table confirm that MPN before was actively and visibly engaged in Community Assistance Programmes as a matter of social policy, as long as it continues to be in operation. Whether in the provision of electricity, water, roads construction, renovation, drainage etc, the many achievements by MPN are evident. These community development contributions have induced core transformation of the quality of lives of its host state, meaning that several communities in Akwa Ibom State have either directly or indirectly benefited from the MPN social responsibilities programme.

Table 1: Projects executed by Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited

S/N	Project Description	LGA	Sector
1	Provision of water and sanitation facilities at Lutheran High School, Obot Idim	Ibsikpo/ Asutan	Water
2	Provision of water and sanitation at General Hospital, Oruk Anam	Oruk Anam	Water
3	Provision of water and sanitation facilities at Ibiono Ibom St. Theresa Hospital, Use Abat	Ibiono Ibom	Water
4	Reconstruction of Boys Dormitory at Lutheran Special senior science secondary school	Ibakachi, Ikono	Education
5	Provision of Mini water project with treatment plant at Ikot Essien Nsit	Nsit Atai	Water
6	Reconstruction of failed portion of Marina Road (by Eden Hotel)	Eket	Road
7	Provision of mini water project with Treatment plant, Iwo Etor	Eitanan	Water
8	Reconstruction of 16 classroom one-story block at Government secondary school, Afaha Eket	Eket	Education
9	Construction of dormitory block at Cornelia Connelly College, Afaha Oku	Uyo	Education
10	Procurement and installation of water treatment systems at 2 locations at Ekim and Mbokpu Uko Akai	Udung Uko/Oruko	Water
11	Construction of 4 Classroom Block at primary school, Urue Offong	Urue Offong/Oruko	Education
12	Construction of a block at Health centre at Ikot Abasi Obio Nkan	Mkpat enin	Education
13	Completion of water project at Health Centre, Etebi	Esit Eket	Water
14	Completion of water project at Ikot Udo	Mkpat Enin	Water
15	Construction of Ekpowong Drains phase II along Marine Road	Eket	Road
16	Construction of 2 kilometers road Qua Iboe Terminal	Ibena	Roads
17	Construction of two classroom block, Mkpanak	Ibena	Education
18	Electricity projects, Nung Obong, Ikot Akpamba and Ikot Ntung	Nsit Ibom	Electricity
19	Installation of various engineering equipment valued at N17 million at the Electronics/Electrical Engineering Laboratory, Faculty of Engineering, University of Uyo	Uyo	Education
20	Donation of 400 volumes of textbook and manuals to Department of Petroleum, Chemical and Mechanical Engineering valued at ₦11, million	Uyo	Education

Source: Mobil Community News 1998, 2009, MPN Diary 2000, 2009).

## **7. Present**

However, beyond development of infrastructure, there is the need for human capacity building, imparting skills and competency to individuals and groups, especially women and youths, in order to prepare them adequately for self-sufficiency. This is the global trend aimed at leveraging private – public partnerships to foster sustainable development. It is in this context that Exxonmobil following its merger in 1997, twelve years ago commenced a shift of its focus from the provision of infrastructures to capacity building initiative, also known as economic empowerment. Activities here are on programmes that have multiplier effects on individuals and communities such as educational support, skills acquisition, micro credit schemes, small and medium scale business development as well as agricultural projects. In short, the present company's community empowerment initiatives show a practical demonstration of a shift from "giving fish" to Akwa Ibom people, to 'teaching them how to fish', (MPN, 2006).

### **7.1 Education**

A country's future depends largely on the type of education its youth are exposed to. When the future leaders are exposed to qualitative education, the society's foundation is strengthened. This principle justifies Exxonmobil Corporation's allocation of about N95 million to empower girls and boys in Akwa Ibom State in a programme tagged, Better Life Options (BLO). The programme is designed to benefit more than 2000 adolescents over an initial three year period. The aims of the programme include reproductive health education, gender awareness, human right training and safe motherhood. The programme attracted its pilot phase participants from five projects sites located within Eket, Esit Eket, Ibeno, Onna, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Areas (MPN, 2006).

On its National Undergraduate Scholarship Awards, out of 500, 250 slots are allocated to Akwa Ibom State. Currently, there are 1,993 scholars on the awards out of which 1,075 are indigenes of Akwa Ibom state. Each scholar receives N70,000 per session exclusive of project assistance for final year students, (NNPC/MPN, 2011). Exxonmobil has continue to sustain its sponsorship of 50 candidates at Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron. The field of study include; Marine transport, Marine engineering, Nautical science, Boat/ship Building Technology and Business studies. 2011 marked Exxonmobil's third year of sponsorship, (NNPC/MPN, 2011).

Another important area worth noting is on biomedical training programme implemented by Medisend International. Since 2006, Exxonmobil foundation provides significant funding for the training of health technicians and engineers in the repair of vital laboratory, diagnostic and other hospital related/medical equipment. Through Exxonmobil, Medisend has been able to provide a six-month Biomedical Training Programmes in Dallas, USA every year for career biomedical technicians from developing nations of which between 2007 and 2011 of 43 Nigerian beneficiaries 31 of them were from Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Cross River State, (NNPC/MPN, 2011).

### **7.2 Fish Preservation Centre**

Exxonmobil/NNPC Joint venture commissioned two fish preservation centres in Ibeno and Mbo Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The centre which have state-of-art facilities for modern day preservation of fish and other sea food products were built at the cost of over N54 million. These facilities are intended to stimulate the growth of fish industry in Akwa Ibom State and its environs, which would help to alleviate poverty and engender benefits for the primary beneficiary which are women group, (MPN, 2012).

### **7.3 Oil Palm Production in two Akwa Ibom State Communities**

Two communities in Akwa Ibom State – Ikot Akpa Ntuk in Ukanafun and Ikot Oku Ikono, in Uyo are benefiting from the oil palm productivity improvement programme, co-sponsored by Exxonmobil and the United Nations Foundation, (UNF). With about N39 million provided Exxonmobil is helping to create wealth in the state by improving the production and processing of oil palm produce to meet local demands. Already, over 18,000 improved oil palm seedlings have been procured and distributed to 61 farmers. With 150 acres cultivated, oil palm nurseries are also sprouting up. Palm oil processing mills are being developed, while fabrication of processing equipment has been commissioned, and marketing plans are being designed.

The project also gives many forms of assistance to farmers. Among these are training on site selection, land preparation, planting, maintenance, application of fertilizer and control of weeds and pests. The project has arranged to make small loans available to the farmers, (MPN, 2006).

#### **7.4 Entrepreneurial and Business Skills Development Programme for Akwa Ibom State Unemployed graduate**

To reduce unemployment in Akwa Ibom State, Exxonmobil sponsored a week long training programme on business development in each of the three senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State. About 295 unemployed graduates have so far benefited from this exercise. The training focused on how to run a successful business with courses ranging from how to identify business opportunity, sourcing strategy, book keeping, customer relations, planning and managing enterprises, how to sustain and grow your business, how to identify sources of funds and linkages to financial institutions and mentoring among others. Other economic empowerment/capacity building programmes of Exxonmobil are 100 beneficiaries of Garment Design and Production training which at the end, the trainees were supported with starter-packs (which included sewing machines and accessories, power generating sets, pressing irons) as well as cash to enable each of them to commence business operations etc.

In the whole, about 300 small and medium scale business have been boosted through skills development and business advisory training received from the programmes sponsored by Exxonmobil. In addition, over 1,600 people (Women/youths) have benefited from small loans offered by Exxonmobile in the last five years, (NNPC/MPN, 2011).

The emphasis on capacity building and sustainable development of Exxonmobil does not mean that the company has abandoned its infrastructural development, rather, the benefits of these activities tends to complement infrastructural projects still being undertaken by Exxonmobil as well as other development agencies in the State. Available facts have shown that for the past ten years, Exxonmobil has contributed more than 250 million dollars towards social investment in its host state. This as outlined above cover projects in areas such as health, education, capacity-building and infrastructure, helping to deliver benefits to not only Akwa Ibom people but to millions of Nigerians, (Exxonmobil, 2011).

However, the fact remains that the benefits of these activities (capacity building and sustainable development) which is the primary focus of Exxonmobil presently are not always immediately visible (intangible) when compared to physical infrastructures (tangible) have however tended to give the erroneous impression by some especially, the immediate host communities or operational base that Exxonmobil is not as active as before in terms of community development. What this implies is that although, present focus of Exxonmobil is commendable, more attention should be given to physical infrastructural development. Although Exxonmobil is aware of the importance of physical infrastructure, but the point is that having engaged in physical facilities development for many years (Mobil), now prefers (Exxonmobil) to redirect its attention to the development of persons and groups to create wealth and boost economic empowerment in line with the global trend since progress and development are multidimensional. That is physical infrastructural development must go side by side with human capacity development.

#### **8. Recommendations**

1. Exxonmobil should be consistent in providing infrastructural facilities as well as capacity building/empowerment.
2. Exxonmobil should give priority to youth training and empowerment in their area of operation to curb youth restiveness. Such training should be geared toward the need of Exxonmobil for absorption into the company.
3. Exxonmobil should continue to respect Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the host communities in respect of employment and infrastructural provision.
4. Exxonmobil should try to cement their relationship with the immediate communities. They should continue with the good relationship that has existed and not adopt an indifferent policy to community development.
5. Certain categories of contracts should be specifically given to Akwa Ibom indigene as against the present advertisement through internet.
6. Exxonmobil should partner with the state government especially the host communities to ensure that their projects are not vandalized.
7. They should endeavour to close the gap between state expectations and what the company can do. This can be accomplished through dialogue.
8. That from time to time, there should be stakeholders meeting between Exxonmobil and the state government/communities on measures for peaceful co-existence.

## 9. Conclusion

Exxonmobil empowerment programmes are driven by a desire to contribute to the betterment of life in our State and make Akwa Ibom people more self-reliant. The benefits of these activities further complement infrastructural projects still being undertaken by Exxonmobil as well as programmes by other development agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the various arms of government local, state and federal.

It is pertinent to add that, the government of Akwa Ibom State derives about 90 percent of its derivation revenue for development purposes from oil exploration and production activities going on in its territory. A disruption of such activities would have dire consequences for its various plans and programmes. Once a feeling of insecurity is created in a state, potential investors are scared away, and opportunities for economic development may be lost forever. Exxonmobil has enjoyed a relative level of peaceful co-existence in the state for two main reasons: first, the government and the people of the state are peace loving. Usually when they call on government and community leaders at crisis times, they try to help, because they understand that it is in the best of all parties for Exxonmobil business to continue uninterrupted (Umoh, 1996). Secondly, Exxonmobil business has done a great job over the years, of showing in practical terms, through numerous community assistance programmes and projects, that it is a socially responsible citizen of the state and Nigeria.

However, there is need for improvement as there will always be a difference between state/community expectations and what Exxonmobil can do now. The important thing is to keep discussing ways to close such gaps. Exxonmobil will continue to be responsive to the needs of the state within budgetary limits. It is hoped that with concerted efforts by all stakeholders including members of the neighbouring communities who have been urged to initiate and take ownership of their development activities, more will be achieved in facilitating capacity building and sustainable state/community development.

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