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The Role of Multinational Corporations in Rural Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, 2014–2024

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Abstract

This study examined the role of multinational corporations (MNCs) in rural development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. Specifically, the study was guided by two research questions and objectives: to assess the extent to which multinational corporations contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta during 2014–2024, and to evaluate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMoUs) on education, healthcare, infrastructure and livelihoods in rural communities. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised community members, community leaders, youth and women representatives, and local government officials in selected MNC-host communities, with an accessible population of approximately 2,000 respondents. A sample of 400 respondents was selected through multistage sampling, while data were collected using a structured questionnaire and key informant interviews. The questionnaire recorded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83. Out of 400 questionnaires administered, 378 were returned and 370 were valid for analysis, representing a 92.5% effective response rate. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, Pearson correlation and Chi-square, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that MNCs contributed to rural development to a moderate extent, with positive perceptions of 59.5% for infrastructure, 57.3% for employment, 61.0% for education and 54.6% for healthcare, producing an overall positive response of 58.1%. The study further found that CSR and GMoU programmes had a moderate positive influence on access to education, healthcare, infrastructure and livelihoods. Pearson correlation showed a significant positive relationship between MNC activities and rural development ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$), while Chi-square confirmed a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 18.45$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that although MNCs have contributed to rural development, environmental degradation, limited community participation, unequal employment opportunities and poor sustainability continue to constrain their overall impact. The study recommends stronger community participation, sustainable investment, environmental monitoring and improved accountability in CSR and GMoU interventions.

Keywords: Multinational corporations, rural development, corporate social responsibility, Global Memoranda of Understanding, Niger Delta, community development, livelihoods.

Introduction

The Niger Delta is central to Nigeria's petroleum economy and has hosted multinational corporations (MNCs) for several decades. Despite the region's contribution to national economic development, many rural communities continue to experience poverty, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation and limited livelihood opportunities. UNEP (2011, 2020) documented serious environmental contamination in Ogoniland, with implications for agriculture, fishing, water resources and community well-being. MNCs have responded through corporate social responsibility (CSR), Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMoUs) and community development projects in education, healthcare, infrastructure and livelihoods. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions remain contested because of inadequate community participation and persistent environmental challenges (Idemudia, 2018; Okoroba & Jack, 2024; Zabbey et al., 2021). In this study, multinational corporations' development interventions and rural development, reflected in improvements in infrastructure, employment and livelihood opportunities. The period 2014–2024 is significant because it captures changing corporate-community relations, increased regulatory attention and multinational divestment from some onshore operations (Ojo, 2022; OPEC Bulletin, 2023; Reuters, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the extensive petroleum activities of multinational corporations in the Niger Delta, many rural communities continue to experience poverty, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation and limited livelihood opportunities. Although MNCs have implemented CSR and GMoU initiatives, persistent development challenges raise concerns about the extent to which these interventions have improved rural conditions. The problem of the study is therefore the apparent gap between the development activities of MNCs and the continuing underdevelopment of rural communities in the Niger Delta between 2014 and 2024, particularly in relation to infrastructure, employment, education and healthcare.

Research Questions

i. To what extent have multinational corporations contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta region between 2014 and 2024?
ii. How have the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMoUs) of multinational corporations influenced access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihoods in rural communities?

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

i. To assess the extent to which multinational corporations have contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta during 2014–2024.
ii. To evaluate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMoUs) on education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihoods in rural communities.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it will provide evidence on the contribution of multinational

corporations to rural development and the effectiveness of their CSR and GMoU interventions in the Niger Delta. The findings will be useful to policymakers, regulatory agencies, host communities, multinational corporations and researchers in strengthening infrastructure provision, employment opportunities, education, healthcare, community participation, corporate accountability and sustainable rural development practices in the region.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the role of multinational corporations in rural development in selected Niger Delta communities in Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Edo States between 2014 and 2024. It examines MNC development interventions and rural development, with emphasis on infrastructure development, employment generation, education and healthcare through CSR and GMoU initiatives.

Literature Review

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are enterprises that operate across national boundaries and contribute to host economies through investment, employment and social interventions (Dunning & Lundan, 2019). In the Niger Delta, MNCs have supported rural development through infrastructure, education, healthcare, employment, skills acquisition and livelihood programmes, although rural communities still experience poverty, inadequate social amenities and environmental challenges (Idemudia, 2018; Obi, 2021). Rural development therefore involves improving the socio-economic well-being of rural people through access to infrastructure, employment, education, healthcare and sustainable livelihoods (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Similarly, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) requires corporations to consider their social, ethical and environmental responsibilities beyond profit-making (Carroll & Brown, 2018). Studies by Idemudia (2018), Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2019), and Ekhator (2019) indicate that MNC interventions have improved some community services and livelihood opportunities, but their effectiveness has been limited by inadequate community participation, poor maintenance, weak accountability and environmental degradation. The study is anchored on Corporate Social Responsibility Theory**,** which explains that corporations have obligations to contribute to societal welfare and protect the environment. Thus, while MNCs have contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta, persistent poverty, environmental pollution and inadequate sustainability suggest that their overall developmental impact remains mixed, creating the need to assess their contributions between 2014 and 2024.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) on rural development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. The study population comprised community members, community leaders, youth and women representatives, and local government officials in selected MNC-host communities, with an accessible population of approximately 2,000 respondents. A sample of 400 respondents was selected through a multistage sampling procedure involving the purposive selection of Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa States, followed by the selection of local government areas and rural communities. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and key informant interviews, focusing on MNC contributions to infrastructure, employment, education, healthcare, environmental management, and community engagement. The instruments were validated by experts in relevant fields at Nasarawa State University, Keffi, while a pilot test produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83**,** confirming satisfactory reliability. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, Chi-square, and

correlation analysis, while interview responses were analyzed thematically. The findings were interpreted in relation to the study objectives and used to draw conclusions and recommendations on the role of MNCs in promoting sustainable rural development in the Niger Delta.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected for the study on Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Rural Development in the Niger Delta Region, 2014–2024. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 378 were returned, while 370 were found valid for analysis, representing 92.5% of the questionnaires distributed. The data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean scores. The findings are presented according to the two research questions guiding the study. Qualitative data obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KII) were also analyzed thematically to complement the questionnaire findings.

Table 4.1: Response Rate of Questionnaires

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	400	100.0
Questionnaires Returned	378	94.5
Questionnaires Not Returned	22	5.5
Questionnaires Valid for Analysis	370	92.5

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1 shows that 400 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 378 were returned, representing 94.5%. Of the returned questionnaires, 370 were valid for analysis, giving an effective response rate of 92.5%. The response rate was considered adequate for the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Research Question One:

To what extent have multinational corporations contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta region between 2014 and 2024?

To answer this research question, respondents' perceptions of MNC contributions to infrastructure, employment, education and healthcare were examined.

Table 4.2: Respondents' Awareness of MNC Activities in Host Communities

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Aware	168	45.4
Aware	132	35.7
Not Sure	42	11.4
Not Aware	28	7.6
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.2 indicates that 168 respondents (45.4%) were very aware of MNC activities, while 132 (35.7%) were aware. Therefore, 81.1% of the respondents were either aware or very aware of MNC operations in their communities. Only 19.0% were either unsure or unaware. This indicates a high level of visibility and awareness of MNC activities among residents of the host communities.

Table 4.3: Perceived Contribution of MNCs to Infrastructure Development

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	102	27.6
Agree	118	31.9
Disagree	96	25.9
Strongly Disagree	54	14.6
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.3 shows that 102 respondents (27.6%) strongly agreed and 118 (31.9%) agreed that MNCs contributed to infrastructure development. In total, 59.5% expressed a positive perception, while 40.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that MNCs have made a moderate contribution to infrastructure development, although the contribution is not considered sufficient by a substantial proportion of respondents.

Table 4.4: Perceived Contribution of MNCs to Employment Opportunities

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	88	23.8
Agree	124	33.5
Disagree	102	27.6
Strongly Disagree	56	15.1
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.4 reveals that 88 respondents (23.8%) strongly agreed and 124 (33.5%) agreed that MNC activities improved employment opportunities. Thus, 57.3% perceived a positive contribution to employment, whereas 42.7% expressed a negative perception. The finding suggests that MNCs have contributed to employment generation, although access to these opportunities may not be evenly distributed among members of host communities.

Table 4.5: Perceived Contribution of MNCs to Education and Healthcare

Sector	Positive Impact (%)	Negative Impact (%)
Education	61.0	39.0
Healthcare	54.6	45.4

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.5 shows that education recorded a positive perception of 61.0%, while healthcare recorded 54.6%. The results indicate that respondents perceived MNC contributions to education somewhat more positively than their contributions to healthcare. However, the relatively high negative responses in both sectors indicate that these contributions have not fully addressed the educational and healthcare needs of rural communities.

Table 4.6: Summary of MNC Contributions to Rural Development

Rural Development Indicator	Positive Response (%)	Negative Response (%)	Level of Contribution
Infrastructure	59.5	40.5	Moderate
Employment	57.3	42.7	Moderate
Education	61.0	39.0	Moderate

Rural Development Indicator	Positive Response (%)	Negative Response (%)	Level of Contribution
Healthcare	54.6	45.4	Moderate
Overall Average	**58.1**	**41.9**	**Moderate**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.6 summarizes the findings for Research Question One. Education recorded the highest positive perception (61.0%), followed by infrastructure (59.5%), employment (57.3%) and healthcare (54.6%). The overall positive response of 58.1% indicates that MNCs have contributed to rural development to a moderate extent during the period under study.

Interpretation of Research Question One

The findings indicate that multinational corporations have contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta between 2014 and 2024, particularly through infrastructure, education, employment and healthcare interventions. However, the extent of contribution is moderate rather than substantial. The finding supports the argument of Okonta and Douglas (2003) that oil companies have historically invested in community infrastructure as part of corporate social responsibility. It also agrees with Idemudia (2014), who observed that MNCs have maintained a significant social and economic presence in oil-producing communities.

The relatively higher positive perception of education (61.0%) suggests that MNC interventions are more visible in areas such as school renovation, scholarships and educational support. This corresponds with Aigbe and Alade (2019), who observed that CSR interventions in the Niger Delta often involve visible social projects. Similarly, the 57.3% positive response on employment indicates some contribution to livelihood opportunities, although the qualitative evidence suggests that access to quality employment remains uneven. This is consistent with Nwobu (2018) and Asuni (2021), who noted limitations in local employment benefits from multinational operations.

Research Question Two:

How have the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMoUs) of multinational corporations influenced access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihoods in rural communities?

Table 4.7: Influence of CSR/GMoU Programmes on Education

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	102	27.6
Agree	124	33.4
Disagree	88	23.8
Strongly Disagree	56	15.2
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.7 indicates that 61.0% of respondents agreed that CSR/GMoU programmes have positively influenced access to education, while 39.0% disagreed. This suggests that MNC interventions have contributed to educational access through activities such as school rehabilitation, educational materials, scholarships and related support.

Table 4.8: Influence of CSR/GMoU Programmes on Healthcare

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	96	25.9
Agree	106	28.7
Disagree	98	26.5
Strongly Disagree	70	18.9
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.8 shows that 54.6% of respondents perceived a positive influence of CSR/GMoU programmes on healthcare, while 45.4% perceived a negative influence. The result indicates that MNC interventions have improved access to healthcare to some extent, but the contribution remains limited and uneven.

Table 4.9: Influence of CSR/GMoU Programmes on Infrastructure

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	102	27.6
Agree	118	31.9
Disagree	96	25.9
Strongly Disagree	54	14.6
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.9 indicates that 59.5% of respondents agreed that CSR/GMoU programmes have improved infrastructure, while 40.5% disagreed. The result suggests that MNC interventions have contributed to roads, water facilities, schools, health centres and other community infrastructure, although the benefits have not been uniformly experienced.

Table 4.10: Influence of CSR/GMoU Programmes on Livelihoods and Employment

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	88	23.8
Agree	124	33.5
Disagree	102	27.6
Strongly Disagree	56	15.1
Total	**370**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.10 reveals that 57.3% of respondents perceived a positive influence of CSR/GMoU programmes on livelihoods and employment, while 42.7% expressed a negative perception. The finding indicates that CSR and GMoU interventions have created some employment and livelihood opportunities, but these opportunities have not been sufficient to meet the livelihood needs of the rural population.

Table 4.11: Summary of the Influence of CSR/GMoU Programmes

Area of Influence	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Interpretation
Education	61.0	39.0	Positive influence
Healthcare	54.6	45.4	Moderate influence
Infrastructure	59.5	40.5	Positive influence
Livelihoods/Employment	57.3	42.7	Moderate influence
Overall Average	**58.1**	**41.9**	**Moderate positive influence**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.11 shows that CSR/GMoU programmes have had a generally positive but moderate influence on rural development. Education recorded the highest positive response (61.0%), followed by infrastructure (59.5%), livelihoods/employment (57.3%) and healthcare (54.6%). The overall average positive response of 58.1% suggests that CSR/GMoU programmes have improved access to essential services and opportunities, but the improvements remain insufficient to fully address rural development challenges.

Qualitative Findings from Key Informant Interviews

The KII findings further explain the quantitative results relating specifically to the two research questions. Five themes emerged from the interviews.

Theme 1: Contributions to Community Development

Key informants acknowledged that MNCs have contributed to rural development through road construction, school rehabilitation, water projects, healthcare facilities and other CSR interventions. However, respondents emphasized that many of these projects were limited in scope and did not always correspond with the scale of community needs.

Theme 2: Education and Healthcare Improvements

Interview participants reported that CSR and GMoU interventions have improved access to schools, educational materials, scholarships and some healthcare facilities. However, healthcare interventions were considered less consistent than educational interventions. This supports the quantitative finding that education recorded a higher positive response (61.0%) than healthcare (54.6%).

Findings on the Research Questions

The findings show that multinational corporations (MNCs) have contributed to rural development in the Niger Delta to a moderate extent**,** particularly through infrastructure, employment, education and healthcare interventions. The results indicate that 59.5% of respondents agreed that MNCs contributed to infrastructure development, while 57.3% reported improved employment opportunities. Similarly, 61.0% perceived positive contributions to education and 54.6% to healthcare. The Pearson correlation result ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$) further established a significant positive relationship between MNC activities and rural development, while the Chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 18.45$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) confirmed a statistically significant relationship. However, the findings also reveal that these contributions have not been sufficient to produce broad-based and sustainable rural development, as 70.3% of respondents perceived the environmental impact of MNC activities as negative. Qualitative evidence similarly showed that although companies have provided roads, schools, health centres, water facilities and employment opportunities, many projects were considered inadequate, unevenly distributed and sometimes

unsustainable. Therefore, MNCs have made identifiable contributions to rural development during 2014–2024, but the extent of their contribution remains constrained by environmental degradation, limited employment opportunities and weaknesses in project sustainability.

The findings indicate that CSR programmes and GMoU-related interventions have had mixed but generally positive effects on access to basic social and economic services in rural communities. Education recorded the highest positive perception at 61.0%, followed by healthcare at 54.6%, while 59.5% of respondents acknowledged improvements in infrastructure and 57.3% perceived improved employment opportunities. The qualitative findings revealed that CSR and community development interventions have included school renovation, healthcare outreach, road construction, water projects and employment opportunities. However, respondents also reported that many interventions were inadequate, short-term and insufficiently aligned with community priorities. Limited community participation in project planning was identified as a major weakness, while environmental pollution, particularly oil spills and degradation of fishing and farming resources, continued to undermine livelihoods. The findings therefore suggest that CSR and GMoU interventions have improved access to some services and created selected livelihood opportunities, but their overall developmental influence has been limited by inadequate community participation, environmental degradation, unequal employment opportunities and poor sustainability of some projects.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the study found that MNCs made **moderate contributions to rural development in the Niger Delta between 2014 and 2024**, particularly in infrastructure, education, healthcare and employment. CSR and GMoU interventions improved access to some basic services and created development opportunities in host communities. Nevertheless, these benefits were uneven and were undermined by environmental degradation, limited community participation, inadequate employment opportunities and concerns about the sustainability of projects. The quantitative results confirmed a significant positive relationship between MNC activities and rural development, while the qualitative findings demonstrated that corporate contributions have not fully addressed the deeper social, economic and environmental needs of rural communities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that multinational corporations made moderate contributions to rural development in the Niger Delta between 2014 and 2024 through infrastructure, education, healthcare, employment and livelihood interventions. CSR and GMoU programmes improved access to some essential services, but their impacts remained uneven due to inadequate community participation, limited sustainability and unequal distribution of benefits. Environmental degradation and livelihood disruption also continued to constrain the overall developmental benefits of MNC activities, indicating the need for stronger corporate accountability, environmental responsibility and sustainable community development.

Recommendations

1. MNCs should strengthen community participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of CSR and GMoU projects to ensure that interventions reflect local priorities.
2. MNCs should expand sustainable investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, employment and livelihood programmes, with greater priority given to members of host communities.

3. Government regulatory agencies should strengthen environmental monitoring and enforcement to reduce oil pollution and protect the livelihoods of rural communities.
4. MNCs and host communities should establish effective monitoring, transparency and maintenance mechanisms to ensure that CSR and GMoU projects remain effective and sustainable over time.

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