

Given the negative attention that international oil companies have attracted in recent times, in respect of the perceived greed that underline their business practices, and sometimes disregard for environmental standards, it appears the Jubilee partners operating in Ghana's flagship commercial oil field are desirous to tell a different tale by ensuring that host communities also reap from their profits.

For Tullow Oil and its partners, corporate social responsibility is no more business as usual. They appear bent on departing from the tokenistic approach of providing various forms of services needed or not, to local communities. Some say, the company is only responding to increased media attention, pressure from non-governmental organizations, and rapid global information sharing, which have led to a surge in demand from civil society, consumers, governments, and others for businesses to adhere to sustainable business practices.

But, Tullow says it is here to demonstrate that it is possible to conduct oil business in a way that benefits all, both companies and resource owners. The company recently organized a free health screening exercise for the people of Apewosika in the Nzema East Municipality of the Western Region, Shama district, Agona Nkwanta in Agona East District, Nkroful and Essiama in Ellembelle District, and New Takoradi, in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis were screened for diabetes, HIV, hypertension, breast cancer, dental care, ear, eye, nose, and throat infections.

Mr. Ken McGhee, the Corporate Social Responsibility Manager for the Jubilee partners, said the screening exercise was aimed at offering free medical services to inhabitants residing within its operational area adding that "the health needs of the people within their catchment area would remain paramount to the company and never be relegated to the background." A total amount of \$1.6 million has been committed by the Jubilee partners to develop six coastal districts of the Western Region. Under a project tagged "Town Planning: an Imperative for Sustainable Oil economy in Western Region" the capacity of the six districts to professionally craft development plans to serve as the basis for both structural and human development in the short to medium term will be enhanced.

According the Jubilee partners they, "thought it wise to first roll out the project to ensure that the socio-economic and environmental fundamentals are put right, in order to facilitate an easy economic take off.

"Apart from spatial land planning, individual district plans would be complementary additions to ensure that the districts also map out effective strategies and systems to transform their areas, thereby becoming hubs for socio-economic change.

"Our expectation, therefore, as Jubilee partners, is that when this programme is fully rolled out, the perennial haphazard development usually associated with the region, where extractive industry, activities take place, would be drastically abated." The Jubilee partners envisage that the project would help arrest the problems associate with uncontrolled development, leading to slums and encroachment of drains and river- courses for residential purposes.

They noted that, incompatible land uses may raise the cost of doing business in Sekondi-Takoradi, as well as serve as a disincentive for prospective investors. The management of Eric Raude Rig, a rig which was used to drill the wells that led to Ghana's first oil discovery by Tullow Oil, also donated assorted items to the Abobre D/A Primary and Junior High schools in the Jomoro District of the Western Region. The items were 10,000 exercise books, four set of jerseys, footballs and kits, pens and pencils, and a polytank, all valued at GH¢ 50,000.

In addition eight districts, namely Ellembelle, Wassa Amenfi East, Wassa Amenfi West, Bibiani/Anhwiaso / Bekwai, Sefwi Akontombra, Bia and Juaboso have benefited from 25 boreholes, small town water supply systems, thirty-four institutional latrines and around 700 household latrines all undertaken by Tullow Ghana.

SOURCE: Public Agenda