

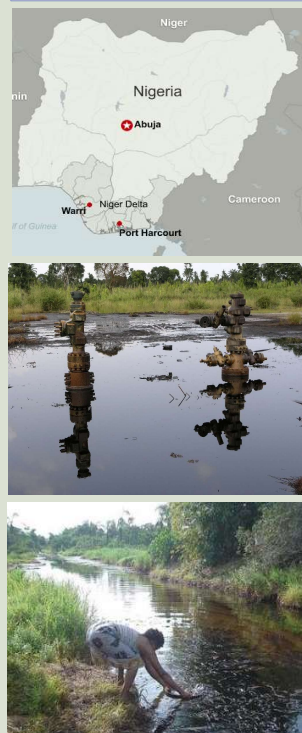
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INTRODUCTION



Oil and gas exploration, globally, has been beset with environmental and social concerns [1]. The case of the Niger Delta, a region with prolific petroleum deposits, host to the tenth largest reserves of crude oil and ninth largest natural gas deposits in the world [2], is no different [3] [4]. These socio-ecological issues have created an atmosphere of volatility in the region with cataclysmic consequences [5] [6] [7] which hamper the operations of the oil and gas industry in the region [8] [9]. Thus, this study aims to develop a framework which can be utilised by the oil and gas industry firms in the region to tackle the issues of social sustainability and, thereof, create a favourable atmosphere for business to thrive and, altogether, promote the global march towards sustainable development in all ramifications of human endeavour. Significantly, previous research has indicated either outright failure or at best, partial success, of the earlier strategies that have been adopted by the oil and gas firms in their social sustainability initiatives. Thus, it is clear that a more robust approach to the implementation of social sustainability initiatives by the firms in the region is necessary. A conceptual theoretical framework was developed. The framework conceptualises the ideals from the literature and applies it to the unique social dimensional characteristics of the Niger Delta. The underlying foundations of the framework is the premise that project management, along with other elements such as social justice, trust, partnership and opportunities for community participation are an integral part of any framework for success in implementation of sustainability initiatives in the new era. The study, after a review of the previous strategies that have resulted in limited success, suggests that a lack of project management inculcation into the previous strategies can be linked to the limited success of these previous strategies. To assess the adequacy of the theoretical conceptual framework, the operationalization of the framework was undertaken and, hence, field studies are currently in progress. Challenges encountered include lack of accurate data on the region, security challenges in the region, low literacy levels in the region, low level penetration and use of internet and, adequate spatial distribution of participants.

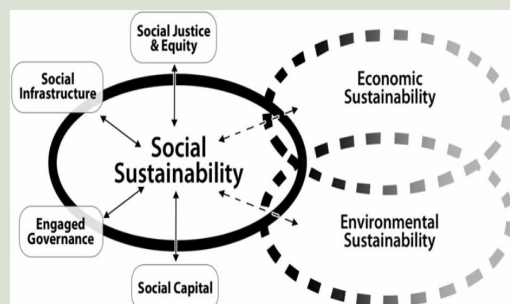


Fig 1: Conceptual framework for social sustainability (Cuthill, 2010)

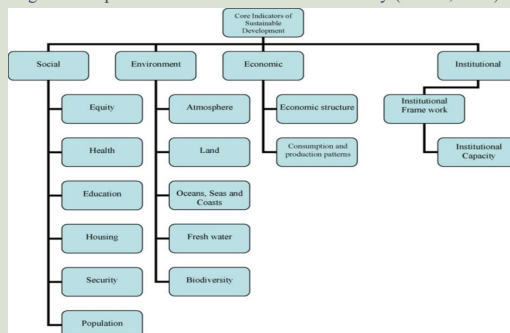


Fig. 2: The United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Theme Indicator Framework (United Nations, Department of Economics, 2007)

OBJECTIVES

1. Development of a conceptual framework for social sustainability in the oil and gas industry in the Niger Delta.
2. Operationalisation of the proposed conceptual frame work.
3. Utilisation of the framework to give expression to the concept of social sustainability as a critical factor in the interrelationship between social, economic and environmental fundamentals.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

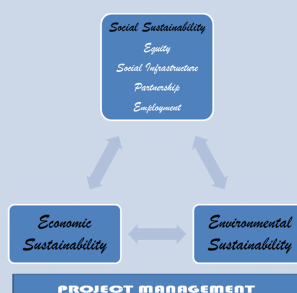


Fig. 3: Proposed Conceptual Framework for Social Sustainability

Several preliminary goals have been achieved. These include the procurement of ethical approval for the research after a thorough and rigorous screening process. Also, the development of a theoretical framework has been completed. However, operationalization of the conceptual framework is still in progress. At conclusion of the research, the development of a framework will have a positive impact on the implementation of social sustainability, in the industry, in the region.

Table 1: Themes and indicators for the conceptual framework

| Theme | Indicators |
|---------------------------|--|
| Equity and Social Justice | Justice Human rights Land ownership status Employees - % of local employees Visible presence of locals in management Purchase of goods and services locally Capital projects - % local projects for social sustainability Gas flaring & venting |
| Social Infrastructure | Healthcare Education Housing Sanitation Potable water Other contributions to local initiatives |
| Partnership | Consultation Involvement in decision making Respect Job opportunities % of Population Living below Poverty Line GAP Analysis |
| Employment and Wellbeing | |

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METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology was used:

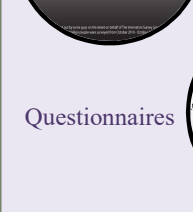


Interviews

Policy documents



Online Surveys



Questionnaires