

Sustainable CSR: Assess Community Needs Before Implementation, Expert Advises Govt, Companies

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By [Francis Onoiribholo](#) On Aug 5, 2022



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BENIN – Renowned international business development expert, Mr. Fatai Afolabi, says steady development is determined by the sustainable implementation of a government or a company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligation to the people or neighbouring communities.

Afolabi made the assertion at a two-day training programme he convened for the management of Okomu Oil Palm Company Plc (OOPC) and members of its neighbouring communities at the company’s plantation in Okomu, near Udo, Ovia South West local government area of Edo.

Afolabi, former Executive Secretary, Plantation Owners Forum of Nigeria now the Managing Consultant, Foremost Development Services (FDS) Ltd noted that effective and sustainable

CSR is based on prioritized community needs, based on an inclusive and participatory approach in deciding the projects to be executed.

He also noted that to ascertain the prioritized needs of the communities for implementation of sustainable CSR, it is essential for a study to assess the needs of the communities, review OOPC's CSR programme and recommend to the company the projects of priority and the CSR implementation strategy that was sustainable.

He explained that when the agreements of the needs assessment are truly and faithfully implemented, "it eliminates restiveness, suspicion, and acrimony but promotes sustained mutual, industrial harmony between companies and host communities".

In his presentation, Dr. Joseph Ahmadu from FDS explained that the essence of the training was to improve the relationship between OOPC and its host communities, saying that "both the company and the communities will greatly benefit from the outcome of the programme".

Ahmadu said it is imperative to carry out a needs assessment study in the 29 communities of OOPC's operational areas, adding that "it will help to identify and prioritise the needs that the company should focus on in order to increase the quality of lives in the communities.

According to him, the inclusive and participatory nature of the study will make the communities a sense of belonging and ownership of the CSR projects.

He listed other benefits to include that "the interest of the communities will be met, they will be satisfied, there will be an increase in income, food security, health, education, skills and social life of the community members and peaceful coexistence between OOPC and the communities".

Representatives of the participating 15 of the 29 host communities, who applauded the training programme, however, spoke on the area of abandonment of some CSR projects in some communities.

They urged OOPC to see how it could remedy this lacuna to avoid the situation where the people would begin to feel neglected and abandoned.

Mr Madoku Rufus from the Owan community, said "we commend this training because it will now give us the opportunity to express our desire in terms of want".

"We also want to plead that projects should be awarded to competent experts for excellent execution (of projects) that will stand the test of time", he said.

Comrade Austin Enabulele, representing the Edo State Civil Society organisation who attended the training as an observer, said "this training is part of our recommendation during a similar programme by an NGO a few weeks ago". If faithfully implemented from what we have observed, the outcome will be of great benefit to both parties.

Our plea as a Civil Society Organization is that companies should always interface with members of host communities and agree on their needs rather than impose needs on them".

Mr Fidelis Olise, OOPC's Head of Communications, said his company had always ensured it carried out CSR to their communities in line with the known best practices as a multinational firm.

Olise said "starting with this programme we ensure that representatives from communities were spread across concerned groups such the Exco members, youths, women and elders..."