

INDIGENOUS MEDIA AND RISK COMMUNICATION OF CHEVRON, NIGERIA -IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Every organization both commercial and non-commercial should have a good and healthy relationship with her host community. In the case of oil companies, this is very crucial to their operations. This is why there is the need for proper risk communication methods to be put in place for the host community residents. Hence, there is need for effective channel of communication for risk communication. This research study focuses on utilizing indigenous media for risk communication by oil companies operating in Ugborodo and Ogidigben communities of Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. The study anchored on the medium theory. The study employed both in-depth interview and survey method to afford the researchers the perception of both the organization and the community residents on how risk communication through indigenous media is carried out in the communities. 385 questionnaires were distributed but 357 copies were used for analysis. An in-depth interview was conducted with the community relations manager at Chevron Warri. Interviews were also conducted with the community head of Ugborodo community and the woman leader of Ogidigben community. From the results obtained from both the questionnaires and the in-depth interview, the researchers found out that indigenous media are used by Chevron to communicate with residents of the communities on risk relation situations and this to a higher percentage has been effective. The findings from the survey indicate that the community residents are aware of Chevron's risk communication efforts which they feel are received early enough, easily understood and prevent casualties associated with these risk situations. Recommendations were made among others that organizations especially those operating in rural communities must fully understand the communication system in operation in the host community. Some of these communities use only indigenous media while some use traditional media like radio and television alongside indigenous media.

Keywords: Indigenous media, risk communication, rural communities, oil companies

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Leiss (2006), risk communication in the oil industry is characterized by a lot of controversies. This is due to “distorted or selective use of information by advocates” and misunderstandings or communication barriers between organizations and the target audience. Oil industries deal with harmful substances as part of their operations. This is why there is the need for effective risk communication to both employees and community residents (Ejomafuvwe, 2007). The use of indigenous media must be encouraged and sustained for rural development and education (Salawu, 2004). The role of indigenous media has been very significant in rural development since the turn of this century and with the advent of the new media, the forms and ways of communication have become more specialized (Essien, 2014). Every human society has developed its traditional modes and channels of communication which characterize its existence, organization and development. These communication modes and channels form the basis upon which the communities, especially the rural community progress (Orewere, 2001). According to Oyesomi, Okorie, Ahmadu and Itsekor (2014), Indigenous communication systems are essential element of the socio-cultural tradition of Africans. These systems have been used to promote cooperation, mobilization and participation among African people. Oyesomi, Oyero, Omole and Kayode-Adedeji (2016) are also of the view that Indigenous communication offers opportunities for local participation in development efforts. Many oil companies in Nigeria face serious hostility from their host community. This is more pronounced in the rural communities in which they operate. Most of the issues they face stem from lack of proper risk communication or lack of the proper media channels for risk communication. Most of these multinational companies face many language and cultural barriers which hinder proper risk communication to the host community residents. This has ultimately resulted in militant activities including vandalism, terrorism and crises in the Niger Delta region where most of these oil companies are located. This study therefore sought to find out if using indigenous media for risk communication can reduce aggravated community hostility.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the forms of indigenous media used by the organization for risk communication in Ugborodo and Ogidigben
2. To find out the Chevron related risks prevalent in Ogidigben and Ugborodo.
3. To assess the risk communication methods put in place by the company to the Ogidigben and Ugborodo communities.
4. To assess the uses of indigenous media used in the community
5. To determine if the use of the indigenous media in the community has been an effective tool for risk communication.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the forms of indigenous media used by the organization for risk communication in Ogidigben and Ugborodo?
2. What are the Chevron related risks prevalent in Ogidigben and Ugborodo?
3. What are the risk communication methods put in place by the company to Ogidigben and Ugborodo?
4. What are the uses of indigenous media used in the community?
5. Has the use of the indigenous media in the community been an effective tool for risk communication?

4. RISK COMMUNICATION AND INDIGENOUS MEDIA

The concept of risk communication is more pronounced in the public and health sector. This is because of a common misconception that risk communication strictly belongs to that field. However, residents of communities who live or work close to harmful production facilities desire to be safe and healthy. This is why they are sensitive to fairness and equality of risk communication (Webler and Tyler, 2006). However, the quantity of social science research on risk communication has increased dramatically over the past thirty years in response to a growing awareness among risk assessors, risk managers, and consumers that the public should be better informed and more active in policy making. There have been various views of the term ‘indigenous media’. The term ‘indigenous media’ have various definitions and synonyms according to various scholars. Indigenous media may also be referred to as traditional or local media (Oyero, 2002).

Conceptions of indigenous media broadly form two schools of thought: those who feel indigenous media are 'traditional folk media' and those who feel indigenous media are 'local media'. Indigenous media have also been defined as: "media which have defied all efforts by western media to cannibalize them. the continuous process of information dissemination, entertainment and education used in societies which have not been seriously dislocated by western culture or any other external influence" (Wilson, 2007 p.5).

Wilson and Stewart (2008) on the other hand, identify three categories of media labeled, 'indigenous'. These are "indigenous media produced by indigenous peoples for indigenous peoples, usually in their own languages and for internal consumption; those produced by indigenous peoples in media industries of the dominant society and those produced in the mainstream, dominant industries that address indigenous topics and issues or appropriate indigenous knowledge and or tell indigenous stories with or without the consent and involvement of those to whom that knowledge or those stories culturally, traditionally or ethically belong.

4.1 Risk Communication in the Oil Industry

According to Leiss (2006), risk communication in the oil industry is characterized by a lot of controversy. This is due to "distorted or selective use of information by advocates" and misunderstandings or communication barriers between organizations and the target audience. Oil industries deal with harmful substances as part of their operations. This is why there is the need for effective risk communication to both employees and community residents (Ejomafuvwe, 2007). Risk communication in the oil industry, unlike many other communications, often involves statements about threatening and poorly understood hazards and consequently, the dialog is often riddled with disagreements, apathy, misunderstanding, and suspicion. However, Ejomafuvwe (2007) feels that risk communication as public relations function has long remained the disregarded economic force among the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region. According to her, community residents and oil companies are meant to be mutually dependent.

Kasperson, Golding & Tuler (1992), identify five goals that must be achieved for risk communication in the oil industry to be effective:

1. Diagnosing and creating trust.
2. Creating awareness strategies.
3. Understanding why concepts are hard to grasp and finding ways to overcome the problem.
4. Developing mediating skills.
5. Motivating the target publics to act.

In recent years, accidents related to the petroleum have made the public perceive that companies cannot be trusted to carry out their environmental responsibilities. Risk communication is often riddled with suspicion, therefore, initial strategies are needed that build trust (Benjamin and Belluck, 2000). Trust is an important pre-requisite for effective

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study anchored on the Medium theory. This theory is also referred to as the channel theory or media formalism. The medium theory states that the medium used to convey the message affects the perception of the message contents by the target audience. Medium theory is the name assigned to a variety of approaches used to examine how the means of expression of human communication impact the meaning of human communication. In medium theory, a medium is not simply a newspaper, the internet, a digital camera and so forth. Rather, it is the symbolic environment of any communicative act. Media, apart from whatever content is transmitted, impact individuals and society. The medium theory applies to this research study as it indicates that the medium used to deliver messages play a key role in how media messages will be received and perceived by the target audience.

6. METHOD

The researcher employed both in-depth interview and survey methods for the study. The in-depth interview was conducted with the Community Relations manager at Chevron, Warri. The survey was conducted on the community residents of Ogidigben and Ugborodo. The population of study was the Warri South West Local Government area of Delta state. This area was selected because many of the communities in that area host oil companies. Ugborodo has an estimated population of 5,000 occupants and Ogidigben has an estimated population of 5,567. Using the Slovin formula, the researcher calculated the sample size to be 385 respondents but only 357 copies of the questionnaire were useful for analysis. For a proportional distribution,

203 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in Ogidigben and 182 copies in Ugborodo. The in-depth interview was conducted with the community relations manager at Chevron, Warri to ask questions on how the organization's risk communication efforts in Ogidigben and Ugborodo and how the organization has utilized indigenous media for risk communication in these communities.

7. RESULTS

From the demographic characteristics, majority of the respondents were females, respondents within the age category of 26-35 years made up majority of the respondents. The three major languages spoken in Ogidigben and Ugborodo are Pidgin, English and Itshekiri. The common occupations in Ugborodo and Ogidigben are business/trading and fishing. Majority of the respondents have lived in the community indicating that the respondents have lived in Ogidigben or Ugborodo long enough to understand the way the system works. Majority of these respondents are aware of Chevron related risk situations in the community constituting 82% of the respondents, 18% of the respondents are not that majority of the residents of Ogidigben and Ugborodo are aware that there are Chevron related risk situations in the communities. The finding also reveals that majority of the respondents mentioned Pidgin and Itshekiri as the languages used for indigenous media constituting 31.4%, respondents that mentioned Pidgin, Itshekiri and English constituted 26.9%, respondents that mentioned Pidgin and English constituted 16.8%, respondents that mentioned Itshekiri only constituted 8.7%, respondents that mentioned Pidgin only constituted 6.2%, respondents that mentioned Itshekiri and English constituted 5.8% and respondents that mentioned English only constituted 4.2%. This indicates that the languages used for indigenous communication in Ogidigben and Ugborodo are majorly Pidgin and Itshekiri. Majority of the respondents mentioned town crier, meetings/workshops and community leaders or chiefs as the general means of indigenous communication in the community constituting 82% of the respondents. This indicates that the general means of indigenous communication in the communities are town crier, word of mouth, chiefs and gongs.

Table 1: Chevron Related Risk Situations in the Community

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Oil spills	18
Gas Flares	12
Fire	9
Waste discharges	5
Combinations of Oil spills, fire and gas flares	56
No response	1%
	100 n=357

From table 1 above, majority of the respondents mentioned oil spills, gas flares and fire as the Chevron related risk situations in the community constituting 56%,

Table 2: Indigenous Media Used by Chevron for Risk Communication in the Community

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Town Crier and gongs	30
Smoke signal	4
Meetings/workshops	24.5
Drum	0.5
Chiefs/Opinion leaders	41
Others	0
Total	100 n =357

Majority of these respondents in Table 2 mentioned town crier& gongs, meeting/workshop and chiefs. This indicates that the indigenous used for Chevron's risk communication in Ogidigben and Ugborodo are town criers, chiefs, Meetings/workshops and gongs.

Table 3: Other Sources of Risk Communication Apart From Indigenous Media

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Television	12
Radio	51
Friendship network	11
Family network	28
Others	0
Total	100 N =357

Table 3 indicates that those who are not aware about risk communication through indigenous media are aware majorly through radio and family network.

Table 4: Uses of Indigenous Media in The Community

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Education	8
Entertainment	11
Information	8
Trading	4
Combination of al	72
Total	100 N =357

The above table above indicates that indigenous media in Ogidigben and Ugborodo are used for education, information, and entertainment and trading.

Table 5: The Different Forms of Indigenous Media Used By Chevron Made Me Know About Risk Communication

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Yes	81.2
No	19.8
Total	100 N=357

Majority of the respondents, 290, said that the different forms of indigenous media used by Chevron made them know about risk communication constituting 81.2% while minority of the respondents said it was not Chevron that made them know about risk communication constituting 19.8%. This indicates that it is Chevron's use of indigenous media that makes majority of the community residents to know about risk communication.

Table 6: If No, Who/What Influenced You To Know About Risk Communication?

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Television	14.3
Radio	45
Friends	19.7
Family	21
Others	0
Total	100 N =67

This is a follow up question to table 5. 67 respondents who say "No" to table 5 question, indicates that they are aware of Chevron risk related communication majorly through radio and family.

Table 7: Risk Communication through Indigenous Communication to Other Forms of Communication

RESPONSE	I know so much of risk communication through the indigenous media (%)	Reach faster and easy to understand (%)	Prevent casualties (%)
Strong Agree	41.2	48.9	49.6
Agree	42	37.8	37.3
Undecided	6.2	6	2.4
Disagree	7	2.5	4.8
Strongly disagree	3.6	4.8	5.9
Total	100 N = 357	100 N=357	100 N=357

The finding in the above table indicates that majority of the respondents agree that they are able to understand Chevron related risk situations through indigenous media. Majority of the community residents also agree that risk communication through indigenous media are faster and easier to understand than other forms of communication. The finding also indicates that most community residents feel risk communication through indigenous media has prevented more casualties than other forms of communication.

From the interview with Mr. Lucky Obuiwevbi who is the Community Relations Manager of Chevron Nigeria, Warri office and has worked with Chevron Nigeria for over eight years, he is of the view that Indigenous media is used because of the community setting. As it is a rural community; most residents are not educated enough or media literate enough to understand and appreciate risk communication through advanced media channels like internet, newspapers and television. They also don't have access to many of these media facilities. This is why indigenous media available in the community is used for risk communication. He also pointed out that Chevron makes use of town criers, word of mouth and community leaders as indigenous media for risk communication. The communication plans for these media are discussed with the community chiefs who are the overall regulators of the indigenous media systems in these communities. With approval from the community chiefs, the town criers are briefed on the messages to be communicated to the community residents. He also made it known that Chevron's risk communication is handled by two departments namely: the Community Relations Department and the Health Safety Security and Environmental department (HSSE). The HSSE department handles the technical aspect such as containment and management of the risk situation. The community relations department on the other hand acts as an interface between the community and the HSSE department. That is they relay the information gotten from the HSSE department to community residents.

According to Mr. Obiwevbi, indigenous media has to a significant extent helped to reduce the number of casualties. When Chevron Nigeria first erected installations in the communities, it was tough communicating the risk situations to the community residents but after familiarizing themselves with the indigenous media systems in the communities, it became easier to communicate these risks thereby preventing the incidents of casualties resulting from these risk situations. From the answers given to the interview questions above, the researcher discovered that from the perspective of Chevron Nigeria, indigenous media is an effective tool for risk communication as it is easier to understand by the community residents, it is cheaper to manage and it is faster in delivery.

Mr, Jolomi Metseaghanrun, the head of Ugborodo community revealed that Chevron Nigeria has been able to manage most of the risk related situations in the community. Unlike in the past where hostility was at its peak but dialogue and communication have reduced this to the barest minimum. He is also of the opinion that indigenous media have been very effective in this especially through the various heads of the community who are well trained to communicate and create awareness to member of the community. Madam Mercy Olowu, the woman leader of Ogidigben community in an interview commended Chevron Nigeria for its various risk communication strategies especially creating awareness in the community especially health and communication risk. She supported indigenous media has an affective too for risk communication.

8. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

1. Investigate the forms of indigenous media used by the organization for risk communication in the community: The results from the survey indicated that the forms of indigenous media used in Ugborodo and Ogidigben are town criers, community leaders or chiefs, word of mouth and gongs. Among these, the most frequent media are the town crier and community leaders. These results are confirmed by Oyesomi, Okorie, Ahmadu and Itsekor (2014) who state that the town crier and community leaders are the most popular indigenous medium in West Africa. The findings of the in-depth interview also confirm this and further go on

to indicate these are the indigenous media used because of their availability in the community. Also, the in-depth interview indicates that it is the community chiefs assist Chevron in the management of these indigenous media for risk communication.

2. To assess the Chevron related risks prevalent in the community: The results from the survey indicated that the Chevron related risks prevalent in the community are oil spills, gas flares, fires and waste discharges. The most frequent of these are oil spills and gas flares. This is further confirmed by the results from the in-depth interview and Otway (2009) who states that the general risks associated with oil extraction are oil spills, gas flares, toxic waste discharges and fire happenings. The findings also indicate that majority of the community residents are aware of these risk situations and the threats they pose hence, the need for effective risk communication.

3. Assess the risk communication methods put in place by the company to the community: The findings from the survey indicate that the community residents are aware of Chevron's risk communication efforts which they feel are received early enough, easily understood and prevent casualties associated with these risk situations. The findings from the in-depth interview indicate the use of indigenous media for risk communication by Chevron. It also indicates that Chevron's risk communication is handled by both the community relations department and the HSSE department. This is confirmed by Palenchar (2008), in his words, "risk, crisis and ultimately disaster are the definitive challenges to public relations and communication researchers and health practitioners who research about or work for organizations whose business, political or social missions involve managing health, safety and environmental risks" From the in-depth interview, The risk communication methods include: Health and safety, environmental sustainability and these are done through creating awareness, training and workshop. Policies aimed at managing or controlling health or environmental risks are also put in place.

4. To assess the uses of indigenous media used in the community: The results obtained also indicate that indigenous media in Ogidigben and Ugborodo are used for education, information, and entertainment and trading. While education, information and entertainment are primary functions, trading is a secondary function. This is confirmed by Essien (2014) who states that the general roles of all media are information, education and entertainment. The findings also indicate that the indigenous media system in the community is effective and uses the languages spoken by the community residents. This is a pointer to the fact that the indigenous media system in Ogidigben and Ugborodo is highly suitable for communication to the community residents.

5. Determine if the use of the indigenous media in the community has been an effective tool for risk communication: The findings from the survey indicated that the use of indigenous media in the community has been an effective tool for risk communication. The survey findings show that the community residents feel risk communication through indigenous media is faster, easier to understand and prevents more casualties than other forms of communication. From the in-depth interview findings, indigenous media is an effective tool for risk communication as it is easier to understand by community residents, it is cheaper to manage and it is faster in delivery. These findings are confirmed by Ejomafuvwe (2007) and Wragg (2003) who state that the community relations staff of any oil company operating in the Niger Delta must have a good command of the indigenous media because they inform the host communities about their operations and activities.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the results, it could be stated that indigenous media has been an effective tool for Chevron's risk communication in Ogidigben and Ugborodo. The respondents confirmed from the survey that indigenous media is easier to understand, faster in reaching them and prevents more causalities and other forms of risk communication. The in-depth interview also backed these findings adding that risk communication through indigenous media is cheaper and easier to manage for Chevron.

Recommendation were made that organizations especially those operating in rural communities must fully understand the communication system in operation in the host community. Some of these communities use only indigenous media while some use traditional media like radio and television alongside indigenous media. For community relations to be effective in these communities, there must be a proper understanding of the way communication works in the host community. Organizations must understand the cultural patterns of the communities because they speak different languages, have different community titles and different market days. Many of these communities become very hostile when mistaken for another. Organizations must the different cultural patterns of these communities to prevent hostility. Organizations should be very open in their risk communication. They should not hide potential risks form their community residents

because they are trying to avoid initial hostility as this will only worsen the situation and lead to crises.

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