

Analysis of Community Relations Practice for Peaceful Coexistence between Organisations and Host Communities

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Abstract

The study investigated why organisations fail to achieve mutually peaceful relationships despite huge investments in community relations programmes using Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited in Brass Island, Bayelsa State and the Whispering Palms, a privately owned holiday resort in Iworo-Ajido, Badagry, Lagos State as a case study. The study was predicated on the Social Penetration theory of public relations. With a survey of 370 respondents, the study revealed that Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited enjoys a smooth working relationship with the Brass Island communities because of the high level of acceptance of and participation in Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited community relations programmes by the members of the host community. The study concludes that the organisational goal of mutual and peaceful coexistence between host communities and organisations does not depend solely on huge investment in community relations programmes. Rather, the host communities' acceptance of the community relations programmes and their participation in executing such programmes are required.

Keywords: *Community Relations Practice, Host Community, Community Relations strategy, Community Relations programmes.*

Introduction

Winning people over is a basic requirement for every organisation. This is because conflict is a natural phenomenon and cannot be insulated from the course of the interface between individuals or organisations and respective publics (Igben & Ikiyowere, 2022). There is a consensus that the basic function of community relations is to project a favourable image for organisations through public relations. Organisations that project a favourable image of themselves to those around them by being responsible for their needs and initiating projects aimed at improving human comfort and understanding are considered good neighbours by their host communities. The need for organisations to embark on community relations cannot be overemphasized. *The New York Times* of March 16, 2016, reported a rocket-propelled grenade attack on the In Salah natural gas field and processing plant in Krehba, 750 miles south of Algiers. The attackers claimed, according to *The New York Times* that the assault was part of its “war on the interests of the crusaders” and that it aimed to protect the environment and discourage shale gas exploration as a result of the negligence of the gas producing plants. The two gas companies were obliged to pull out their employees from Algeria in 2016. This reference underscores the fact that there exist severe negative consequences for organisations, whether big or small, that are not willing to uphold congruous and synergetic cooperation with their host communities. Kalu, (2018), posits that skirmishes between multinational companies and host communities can be managed if organisations can invest most of their time and resources towards identifying, monitoring and promoting public interest in their area of operation. While some countries have legal provisions and even make it mandatory for organisations to give back to

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the local community (Deegan & Shelly, 2014), the Nigerian experience contrasts. CSR is mere corporate gifting or philanthropy in Nigeria (Atoyebi 2023). Corporate organisations may even decide not to engage in charity and philanthropy whenever they feel that such a community relations programme only benefits the host community and may have little to contribute to the company and shareholders' interest. (Section 38 of Companies and Allied Matters Act in Nigeria). Even so, corporate gifting is prohibited in Nigeria where the organization claims the gift will benefit political parties or political associations or targeted towards any political purpose. (Section 38(2) of the Act). Therefore, there is no provision for a systematic ideology for CSR practice for organisations in Nigeria. Rather, all provisions relating to CSR have been pitched on shareholder protection with no provision for other key players outside the company. Corporate organizations were perceived to be disconnected from their operating communities thereby misunderstanding the essence of social contract. Consequently, only the Government was held responsible for public relations activities for the public's interest while organisations were only required to pay their taxes (Nworgu, 2021). This probably explains why corporate organisations in Africa particularly in Nigeria choose to neglect their social responsibility towards host communities with impunity. However, some organisations embark on community relations just for a show. Such community relations programmes may not enjoy the host community's acceptance. Agyapong, K, Twum-Ampomah, M. K. & Acheampong, A. (2015) quoted Leeper (2004) and state that recognizing community as the context within which organisations operate and recognizing the importance to organisations of establishing strong communities, is a good backdrop for realizing idealistic role of public relations.

Ajayi (1997) explains that right from the onset, an organization should consider and embark on laying down the requisites of the organization's relationship with its public, internally and externally. It is important to note what Ajayi (Ibid) refers to as corporate relations, which according to him, connotes the "act of civility, courtesy, altruism and donating with no strings attached in showing good neighbourliness" (p. 1). What this implies is that an organization's neglect of community relations which translates into giving something back to the host community -- the organization's neighbourhood where it makes its fortunes-- can boomerang.

Authors such as Igben & Ikiyowere (2022), Ukam ivi (2020), Kalu, (2018), Agyapong, K, Twum-Ampomah, M. K. & Acheampong, A. (2015) have given research attention to the issue relating to community relations practices of organisations and their host communities. While such studies have greatly provoked so much academic debate in this area of speciality and highlighted the need to find a better way to handle conflicts between organisations and their host communities, the studies focused their attention mainly on the need for community relations strategies in the management of conflicts between organisations and their host communities. This study fills an important gap which consists of the need for organisations to understand why well-intentioned and huge investment in community relations strategies and tactics fail to achieve the desired goal. This important aspect of how these strategies and tactics could be deployed for maximum benefit to both the organizations and host communities has hardly received adequate research attention. This is the gap that this study intends to fill.

The objectives of the study are to determine how relevant Brass Island and Iworo-Ajido community members perceive the various community relations programmes of Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited and Whispering Palms resort that they can identify; assess the degree of involvement of Brass Island and Iworo-Ajido communities right from conceptualization to implementation of community development programmes of Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd and Whispering Palms resort, and ascertain Brass Island and Iworo-Ajido community members acceptance level of Brass LNG and Whispering Palms resort's commitment to the execution of public relations programmes embarked upon.

Hypotheses

In achieving the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated to capture the research objectives

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the identified community relations programmes of Whispering Palms and the perception of such programmes by the Iworo-Ajido people.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the participation of the Iworo-Ajido community in the decision-making process of Whispering Palms community relations programmes and their acceptance of the programmes.

Literature Review

Community relations in perspective

There exists a consensus that the sense of value and morality demonstrated by the organization in its attitude towards social problems facing the community among whom it lives and operates is imperative to the organisation's survival and growth. (Asemah (2024). Since there has never existed an organization without a host community, corporate organizations, especially business-oriented enterprises, need to appreciate and maintain mutually harmonious relations with their host communities. The need for planned functional community relation activities which must be carried out in partnership with both the organization and the host community cannot be overemphasised. Etim, Inyang, & James, (2022). Even where there is an existing community relations programme, there is need for organisations to carry out periodic assessments of the needs of their host communities. Such evaluation would reveal whether or not such community relations programmes are still relevant and critical to the current nature of the needs of the host community. The host community's needs are not static. Ongoing supporting social and educational community relations programmes show the commitment of organisations to their host communities. (Asemah et al, 2021). Community relations refer to the various methods an organisation uses to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the community in which it operates (Chepkirui and Naserian 2020). It stands for a positive and symbiotic affiliation where both parties work together towards mutual goals and aim at satisfying each other's interests, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the community. Jonathan, K. et al. (2023).

One significant community relations strategy is organisations establishing their credibility in their host communities. Being an active member of a community establishes an organisation's credibility with the host community. Osho (2008) states that the active participation and contributions of a corporate organization to the activities of the host community is a good strategy in public relations practice. The host community believes that the organisation will always listen and work in their best interest. (Asemah, Kente & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2021). Farhad (2019) observes that an organization's involvement in host-communities projects builds public image and employee morale and fosters a sense of teamwork. For long-term success, organisations must involve host communities in community relations programmes. Hassani (2017) explains that community relations are the establishment, nurturing and sustenance of congruous and productive relations between a corporate entity and the community which hosts its structures and operations. Therefore, the host community should be involved in any community relations project right from when the projects are planned to when they are executed.

This study investigates why the Iworo-Ajido community in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State remained hostile to Whispering Palms, a private resort in Iworo-Ajido community with several community relations programmes while the Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited with similar community relations programmes enjoyed a peaceful relationship with the people of Brass Island and one wonders why the same community relations that worked for Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited and failed to achieve the desired result for Whispering Palms resort and Iworo-Ajido community. This informs why this study sets out to assess community relations programmes of Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited vis-à-vis community relations programmes of Whispering Palms.

Social penetration theory

If there is a theory that describes the process of a relationship from non-disclosure to that of intimacy, it is the Social Penetration Theory. The Social Penetration Theory (SPT) was propounded by psychologists Irwin Altman and Taylor in 1973. The purpose is to appreciate relationship development between individuals. The social penetration theory states that relationship development occurs primarily through self-disclosure or intentionally revealing personal information such as personal motives or desires, feelings,

thoughts, and experiences to others. Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis (1993) cited in Carpenter & Greene, 2016 state that Self–disclosure, the very essence of the penetration theory, is the purposeful process of revealing information about oneself. This theory is most appropriate in community relations given the fact that relationship development between organisations and the host community is systematic and predictable. In essence, relationships between an organisation and the host community’s development follow a particular trajectory, moving from shallow knowledge and casual relationships to better understanding and intimate relationships. Therefore, when business organisations and the community understand each other and achieve confidence in each other, the operating environment becomes more conducive.

Materials and Methods

The researcher used a descriptive survey in this study to assess the role of the community relations practices of Brass LNG and Whispering Palms resort towards having a harmonious working relationship with the communities on the Brass Island of Bayelsa State and Iworo-Ajido, Badagry, Lagos State. The participants in this study were drawn on one hand from the three towns that make up Brass Island (Twon Brass, Ewoama and Okpoama) estimated at 12,000 and on the other hand from Iworo-Ajido estimated at 13, 550; making a total population of 25,550. The study was strengthened by using in-depth interviews with the Chairman, Whispering Palms and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) made up of opinion leaders in both the communities on Brass Island and Iworo-Ajido. The FGD was made of three sessions with each session made up of eight participants.

To determine the sample size, the researcher adopted Philip Meyer’s population sampling procedure at a 95% confidence level. Meyer believes that representativeness in sampling is very vital to research acceptability and therefore, proposes the table below to assist researchers in sample size procedure.

Population Size	Sample Size
Infinity	384
500,000	384
100,000	383
50,000	381
10,000	370
5,000	357
3,000	341
2,000	322
1,000	278

Source: Meyer (1979) cited in Stacks and Hocking (1992) Essentials of communication research

Therefore, the sample size for Brass Island was 370 (3.7%) at a 95% confidence level while A total of 371 persons made up the sample size of Iworo Ajido with Philip Meyer’s population sampling procedure at a 95% confidence level. The random number function of the Raosoft sample size calculator was also used to further confirm the sample size. The quota sampling method was adopted for the study The research instruments used for the study were a questionnaire for the survey, a question guide for the in-depth interview and a discussion guide for focus group discussion. Data collected from the field were analysed

using descriptive statistics. The interview conducted with the Chairman, Whispering Palms and the focus group discussions were transcribed and qualitatively analysed. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square.

Results

Table 1: Relationship between the community relations programmes of Whispering Palms identified and their perception by Iworo-Ajido people.

Community relations programmes	Response	% Distribution					Total acceptance or rejection
		<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	
.1.	A. Identification	40.3.1	41.7	1.5	11.9	4.7	83
6 classroom blocks	B. Acceptance	12.3	15.7	0	57.3	15.4	27.3
	C. Diff. (B-A)	-27.8	-26	-1.5	45.4	10.7	-54.7
.2.							
Borehole and transformer	A. Identification	17.7	37.5	4.1	32.3	8.4	55.2
	B. Acceptance	5.2	31.4	0	41.4	14	36.6
	C. Diff. (B-A)	-12.5	-6.1	-4.1	9.1	5.6	-18.6
.3.							
Renovation of idol statue	A. Identification	47.4	32.3	0	12.8	7.6	79.7
	B. Acceptance	12.8	47.4	0	32.3	7.6	60.2
	C. Diff. (B-A)	-34.6	15.1	0	19.5	0	-19.5
Average Diff. for all subjects							-30.9

Source: Author's Field Study, 2014

The percentage distribution of responses shows that for the three community relations programmes which were identified by the Iworo-Ajido community, none was accepted as the predominant choice of the people. The average difference between programmes identified and programmes acceptance gave a negative value of -30.9% which indicates a negative relationship but not significant, i.e. (less than 50%). The inference is that the identified programmes were not significantly accepted by the people. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Table 2: Relationship between the participation of the Iworo-Ajido community in the decision-making process of Whispering Palms community relations programmes and their acceptance of the programmes.

Community relations programme	Response	% Distribution					Total acceptance or rejection
		SA	A	U	D	SD	
.1.							
6 classroom blocks	A. Identification	12.2	15.1	0	57.3	15.4	27.3
	B. Acceptance	12.2	15.1	0	57.3	15.4	27.3
	C. Diff. (B-A)	0	0	0	0	0	0
.2.							
Borehole and transformer	A. Identification	5.2	31.4	0	41.4	14	36.6
	B. Acceptance	5.2	31.4	0	41.4	14	36.6
	C. Diff. (B-A)	0	0	0	0	0	0
.3.							
Renovation of idol statue	A. Identification	12.8	47.4	0	32.3	7.6	60.2
	B. Acceptance	12.8	47.4	0	32.3	7.6	60.2
	C. Diff. (B-A)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average Diff. for all subjects							0.00%

Source: Author's Field Study, 2014

From the percentage distribution of responses, the average difference for the three programmes in which members of the Iworo-Ajido community participated as well as accepted gave a 0% value implying that each programme for which there was participation of the community also received the full acceptance of the community. There is therefore a positive relationship though not significant i.e. (below 50%) between participation and acceptance of the community relations programmes of Whispering Palms. The inference is that the null hypothesis is also not rejected by the findings of this research.

Table 3: Preferred community relations programmes of Brass LNG Ltd by the people of Brass Island.

Programmes	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Job opportunities	142	41.8
Skills acquisition scheme	60	17.6
Micro-credit scheme	83	24.4
Renovation/Refurbishment of Health facilities	55	16.2
Total	340	100

Source: Author's Field Study, 2024

The Table shows that 142 respondents (41.8%) prefer Brass LNG to give more attention to job opportunities, 60 respondents (17.6%) prefer the skills acquisition scheme should be given more attention, 83 respondents (24.4%) prefer the micro-credit scheme while 55 (16.2%) of the respondents prefer the renovation/refurbishing of existing health facilities.

Table 4: Extent of respondents' assessment of Brass LNG methods of community participation in planning and implementation of community development programmes.

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Consultations only	180	53
Briefing only	117	34.4
Unawareness	43	12.6
Total	340	100

Source: Author's Field Study, 2024

The Table shows that 180 respondents (53%) state that Brass LNG engages the communities in the planning and implementation of community development programmes through consultations only, 117 respondents (34.4%) state this is done through briefing only, while 43 respondents (12.6%) are unaware of the methods used.

Table 5: The Perceived Level of Participation by Members Brass Island Communities in Brass LNG Ltd. Community Relations programmes

Stages	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Planning stage	180	52.9
Implementation stage	40	11.8
Evaluation stage	30	8.8
Commissioning stage	90	26.5
Total	340	100

Source: Author's Field Study, 2024

Evidence from the Table shows that 180 respondents (52.9%) state that the communities participate in the development process of the programmes of Brass LNG at the planning stage, 40 respondents (11.8%) state this is done at the implementation stage, 30 respondents (8.8%) state this is done at the evaluation stage while 90 respondents (26.5%) state this is done at the commissioning stage.

Table 6: The Perceived Level of Participation by members of the Iworo-Ajido community in Whispering Palms community relations programmes

	Item	VHL	HL	U	LL	VLL	% Acceptance Rate	Decision
1	The six-classroom block built as well as the scholarship granted to the youths of Iworo-Ajido was a result of the opinion leaders' suggestion to whispering palms.	42 (12.2)	52 15.1	0 0	197 57.3	53 15.4	27.30%	Rejected
2	Whispering Palms Resort discussed and agreed with the Iworo-Ajido community at a town hall meeting before the construction of the borehole for potable water and the provision of an electricity transformer.	18 5.2	108 31.4	0 0	170 49.4	48 14	36.60%	Rejected
3	Whispering Palms seeks out Iworo-Ajido community youth's opinions through their youth leaders before deciding on the annual Model College marathon race and the Larus Football Championship competitions	16 4.7	41 11.9	5 1.5	144 41.9	138 40.1	16.60%	Rejected
4		26	163	0	111		54.90%	

The elders and traditional rulers of Iworo-Ajido were consulted and approval was given before the decision on renovation of the Iworo-Ajido Zangbeto idol statue at the village square, and participation in a week-long cultural celebration was taken.	7.6	47.4	0	32.3	44 (12.8)	Accepted
Overall Average Acceptance Rate						2.5 Rejected

Source: Author's Field Study, 2024

The Table displays the mode of respondents on the perceived level of participation by the Iworo-Ajido community in Whispering Palms community relations programmes. With an overall acceptance rate of 33.9%, respondents reject the participation of Iworo-Ajido people in the community relations programmes of Whispering Palms

Table 7: Brass Island community members' rating of Brass LNG's commitment to the execution of public relations programmes embarked upon

Programmes	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Public enlightenment campaigns	198	58.2
Career Guidance	27	7.9
Stakeholders' engagement meetings	43	12.6
Town Hall meetings	72	21.2
Total	340	100

Source: Author's Field Study, 2024

From the above Table, out of the 340 respondents, 198 (58.2%) rated the quarterly public enlightenment campaigns the highest, 27 respondents (7.9%) rated the career guidance programme for secondary school students the highest, 43 respondents (12.6%) rated the stakeholders' engagement meetings highest, while 72 respondents (21.2%) rated the town hall meetings the highest.

Presentation of Focus Group Discussion

Traditional Leaders	FGD 1
Community Elders	FGD 2
Community Youths	FGD 3

FGD Guide: Whispering Palms community relations programmes identified

FGD 1: Six-classroom block at Epeme primary school, renovation of Zangbeto statute and beautification of the village square roundabout, borehole and water distributed to different places.

FGD 2: Six-classroom block at Epeme primary school, renovation of Zangbeto statute and beautification of the village square roundabout, borehole and water distributed to different places.

FGD 3: Six-classroom block at Epeme primary school, renovation of Zangbeto statute and beautification of the village square roundabout, borehole and water distributed to different places.

FGD Guide: Effectiveness of Whispering Palms's channel of communication with the community

FGD 1: No known channel of communication between Whispering Palms and the Iworo-Ajido community. Chairman of Whispering Palms initiated the Lagoon Front Development Association. He selected the members, most of whom were his friends.

FGD 2: Lagoon Front Development Association is not recognized by the Iworo-Ajido community. Lagoon Front Development Association was initiated by the Whispering Palms Chairman. He selected the members, most of whom were his friends. The association does not represent the community because the community did not appoint them. We trust our community leaders and prefer them to the Lagoon Front Development Association.

FGD 3: The youth's leadership is not recognized by Whispering Palms. Chairman of Whispering Palms would ask us to route our communication through the so-called Lagoon Front Development, an Association made up of old men like him. The association is not even recognized by the Iworo-Ajido community.

FGD Guide: Rumours about the alleged use of spiritual (juju) powdery substance and community member's perception of Whispering Palms community relation programmes.

FGD 1: It was a rumour, So, we don't take rumour seriously. We heard of the rumour, but we did not believe in it.

FGD 2: We don't take rumour seriously. We did not believe in it. It was a rumour, a baseless one at that.

FGD 3: We heard of the rumour, but we did not believe in it.

FGD Guide: Level of participation in Whispering Palms community relations programmes decision-making process.

FGD 1: No consultation on relevant community relations programmes. Only information is received about the programme to be carried out. No community participation or involvement from beginning to end by the community.

FGD 2: It is the Lagoon Front Development Association club that Whispering Palms carries along, not the Iworo-Ajido community. Whispering Palms has never requested to know from the community what it needs and what the resort could do for them.

FGD 3: Whispering Palms does not recognize anyone in the community and does not carry anyone along in its community relations programme decision-making process. The Whispering Palms chairman along with-it the Lagoon Front Development Association club decides what they want for the community.

FGD Guide: The commitment of Whispering Palms to its community relations programmes.

FGD 1: We cannot talk about commitment when we are not asked if the programmes is what we want.

FGD 2: No clearly defined policy and cooperation on community relations programmes.

FGD 3: We are not part of the community relations programmes. Whispering Palms does what it thinks is right. We cannot say they are committed to our developmental course.

FGD Guide: Acceptance of Whispering Palms community relations programmes by the Iworo-Ajido community

FGD 1: If Whispering Palms asked us what we wanted, our priorities were not school or potable water. What we needed since the 1980s is a good road. Where there is a road, development will come.

FGD 2: More importantly, what Iworo-Ajido needs now is the road. Whispering Palms can afford to construct the road or use its connection with people in high places to effect the road construction. Larus Field of Hope community stadium is of no use to Iworo-Ajido people who are not satisfied with the community relations programmers of Whispering Palms.

FGD 3: The only thing we can say is that Whispering Palms has put the name of Iworo-Ajido on the world's map. Besides this, Whispering Palms has not done anything for the youths of Iworo-Ajido. That was why the youths resisted any major projects Whispering Palms wanted to embark on in the community.

Presentation of the interview with the Chairman, Whispering Palms resort

Question Guide: What are your community relations programmes to enhance cordial relationships with your host community and who manages your public relations activities?

Response: We focus on human capacity development, provision of infrastructure and social amenities, and support for culture. Under capacity building strategy, we have programmes that include education sponsorship, and organizing of sports competitions. Under the provision of infrastructure and social amenities, we have a borehole, classroom block building, football field, relaxation centre etc. We participate in the organizing and hosting of cultural festivals. On public relations, we have the operation manager, a graduate of Business Administration in charge.

Question Guide: How do you determine the relevance of your community relations programmes to the needs of the community?

Response: The things we have done are relevant to the needs of the community in the sense that it is not us who started some of these projects. I would take the school. It was Asiwaju Bola Tinubu Intervention. The school was on the ground, but with a leaking roof, smelling as a result of refuse dumps on the site, and the students and teachers complaining. They needed help. So, we moved in to renovate the buildings and built an additional six-classroom block

Question Guide: What channel of communication do you employ to reach your host community on your community relations programmes?

Response: We have a club called the Lagoon Front Development Association. It is made up of retired and about-to-be-retired members of the community. Whispering Palms hosts the monthly meeting. We are usually between 12 and 25 in attendance. We have a secretary that takes the minutes of our meetings. After the meeting, Whispering Palms hosts members in attendance to a dinner between 6 to 8 pm. We use this forum to interact with the community leadership and opinion leaders.

Question Guide: How did your organization manage the rumour on your alleged spread of spiritual powdery substance when you visit other resorts so that such resorts may not function well?

Response: Well, I have some admirers. I used them to pass my message across, educating the superstitious people that hard work, focus and commitment have made Whispering Palms what it is today.

Question Guide: What is the Iworo-Ajido people's perception of these community relations efforts?

Response: They are like Oliver Twist, always asking for more. When the road is bad, the citizens argue that it is Whispering Palms that should repair the road. They see Whispering Palms as a big brother to support them. But it is not Whispering Palms alone that is using the road. Their wives, children and visitors also ply the road, but they feel that Whispering Palms benefit from the road more because of their tourists.

Discussion of Findings

In Brass Island, their activities have no doubt helped in cementing the relationship between Brass LNG and Brass Island communities, hence, the people's acceptance of these programmes. The various community relations activities of Brass LNG are therefore relevant and accepted by the Brass Island communities. This shows that Brass LNG has a clear understanding of the community, its culture and expectations before engaging in community relations activities in that community, which could be compared with having and keeping friends in need within the community.

On the other hand, the Iworo-Ajido community recognised only Whispering Palms' community relations programmes that directly impact their life as a people. The Percentage distribution of responses shows that for the three community relations programmes which were identified by the Iworo-Ajido community, none was accepted as the predominant choice of the people. The average difference between programmes identified and programmes acceptance gave a negative value of -30.9% which indicates a negative relationship but not significant, i.e. (less than 50%). The inference is that the identified programmes were not significantly accepted by the people. The null hypothesis is not rejected. Iworo-Ajido people demonstrated that community relations should involve more than just an annual contribution to charity. Instead, the organization owner should become personally involved in community relations programmes that impact directly the people. This agrees with Anyanwu (1999) who sees community development as the changes which come in the form of the provision of infrastructure and social amenities which may be visible and tangible in the life of the people, and which translate into a better living in the physical and economic circumstances of the people. An important issue at this point is to consider what community relations by an organization is intended to achieve, for what purpose and in whose interest. The focus group panel members questioned the motive behind Whispering Palms' community relation programmes in the areas of sports and corporate donations. There is a need for Whispering Palms Resort to seek to influence the Iworo-Ajido people's attitude and to understand their perception of corporate donation and sports as community relations strategies. This agrees with Cutlip and Centre (2000) who argue that a public relations problem exists if there is a discrepancy between an institution's definition of an issue and the views held by members of an important public. The picture Whispering Palms resort created is that of assumption of Iworo-Ajido people's opinion and behaviour about the resort's community relations programmes. Significantly, the public of an organization possesses the reproductive capacity of public relations within the existing structure of social relations. This implies that Whispering Palms community relations programmes should be characterized by a social relationship with a reproductive capacity within the Iworo-Ajido community.

In an environment of public suspicion, gaining and maintaining public consent to operate has become of great concern for many businesses and corporate organisations. Therefore, community relations is effectively maintained primarily through engagement with various publics within the community and an organisation. The findings from the study indicate that Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited engages the communities in the planning and implementation of community development programmes through consultations and briefings which amount to 297 (87.4%) of the respondents. Also, 239 (70.3%) of the respondents indicated being aware and having participated in the programmes of the company. Those who indicated this might have participated in one or some of their programmes. These are the stakeholders' engagement meetings, public enlightenment campaigns, micro-credit schemes, skills acquisition schemes,

town hall meetings, contractors' enhancement meetings and pre-tender meetings, during which they are briefed on developments. This is in line with the company's development priorities, in which it promised to promote developments that will simultaneously benefit "our communities and company" (Brass LNG Project Sheets. (2007-2010, p.8). It promised to do this by working closely with the government, the communities, local development agencies and business organisations, which the respondents stated it has been doing. This, also reinforces what Nwosu (2001) advises that corporate organisations should work closely with their host communities to sufficiently understand and contribute immensely to the concrete priority needs of such communities, to achieve harmonious relationships.

On the other hand, with an overall acceptance rate of 33.9%, respondents reject the participation of Iworo-Ajido people in the community relations programmes of Whispering Palms. The first declaration is to elicit a response to the effect that the six-classroom block was built because opinion leaders in the Iworo-Ajido community suggested the same to Whispering Palms' management. Opinion leaders represent the voice of the community people on issues of common interest. Respondents reacted to the statement and the result was a 27.3% acceptance rate signifying rejection. The traditional rulers' focus group discussants said no consultation on relevant community relations programmes was made by Whispering Palms and that they were only informed about the programme to be carried out. According to them, there was no community participation or involvement in any community relations process initiated by Whispering Palms from the beginning to the end. The same response was received in connection with the construction of the borehole for potable water and the provision of an electricity transformer. The elders' focus group discussants assert that it is the Lagoon Front Development Association club that Whispering Palms consults, not the Iworo-Ajido community. They said Whispering Palms has never requested to know from the community what it needs and what the resort could do for them. But Oyekola (2003) states that a corporate organization needs to make the people feel that it is part of the community. He further explains that through community relations, the organization, despite the harsh economic environment, should establish itself as an important factor in the community. He concludes that by this, the organization can correct misunderstandings and create a conducive business environment in the community. In this case, Whispering Palms just gave what it feels to the Iworo-Ajido host community without the host community's being involved in planning, executing and sustaining community relations development projects/programmes. The focus group panels, while reacting to involving the community, were unanimous in their complaint that Whispering Palms does not consult them but only informs them before they do most of what they do and that their priority was not school or potable water, but the repair or reconstruction of the only road that links their community to the town.

Respondents agree that Brass LNG has embarked on a skills acquisition programme, micro-credit scheme, public enlightenment campaigns, contractors' enhancement programme, stakeholders' engagement meetings and provision of health facilities of Brass LNG are available on Brass Island as community relations programmes for the benefit of the host community. The findings show that Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited enjoys the requisite working relationship with its host communities. The result shows that since its existence on Brass Island in 2007, there has never been any noted crisis between the company and the communities. This might have been attributed to the company's deliberate policy of participating in the programmes of the communities and the implementation of its programmes, such as the micro-credit scheme, contractors' enhancement programme, quarterly public enlightenment campaigns and stakeholders' engagement meetings during which period the stakeholders are regularly briefed on current developments regarding the project. This is in line with Cole's (2004) assertion that being socially responsible means playing more than just an economic role in society.

From the foregoing, Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited could be seen as enjoying a smooth working relationship with the Brass Island communities. On the other hand, respondents in the Iworo-Ajido community identified the Six (6) classroom block, Bore-hole & distribution of potable water, Transformer for electric power generation, Larus football field, Sponsorship of annual football match tournaments between Iworo-Ajido and neighbouring communities, the annual hosting of Iworo-Ajido Model College marathon race. Renovation of the Iworo-Ajido *Zangbeto* idol statue at the village square, participation in week-long cultural celebrations and Corporate Financial donations to members of the Community and

Scholarships offered to Youths of Iworo-Ajido but with an overall average acceptance rate of 31%, respondents reject that Whispering Palms is committed to its community relations programmes. The youths' focus group discussants revealed that Whispering Palms resort's management does not recognize the traditional security outfit of the village. The resort prefers to make use of the Nigeria Police force for security and does not contribute either financially or morally to the local vigilante group made up of youths in the community. Oshodi-Glover (2008) explains that regular payment of tax, engaging in social activities of the community, concern for the welfare and health of the community, and assisting in keeping the environment clean are indicators of commitment to community relations programmes. With a percentage acceptance rate of 26.2% depicting rejection, respondents state that Whispering Palms community relations programmes are not reckoned with by members of the community. According to the traditional rulers' focus group discussants, one cannot talk about commitment when the leaders are not asked if the programmes are what the community wants. The elder's focus group simply stated that Whispering Palms does not have a clearly defined policy and cooperation on community relations programmes, while the youths' focus group discussants said that they are no part of the community relations programmes and since Whispering Palms does what it thinks is right, they cannot say that the resort is committed to the community's developmental course. Although the researcher found out that Whispering Palms had clearly defined community relations areas of interest, the community was not carried along in the process. The rejection of all the items under research question five which sought to find out to what level Whispering Palms is committed to its community relations programmes shows that Whispering Palms overlooked the need to consult the people. In their analysis of a community relations practitioner, Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1992) affirm that a community relations practitioner is an "idea man" who consults the community people to know why they feel dissatisfied with the firm's community relations programmes.

Study shows that in Brass Island, the various community relations activities of Brass LNG are relevant and accepted by the Brass Island communities. On the other hand, the Iworo-Ajido community did not accept any of the community relations programmes by Whispering Palms because none was accepted as the predominant choice of the people.

The findings from the study indicate that Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited engages the communities in the planning and implementation of community development programmes through consultations and briefings. Also, respondents indicated that they are aware of and participated in the programmes of the company. On the other hand, with an overall acceptance rate of 33.9%, respondents reject the participation of Iworo-Ajido people in the community relations programmes of Whispering Palms. The focus group panels, while reacting to involving the community, were unanimous in their complaint that Whispering Palms does not consult them but only informs them before they do most of what they do and that their priority was not school or potable water, but the repair or reconstruction of the only road that links their community to the town.

Respondents agree that Brass LNG is committed to the community relations programmes embarked on. The findings show that Brass Liquefied Natural Gas Limited enjoys the requisite working relationship with its host communities and as a result, since its existence on Brass Island in 2007, there has never been any noted crisis between the company and the communities. On the other hand, respondents in the Iworo-Ajido community reject that Whispering Palms is committed to its community relations programmes. The youths' focus group discussants revealed that Whispering Palms resort's management does not recognize the traditional security outfit of the village. The rejection of all the items under research question five which sought to find out to what level Whispering Palms is committed to its community relations programmes shows that Whispering Palms overlooked the need to consult the people.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that what determines the acceptance of community relations programmes by organisations' host communities is not necessarily a huge investment in community relations programmes. Rather, community relations programmes' acceptance or non-acceptance by host communities is often attributed to the organization's failure to consult and carry along the host community during the planning, implementation and evaluation periods of the organization's community relations

programmes. The consequence is a colossal loss of investment in community relations programmes that fail to achieve the desired organizational goal of mutual peaceful coexistence between organisations and host communities. Conversely, organisations enjoy the requisite working relationship with their host communities when host communities are aware and have participated in the community relations programmes as exemplified by Brass LNG Ltd.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made. Whispering Palms should always consult the host community and receive its consent before carrying out its community relations programmes. It is further recommended that Whispering Palms review its channel of communication and adopt a communication channel acceptable to both the organization and the Iworo-Ajido community. Brass LNG Ltd. Is encouraged to sign of the Final Investment Decision (FID) to boost the confidence of the Brass Island community in the organisation's community relations practice.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest whatsoever.

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