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## Article

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# Community expectations versus corporate social responsibility practices in Ghana's oil and gas sector

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## ABSTRACT

The discovery of oil in Ghana initially raised hopes for development in oil and gas communities, driven by transnational companies' (TNCs) corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Although previous research on CSR in the oil and gas sector has examined the community's expectation of CSR, it has produced inconclusive results. As such, this study intends to contribute to this ongoing debate. In this quest, a multiple case study design was deployed to guide this study using a sample size of 94 participants who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The study deployed interviews and observation to collect data while the data were analysed using thematic analysis. This study's findings showed considerable optimism among communities regarding the transformative potential of CSR initiatives, with TNCs actively contributing to infrastructure development and livelihood opportunities. However, the results showed that some beneficiaries were discontent with the CSR interventions as they did not reflect their felt needs because of their limited participation. The policy recommendation is that there is a need for active stakeholders' engagement in CSR decision-making to ensure that felt needs are met and to promote TNCs acceptance.

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& Industrial Studies;  
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## 1. Introduction

The discourse surrounding oil and development revolves around the resource curse debate, which posits that resource-rich countries, including those with abundant oil, gas and mineral resources, may not necessarily benefit from these riches (Andrews, 2013; Attah & Amoah, 2023; Bishoge & Mvile, 2020; Duttagupta et al., 2021; Kinnaman, 2023). To address this challenge, Akporiaye (2023) argues that oil and gas companies now pursue corporate social responsibility (CSR) to meet community expectations. CSR encompasses the ethical and socially responsible strategies corporations employ to conduct their business (Galbreath, 2006). While some nations like Norway, Canada, Finland, Australia and Botswana have effectively managed their citizens' expectations, others, such as Russia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil, have struggled to do so, contributing to the perception that oil can be a curse rather than a blessing (Kaldor, 2007; Jackson & Beswick, 2014; Yang et al., 2021). This challenge extends to many African countries, including Angola, the former Republic of Sudan, Zambia, Gabon and Nigeria, where inadequate management of oil revenues has led to the so-called oil curse phenomenon (Bishoge & Mvile, 2020; Obi, 2014; Panford, 2017).

Research indicates that one of the most significant challenges transnational companies (TNCs) face in Africa is company-community relations (Ackah & Mohammed, 2020; Idemudia & Ite, 2006; Okpanachi & Andrews, 2012). Osei-Tutu (2012) has highlighted grievances from local inhabitants, including increased

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unemployment, loss of farmlands and restricted access to deep-sea fishing due to the construction of oil rigs and related developments. Existing literature has sometimes overlooked the role of socio-cultural contexts in understanding the causes and effects of the resource curse phenomenon, which could be addressed through effective CSR initiatives by TNCs (Ovadia et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that Ghana's oil sector has been the subject of extensive research since its discovery in 2007 (Ackah & Mohammed, 2020). However, previous studies (Ablo & Overå, 2015; Ackah & Mohammed, 2020; I. Ackah et al., 2020; Ayelazuno, 2014; Eduful & Hooper, 2015; Mohammed, 2019; Obeng-Odoom, 2014; Okpanachi & Andrews, 2012; Ovadia et al., 2020; Panford, 2017) have primarily focused on topics such as local content laws, petroleum revenue management, impact assessments, negotiation strategies for benefits, political dynamics and the challenges associated with the oil sector. The prior studies that have specifically focused on community expectations of CSR of oil and gas companies have produced contradictory results. Whereas Andrews (2013), Oppong (2016), Celik et al. (2019), Masum et al. (2020) and Mohammed et al. (2022) reported that CSR interventions have a significant positive effect on the communities on the contrary, authors like Frynas (2005), Dauda (2019), Hilson et al. (2019), Ovadia et al. (2020) hold a contrary perspective. For instance, Eduful and Hooper (2015) argue that oil production has led to gentrification in the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi, while Ayelazuno (2014) contends that the oil and gas sector poses a resource curse for Ghana due to relentless exploitation by global capitalist forces. This study intends to contribute to this ongoing debate. The paper aims to explore CSR initiatives and community expectations within the oil-affected communities in the Ahanta West Municipality. Specifically, the paper examines the primary expectations of coastal communities affected by oil and gas production, the implementation of CSR interventions by TNCs and the community's and TNCs' views on CSR interventions within these communities. The paper is designed as follows: after this introduction, the next section presents the theoretical framework centred on CSR and community development. The subsequent section outlines the research materials and methods. It then delves into the results and engages in an in-depth discussion. Finally, the last section presents our conclusions and highlights policy implications derived from our research.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theoretical and conceptual perspectives

This study is guided by three main theoretical frameworks: corporate citizenship theory, legitimacy theory and Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation theory. On the other hand, the fundamental concepts underpinning this study comprise CSR, community development and the resource curse. As elucidated by Hayes and Khartit (2022), corporate citizenship theory emphasises a company's broader responsibilities towards society, encompassing its local community and the global environment. It encompasses social, ethical and economic obligations, emphasising the importance of businesses contributing to societal well-being, environmental preservation and profit generation. This perspective aligns with evolving expectations from investors and regulators, emphasising robust environmental, social and governance practices. Historically, corporate citizenship was associated with philanthropy and community engagement, but its definition has expanded to emphasise partnership and mutual benefits between businesses and society (Sitnikov, 2013). While the definition of corporate citizenship may vary among individuals and organisations, its central premise is that businesses have a societal responsibility beyond profit generation (Ogola & Mària, 2020).

With legitimacy theory, it revolves around a social contract between organisations and their communities, highlighting the need for organisations, particularly corporations, to maintain perceived social legitimacy for survival and success. This theory suggests that organisations align their actions with societal norms and expectations to gain and uphold public acceptance. CSR initiatives are influenced by the relationship between societal expectations and the company (Stratling, 2007). Companies seek legitimacy from the community, often achieved through disclosing their social responsibilities (Dewiyanti, 2021; Rochayatun & Kholifah, 2021). While legitimacy theory underscores the significance of CSR efforts and transparent communication in preserving organisational legitimacy, it has faced criticism for oversimplifying organisational motives and assuming uniform societal expectations (Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013).

Regarding Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation theory, it categorises citizen engagement into various levels, distinguishing between degrees of participation and associated power. It ranges from passive or pseudo-participation at lower rungs to active or genuine engagement at higher rungs, where citizens actively participate in policymaking. While this ladder has helped assess stakeholder participation, critics argue that it may overlook barriers to meaningful participation and not account for diverse societal perspectives (Collins & Ison, 2006; Laskey & Nicholls, 2019). The corporate citizenship theory, legitimacy theory and Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation collectively form a theoretical framework that sheds light on different CSR practices among oil and gas companies such as Tullow Ghana Limited, the TEN Partners and Kosmos Energy. Corporate citizenship theory suggests that these companies integrate CSR into their business strategies as a core aspect of their responsibility to society. In contrast, legitimacy theory proposes that their CSR efforts aim primarily to garner public acceptance. Meanwhile, Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation offers insights into the degree of engagement these companies have with the communities affected by their operations, specifically involving them in decisions about CSR activities. Together, these theories provide a multi-dimensional understanding of how and why oil and gas companies undertake CSR initiatives.

In addition to these theoretical frameworks, the study revolves around key concepts such as CSR, community development and the resource curse. CSR involves a company's responsibility for its impact on society and the environment, extending beyond legal compliance (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). It is a collaborative approach between society and business, emphasising a company's role in managing its relationship with broader society (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). CSR is not based on regulatory compliance in Ghana and its practices extend beyond compliance. As such, corporate citizenship and CSR are synonymous concepts, which can be used interchangeably in Ghana. The corporate citizenship theory provides an adequate basis to elucidate CSR policies and practices. Thus, the significance of CSR concept cannot be overstated, as it establishes the foundational understanding of the obligations that companies such as Tullow Ghana Limited, the TEN Partners and Kosmos Energy hold towards the communities within their areas of operation. This understanding is crucial for fostering a responsible and sustainable interaction between these corporations and the local populations affected by their activities. Community development aims to enhance the well-being of residents in low- to moderate-income neighbourhoods through asset building (Ferguson & Dickens, 1999). The success of community development efforts is influenced by whether external resources are perceived as a curse (Vidal & Keating, 2004). Within the context of community development, the insights gleaned from this concept are instrumental in delineating how the operations of oil and gas companies are perceived by the communities they impact, particularly in terms of enhancing living conditions. This perspective illuminates the direct effects of corporate activities on local development and underscores the importance of aligning corporate strategies with the genuine needs and aspirations of the affected populations. The resource curse describes the challenges resource-rich countries face in harnessing their natural wealth for the benefit of their citizens, leading to slower economic growth and reduced development outcomes (Fernando, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to this study's context. This study leverages the concept of the resource curse to assess how much oil and gas exploration activities are advantaging the communities situated in the exploration zones.

## **2.2. Community expectations of CSR**

Several prior studies collectively examined various facets of CSR and its influence on community development. Some of the studies have indicated that CSR has a positive effect on community development. Oppong (2016), for instance, researched CSR in Ghana, emphasising the prevalence of CSR initiatives in sectors like telecommunications, banking and extractive industries, with a significant role played by foreign-owned firms. These initiatives primarily targeted education, healthcare, environmental conservation, social entrepreneurship and sports development. CSR efforts were visible in education, mining communities, sports and coastal regions near offshore oil and gas facilities. Mohammed et al. (2022) also found that CSR interventions had positively impacted the living conditions of coastal communities in Ghana, generating appreciation from the host communities. Celik et al. (2019) conducted a literature review focusing on the contribution of CSR initiatives to community development. The review revealed

that sampled companies engaged in various CSR activities, encompassing education, healthcare and empowerment, positively contributing to community development. Effective stakeholder engagement was highlighted as a critical aspect of successful CSR implementation. A related study by Ansu-Mensah et al. (2021) investigated the CSR processes of an extractive company in Ghana. It emphasised the importance of stakeholder involvement in designing and implementing relevant CSR programmes. They highlighted the consistent CSR efforts of Newmont Ahafo Mines in Ghana. For Masum et al. (2020), they adopted an integrated literature review approach to explore the effect of CSR on community development. They observed a transition from a profit-centric business approach to CSR, encompassing economic, environmental and social dimensions. In Ghana, Andrews (2013) and Mohammed et al. (2022) conducted research highlighting the high expectations of oil-producing communities in the Western Region following the discovery of oil in 2007. These expectations included access to job opportunities, healthcare improvements, clean water, better infrastructure, reliable electricity supply and enhanced educational facilities that appeared not to have been met. The impact of CSR on community development was evident in various aspects, including environmental protection. Oppong (2016), Celik et al. (2019) and Masum et al. (2020) appeared to suggest that CSR contributes to community development.

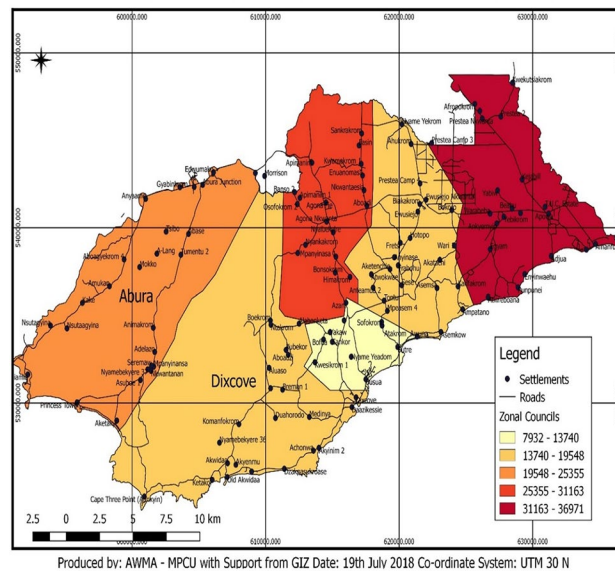
However, some other studies illustrate that CSR may have little or no positive impact on the community development of oils and gas enclaves. For example, Dauda (2019) investigated community development dynamics related to mining projects in Ghana, employing CSR practices. The findings indicated that mining companies often failed to communicate their CSR strategies effectively to host communities. While they showcased commitments to social and environmental standards, they struggled to grasp the local socio-cultural, economic and political dynamics, limiting the impact of their CSR programmes. Ovadia et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study assessing the impacts of oil and gas production in Ghana. Their research found that CSR projects often did not align with local development priorities, resulting in community dissatisfaction, social issues and land disputes. The high expectations and perceived grievances among communities increased the risk of conflict and hindered overall development. Frynas (2005) revealed divergent perspectives on CSR within the oil industry, with some insiders viewing it as a superficial attempt to manage perceptions rather than drive meaningful development. Hilson et al. (2019) argued that multinational corporations (MNCs) in the oil and gas sector had made limited contributions to community development in Nigeria, and the enclave nature of mining operations in sub-Saharan Africa hindered the effectiveness of bottom-up CSR initiatives. Idemudia and Ite (2006) identified factors contributing to the shortcomings of CSR in the Niger Delta, including a failure to consider community perceptions, an imbalance between affirmative and negative duties, and an unsupportive environment. The review of existing literature reveals a dynamic debate regarding the effectiveness of CSR in fostering community development, especially in the context of multinational oil and gas corporations. While some communities acknowledge and appreciate these corporations' CSR activities, others adopt a sceptical stance towards the benefits and motivations of such initiatives. This study seeks to delve into this debate, enriching the discourse with empirical evidence and a deeper analysis of CSR's impact on community development.

### 3. Materials and methods

#### 3.1. Study area

Ahanta West Municipality, situated at the southernmost point of Ghana, has its capital in Agona Nkwanta, also known as Agona Ahanta. Several boundaries geographically define this district: it is bordered on the East by the Sekondi – Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, on the West by the Nzema East Municipal Assembly and to the North by the Mpohor Wassa East District and Tarkwa - Nsuaem Municipal Assemblies. To the South, it extends to the Gulf of Guinea, embracing the coastline (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021). Covering a land area of 591 square kilometres, the district was home to a total population of 153,140 people as of 2021, with females forming the majority at 77,921 individuals (GSS, 2021). The demographics reveal that a significant proportion of the population, 82,278 residents, reside in rural areas. The district is notably characterised by its predominantly youthful population, signifying a potential high demand for future social amenities and infrastructure development. The primary economic activities in this region revolve around two key sectors: sea fishing and crop farming. The youth





**Figure 1.** Map of Ahanta West Municipality.  
Source: Ahanta West Municipality Assembly (2022).

predominantly engage in these activities, which serve as their primary source of employment. On the other hand, women play a crucial role in processing the harvested fish and preparing it for local consumption and external markets. Furthermore, the area attracts several traders who journey to these communities to purchase fish in substantial quantities, sourcing it from various parts of Ghana. The study conducted its research across 12 communities within the district, encompassing Lower and Upper Dixcove, Cape Three Points, Busua, Princes Town, Butre, Achowa, Katakori, Funko, Asemkow, New Amanful, Pumpkin, Egyambra and Akwidada. The selection of these communities was strategic, primarily due to their heavy involvement in fishing activities and the potential impact of oil discovery and production on their livelihoods. For reference, Figure 1 on the map depicts the locations of these communities within the Ahanta West Municipality.

### 3.2. Research design

Employing a qualitative research method for this study was informed by its suitability for addressing the 'how' and/or 'why' questions in research, as Yin (2018) emphasised. In the context of this study, which aimed to investigate community expectations arising from oil production, the qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for comprehending how these communities perceive CSR resulting from oil production. Qualitative research methods excel at uncovering a phenomenon's meaning through the participants' perspectives and experiences (Thomas, 2006). A case study design was adopted to structure this inquiry. Case studies are empirical investigations that delve into a specific, real-life incident within its natural setting, mainly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are intricate and multiple sources of evidence are necessary (Yin, 2014, 2018). Case studies typically rely on qualitative data collection methods to provide an in-depth understanding of the topics under scrutiny (Sarantakos, 2005). In this instance, a multiple-case study design was chosen, which involves examining more than one case simultaneously where researchers contrast individual cases (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Employing a multiple-case study design facilitates a nuanced comprehension of each case's collective and individual characteristics. It enables researchers to delve deeper by comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences across cases within a specific group or phenomenon (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Hunziker and Blankenagel (2024) highlight the principal benefit of employing a multiple-case study methodology as its capacity for conducting cross-case comparisons. This approach expands the scope of the investigation beyond a singular instance, enabling an analysis that uncovers both the shared and distinct elements across different cases (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). The cases selected for this study comprised Tullow

Ghana Limited, the TEN Partners and Kosmos Energy. These entities were chosen due to their prominence as leading TNCs operating within the specific enclave of interest in the oil and gas sector.

### 3.3. Sample size and sampling procedure

The study population encompassed two primary groups: residents residing in Ghana's oil and gas enclave and prominent oil and gas companies operating within the region, specifically Tullow Ghana Limited, the TEN Partners and Kosmos Energy. The study included 94 participants, with the sample size determined through a considered judgement process. In qualitative research, the sample size should be sufficiently large to reveal a nuanced and detailed understanding of the studied phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1995). Nevertheless, it must remain small enough to permit in-depth, focused, case-by-case analysis. This balance is guided by the concept of saturation—when additional data no longer offers new insights—and practical limitations, according to Vasileiou et al. (2018). In each of the 13 communities examined, which were Dixcove, Cape Three Points, Busua, Princes Town, Butre, Achowa, Katakori, Funko, Asemkrow, New Amanful, Pumpkin, Egyambra and Akwidaa, a minimum of seven key informants were interviewed (Table 1). These key informants were selected based on their profound knowledge of the CSR activities carried out by the TNCs operating in their respective localities. Furthermore, one key informant was chosen from the three major companies involved—Tullow Ghana Limited, TEN Partners and Kosmos Energy (Table 1). These selections were also based on purposive sampling, considering their extensive knowledge of their respective organisations' CSR endeavours (Kumar, 2019).

### 3.4. Data collection instruments, data collection and ethical issues

Data collection in this study employed a multifaceted approach involving interviews and observations to ensure comprehensive and nuanced insights into the research objectives. For the interview component, two distinct interview guides were designed. This approach offers considerable flexibility, allowing for modifying questions during the process and collecting more detailed and extensive information (Kothari,

**Table 1.** Sample distribution of key informants.

Location of participant	Key informant	Sample
<b>Community Level</b>		
Dixcove	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Cape Three Points	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, imam (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Busua	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Princes Town	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Butre	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, imam (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Achowa	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Katakori	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Funko	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Asemkrow	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
New Amanful	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Pumpkin	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Egyambra	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
Akwidaa	Leader of fisher folks, leader of farmer associations, community youth leader, women's leader, pastor (religious leader), chief, and assembly member	7
<b>Institutional level</b>		
Kosmos Energy	Community Liason Officer	1
Tullow Ghana Limited	Corporate Affairs Officer	1
TEN Partners	Corporate Affairs Officer	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>94</b>



2014). One was tailored for the residents of the 13 study communities, while the other was aimed at representatives from the TNCs operating in the oil and gas sectors. Interviews were conducted with diverse community leaders, including leaders of fisher folks, farmer associations, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, local chiefs, local assembly members, traders in the fishing value chain and artisans. The questions delved into various aspects, such as the community's primary expectations from oil production, the impact of oil production on livelihoods and emerging contentions with the TNCs. Participants were also encouraged to provide specific details about the TNCs' interventions, including their selection, implementation, current status and concerns. The interviews with key informants from the TNCs sought to reveal their perspectives on project selection and implementation methods and the challenges they faced while working with the communities in their operational areas. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded after verbal permission was sought and granted. The data collection process spanned two weeks in July 2023.

Additionally, an observation guide was utilised to document the physical interventions initiated by the TNCs as part of their CSR initiatives. In cases where visual documentation was necessary, a camera was used to capture images of selected interventions. The observation method was utilised based on Kumar's (2019) recommendation that it is particularly suited for situations where questioning alone may not yield comprehensive or sufficient information. As its methodology, this research incorporated instrument triangulation, including interviews and observation guide. Triangulation, as described by Carter et al. (2014), is a strategy in qualitative research that enhances validity by corroborating information gathered from various sources.

The participants for the key informant interviews were selected and recruited after obtaining their verbal informed consent, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's objectives and their voluntary involvement in the research process. In addition, ethical clearance was obtained from the Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies Research Ethics Review Board to ensure ethical conduct throughout the research process. This rigorous review process established a solid ethical foundation for the research. Subsequently, informed consent letters were provided to all research participants, affirming the commitment to protecting their anonymity, maintaining the confidentiality of their responses, and mitigating potential harm.

### 3.5. Data analysis

Data processing and analysis in this study adhered to a standard qualitative approach. Initially, the interviews underwent transcription, followed by a manual thematic analysis. This inductive approach, integral to the thematic analysis methodology, involves systematically identifying, analysing and reporting discernible patterns, referred to as themes, present within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through discovering, refining and categorising codes, themes naturally emerged, providing a comprehensive framework for interpreting the data (Yukhymenko et al., 2014). The intricate phases and processes constituting the data analysis journey are summarised in Table 2 to encapsulate the analytical process. The result of this thorough analysis was the presentation of findings through textual representation, encapsulating the rich narratives derived from the collected data. Data collection involved diverse stakeholders to encourage participant triangulation. Furthermore, member checks were conducted with some key participants to ensure the validity of the results. Regarding reflexivity, it was

**Table 2.** Phases of thematic analysis.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting data features in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating to the analysis of the research question and literature, producing a scholarly analysis report.

Source: Adopted from Braun & Clarke, [2006, p. 87].

imperative to approach the research from a researcher's perspective while maintaining objectivity by setting aside personal experiences, preconceptions, opinions and emotions. However, it is acknowledged that maintaining complete objectivity and adopting an insider stance proved challenging as one of the researchers hails from one of the study communities.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *Community expectations from oil and gas production*

An examination of the responses obtained from the key informant interviews has unveiled a range of expectations held by the communities impacted by oil production. These expectations have been systematically documented and assessed in [Table 3](#), where they are rated based on the degree of emphasis placed on them during the key informant interviews. The responses overwhelmingly underscore substantial expectations associated with oil and gas production.

Among the expectations articulated by the participants regarding oil production by the TNCs, several key themes emerged. These encompassed educational needs, healthcare requirements, agricultural support, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, improved transportation networks, enhanced safety and security measures, recreational opportunities, job creation, the development of local businesses, economic prospects, community capacity building initiatives and the preservation of art and cultural heritage. Some expectations, such as art and cultural needs, safety and security concerns and recreational facilities, were expressed with relatively lower frequency. However, it is paramount to highlight that certain expectations held by the participants stood out prominently. These included aspirations for increased employment opportunities, the establishment of alternative livelihoods, fair compensation for lost livelihoods and the overall enhancement of community infrastructure. Despite the diversity of expectations and mixed sentiments, participants expressed optimism during the interviews, emphasising their belief that the oil and gas industry could bring numerous benefits that are capable of addressing their multifaceted challenges. For instance, a key informant said:

Indeed, our expectations have been, and continue to be, quite extensive. At the very least, we anticipate the construction of much-needed roads within our community. Our hope extends to establishing hospitals and addressing a critical healthcare gap in this part of the country. Access to clean and reliable drinking water sources remains a pressing concern, and we hold high hopes that both the companies and government will collaborate to provide us with safe drinking water, particularly in light of our newfound oil resources. Additionally, our fervent wish is to witness the construction of schools, which would significantly benefit our community (Key informant from Katakori).

Aside from that, a key informant remarked:

While we know the presence of oil resources in our area, the rising transportation fares have been a consistent challenge. We also grapple with the absence of electricity, which hinders our progress and development. A particularly pressing concern is the high unemployment rate among our youth, casting a shadow over their prospects. One primary expectation for the oil companies is a commitment to training and educational initiatives, including establishing schools (Key informant from Akatakya).

Another key informant noted:

We strongly advocate for increased employment opportunities within our community to uplift our residents. For those who have lost their livelihoods due to oil production, we expect support and assistance in finding alternative means of sustenance. We believe these expectations are essential for garnering the support and cooperation of our community in the context of oil production (Key informant from Ezile).

A predominant theme among the expressed expectations is the desire for employment opportunities and viable alternatives to existing jobs. In individual interviews, numerous participants emphasised that a significant portion of the youth in their communities is either unemployed or disinterested in pursuing careers in the fishing industry. They contend that oil production has disrupted fishing and its associated businesses, rendering these livelihoods unsustainable. A key informant from Butre commented:

**Table 3.** Most prioritised needs of communities in Ahanta West Municipality.

Community / need	Educational needs	Health needs	Agricultural needs	Water, Sanitation and hygiene	Transportation	Safety and security	Recreational	Jobs, business and economic opportunities	Community capacity building	Art and Cultural Needs
Miemia	Furniture for school children	Health facility	Cold Store for bumper harvest	Toilet facility	Road network	Police post	Football field	Jobs in the community	Local capacity building in oil and gas industry	None
Princess Town	Teachers' bungalow	Health facility	Farming and fishing inputs to make farming and fishing easy.	Toilet facility	Good road network	Street light	Football field	Jobs in the community	Local capacity building in oil and gas industry	None
Awona Beach	Kindergarten to give firm educational basis to kids	None	Farming and fishing inputs to make farming and fishing easy	Potable Water	Good Road network	None	Clean beach to improve recreational activities along the beach	Creation of Jobs in the community	None	None
New Amanful	School building	Health facility	Loan/financing	Portable water	Good road networks	Police	None	Job in the community	Community youth involvement in decisions making in the O/G industry	Culture centre
Aketakyi	Computer lab library to facilitate learning	Health facility	Farming/fishing inputs	Improve on drainage system	Good road network	None	None	Jobs in the community	Capacity building in the O/G industry	None
Funko	School building	Health facility	Farming or fishing inputs	Toilet facility	The road from Apowa to the community is not tarred; therefore, needs to be tarred	Street lights	Recreational centre	Jobs in the community	None	Art centres or cultural centres
Asemkow	School building		Farming/fishing inputs	Portable water	Good road networks	Street lights	Clean beaches	Market place to enhance business	None	Cultural/Art centre Festival
Lower Discove	School building and Staff bungalow	None	Farming and fishing inputs	Toilet facility	Good road networks	None	Clean beaches	Market place to enhance business	None	Cultural/Art centre Festival
Pumpkin	School building	Health facilities	Premix fuel	Toilet facility	Good road networks	Street lights	Recreational centres	Market place to enhance business	Youth empowerment	Cultural/Art centre
Butre	School building	Health staff	None	Portable water	Good road networks	Street lights	Recreational centre	Loan or government support to expand businesses (fishing)	Youth empowerment	Cultural/Art centre
Adjua	School building	Health facility	Farming and fishing inputs	Toilet facility	Good road networks	Street lights	None	Market place to enhance business	None	Cultural/Art centre Festival
Upper Discove	School building	Health staff	Premix fuel	Toilet facility	Good road networks	Street lights	Clean beaches	Jobs in the community	None	Cultural/Art centre Festival
Akwidaa	Staff bungalow	None	Fishing and farming inputs	Toilet facility	Good road network	None	None	Jobs in the community	None	None
Achowa	Furniture for school children	None	Loan or government support to expand businesses	Toilet facilities	Good road network	None	None	Creation of jobs	None	None
Egyambra	School building	Medical supplies	Sea weeds	Portable water	Good road network	None	None	Jobs in the community	None	None

(Continued)

Table 3. Continued.

Community / need	Educational needs	Health needs	Agricultural needs	Water, Sanitation and hygiene	Transportation	Safety and security	Recreational	Jobs, business and economic opportunities	Community capacity building	Art and Cultural Needs
Busua	School building		Loans to expand business	Portable water	None	None	None	Jobs in the community	None	None
Katakori	School building	Health facility	Premix depot	Toilet facility	Good road network	Police post		Loans/business financing	Youth empowerment	None
Cape Three Points	Furniture for school children	Staff	Premix fuel	Toilet	Rehabilitation of community Roads	None	None	Creation of Jobs in the community	None	None

Source: Field Visit (2023).

While we hold high hopes for oil production to usher in development within our community, we are equally burdened by the potential jeopardy it poses to our traditional livelihoods. A significant portion of our younger generation lacks the necessary education to secure employment within the oil companies, and the fishing industry, which has long been a source of livelihood for them, is now under threat. This situation has left me deeply concerned about the future prospects of our children (Key informant from Butre).

Despite a relatively small number of interviewees expressing optimism regarding employment opportunities from oil companies and associated government entities, a prevalent sentiment among many was apprehension about the future of their primary livelihoods, which revolve around farming and sea fishing. Fisherfolk, in particular, voiced substantial concerns about the increasing restrictions imposed at sea, severely impacting their fishing activities. They vehemently opposed suggestions of replacing their current livelihoods with alternative options, instead advocating for reducing sea restrictions to facilitate peaceful coexistence and maintain their way of life, as emphasised in interviews.

#### 4.2. Interventions of TNCs in the communities

This section offers a comprehensive overview of the tangible CSR initiatives implemented by the TNCs in various communities and their current operational status (Table 4). The results highlight that out of the 23 CSR projects undertaken, a significant majority of 20 projects remain in functional condition. Notably, the most prevalent types of interventions encompassed the construction of school buildings, installation of toilet facilities and boreholes.

Given the assertions made by key informants regarding the execution of specific projects, it became imperative to ascertain the accuracy of these claims through on-site observations. The observations unequivocally validated that TNCs operating within Ghana's oil and gas sector had carried out several interventions as part of their CSR efforts (Figures 2-4), corroborating the earlier insights provided by key informants.

Concrete evidence in the field substantiates the tangible impact of oil and gas companies' interventions within the communities. Numerous participants have not only acknowledged these interventions but have also expressed their profound satisfaction, asserting that their well-being would have faced significant challenges without the presence of these initiatives. One participant aptly remarked:

As previously mentioned, Tullow Oil has taken proactive steps in our community. For instance, they have generously donated computers to our local school, enhancing our educational resources. Additionally, Tullow Oil has demonstrated its commitment to education by offering scholarships for individuals to pursue studies

**Table 4.** TNCs CSR interventions in the Ahanta West Municipality.

Name of community	CSR intervention	Status and functionality	TNC responsible
Butre	Community Borehole	Functional	Kosmos
Achiowa	Community Borehole	Functional	GNPC
Katakori	Toilet Facility	Completed and not functional	TEN Partners
Cape Three Points	School Building Project	Functional	Kosmos
Busua	Clinic	Functional	Kosmos
Asemkrow	Basic School building	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Butre	Clean water project	Functional with management challenges	Jubilee Partners
Butre	Piggery Livelihood Enhancement Project	Functional with management challenges	Jubilee Partners
Funko	School Water Project	Functional	GNPC
Funko	Piggery Livelihood Enhancement Project	Functional with management challenges	Jubilee Partners
New Amanful	Public toilet facility	Functional	Fendercare Marine Limited
New Amanful	Public toilet facility	Functional	Bayfield Oil services
Pumpkin	School building	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Egyambra	Safe water project	Functional	Kosmos
Cape Three Points	Public Toilet facility	Not functional	Jubilee Partners
Cape Three Points	Public Toilet facility	Not functional	GNPC
Cape Three Points	Community Borehole	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Akwidaa	Community Borehole	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Akwidaa	School building	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Lower Discove	School building	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Lower Discove	School building	Functional	GNPC
Lower Discove	Teachers Bungalow	Functional	Jubilee Partners
Lower Discove	Computer Laboratory	Functional	Jubilee Partners

Source: Field Visit (2023).



**Figure 2.** Community Borehole at Achiowa.  
Photo credit: Authors (2023).



**Figure 3.** School Project at Discove.  
Photo credit: Authors (2023).



**Figure 4.** Piggery at Butre.  
Photo credit: Authors (2023).

abroad. Remarkably, two fortunate individuals from our community have been beneficiaries of these scholarships, a testament to the positive impact Tullow Oil is making here (Key informant from Lower Dixcove).

Despite the TNCs' dedication to community development initiatives, some participants expressed scepticism. They noted that these interventions offer limited opportunities for local employment. Regarding this, a key informant had this to say:

We have observed and complained several times that the oil and gas companies do not consider the employment of our local people. They often claim to be providing water, schools and hospitals. What about the



employment of our people who have lost their livelihoods? We need employment in companies to earn income to support our families (Key informant, a youth leader activist in Dixcove).

#### **4.3. The community's and TNCs' views on CSR interventions**

Feedback from interviews with community members and TNC representatives revealed varied levels of engagement in CSR decision-making. While some individuals felt actively involved in choosing CSR activities, others experienced these projects as top-down impositions, being merely informed about infrastructural developments like schools and water systems without prior consultation. This discrepancy highlights various participatory practices in identifying and implementing CSR interventions within these communities.

Evidence gathered from key informant interviews underscored the generally substantial benefits of TNC interventions, particularly in addressing the fundamental needs of the communities. Participants expressed their gratitude openly, highlighting the positive impact of certain TNCs on their community infrastructure. Notably, residents of Egyambra spoke highly of KOSMOS Energy's contribution, explicitly citing the construction of a community water project and its efficient management. Before the intervention, community members had to travel to neighbouring areas with containers to fetch water. However, the new water system brought significant relief, ensuring a reliable source of clean drinking water. Remarkably, the system's external management ensured that the community did not bear any costs in case of system failures, preventing potential abandonment if left solely in the hands of the community.

While many community water projects had been implemented, participants raised concerns about the effectiveness of some of them. Several TNC-provided water projects faced initial abandonment due to machine size and electricity consumption exceeding the community's capacity. However, participants acknowledged that these issues had been addressed over time.

On the contrary, those who indicated they were not fully involved in identifying the CSR intervention noted that despite their overall appreciation for TNC interventions, they were dissatisfied regarding some specific projects. For instance, a key informant at Cape Three Points reported:

One day, we were informed by an oil and gas company that they were going to provide us with a community toilet. We were not consulted; this was an imposition. The money is theirs, so they can decide what to do. We would have agreed on something else if we had been consulted about what the community wanted.

Similarly, a key informant from Katakori remarked, 'one notable example was a single-seater toilet facility provided by the TEN Partners for the community's children. We considered it inadequate for a community of approximately 700 people.' A follow-up interview with the Corporate Affairs Officer of TEN clarified that the facility aimed to teach children proper toilet usage habits from a young age. Nevertheless, residents believed their primary need was a fully functional toilet facility for the entire community. These quotes suggest that some of the beneficiaries of the CSR from the oil and gas companies are sometimes not actively involved in deciding what the companies should provide. However, this has the potential to lead to the provision of CSR activities that may not meet the community's felt needs, leading to limited use of that intervention.

Additionally, concerns were raised about the imbalanced nature of TNC infrastructure interventions. Although participants recognised the positive aspects of these interventions, some voiced disappointment about limited employment opportunities within the TNCs. They believed that while their youth may lack the qualifications for certain positions, TNCs should still consider them for less skilled roles.

Our community members' continued support hinges on their ability to assist our youth in securing employment opportunities. If they restrict deep-sea fishing without offering alternative livelihood options, I believe our community's backing will remain uncertain (Key informant from Dixcove).

Subsequent interviews with TNCs (TEN, Tullow and Kosmos) provided further insights into the participants' claims. These TNCs generally adhere to their community engagement and CSR policies, explicitly outlining their approach to community interventions. For instance, a key informant remarked, 'we have our community engagement and CSR manual, which we refer to when making decisions with respect to development interventions in the communities' (Interview with Community Liaison Officer of Kosmos).

Energy in Agona). Another key informant noted ‘sometimes we consult our partners in the Jubilee Field to discuss the appropriate interventions for the communities, and when we agree on something beneficial to the communities, we go ahead and provide’ (Interview with Tullow Corporate Affairs Officer at Takoradi). These quotations suggest that, to some extent, the TNCs engage the communities. As such, TNCs maintain that accusations against them are unwarranted and stress their dedication to fostering positive relationships with beneficiaries by involving them extensively in project decision-making and execution. A key informant from Kosmos Energy reported, ‘as a company, we have made conscious efforts to engage community leaders in determining suitable projects for their areas, but they, at times, do not show up when invited for such occasions’. The quote suggests that while TNCs endeavour to engage with communities in their operations, there are instances where community participation falls short, often because community members do not make themselves available for the engagement process. This situation points to a gap in effective communication and involvement between TNCs and the communities they aim to serve.

Regarding the employment of residents, TNCs reiterated their concerns about the limited qualifications of many job applicants from the communities. Tullow Ghana, in particular, cited instances where they hired locals for less skilled positions like security and driving, only to encounter issues such as theft and absenteeism among some local employees. TNCs emphasised that they have invested substantially in local skill development and scholarship opportunities. However, they expressed disappointment with the outcomes, noting that many local beneficiaries of these programmes often abandon them without providing compelling reasons.

## 5. Discussion

The results suggest that most participants have high expectations from the oil companies. The findings underscore the considerable expectations held by the participants concerning the contributions of TNCs to community development. These expectations encompassed various facets of community well-being, including education, healthcare, agriculture, water and sanitation, transportation, employment, business opportunities, economic growth and community capacity building. While some participants expressed optimism about potential employment opportunities in the oil companies, their predominant concern revolved around the potential disruption of their primary livelihood sources, particularly farming and fishing. The high reliance on these sectors was justified, as a substantial portion of Ghana’s population is engaged in agriculture, constituting a significant portion of the country’s GDP (Kaleem & Guohua, 2015). The finding supports previous research by Andrews (2013) and Mohammed et al. (2022), highlighting the communities’ expectations for improved healthcare, clean drinking water, enhanced infrastructure, reliable electricity and better educational facilities due to TNCs in the oil enclave. Should these expectations not be fulfilled, an expectation gap may arise, potentially leading to feelings of resentment and conflict. For oil and gas companies to be embraced by the public, they need to implement CSR efforts that align with community expectations, a concept supported by legitimacy theory (Rochayatun & Kholifah, 2021).

Regarding CSR interventions, the study revealed that school buildings, toilet facilities and boreholes were the dominant and functional projects initiated by the TNCs in the communities. Mohammed et al. (2022) made similar findings, indicating that CSR initiatives had positively impacted the living conditions of coastal communities in Ghana, earning appreciation from these host communities. These interventions aimed to enhance community development and improve residents’ quality of life, aligning with the principles of the corporate citizenship theory. This theory posits that companies have responsibilities that extend to society, including their local communities (Hayes & Khartit, 2022). The provision of these projects reflects the social contract concept, emphasising the importance of managing stakeholders’ perceptions to maintain organisational legitimacy (Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013). The evidence from the results underscores the idea that failing to fulfil these obligations can jeopardise a company’s existence (Rochayatun & Kholifah, 2021). Since the TNCs are actively providing infrastructure in their operational areas, this indicates that Ghana is, to some extent, mitigating the effects of the resource curse. This proactive approach by TNCs suggests that the country’s natural resource wealth is being leveraged to support community development and infrastructure improvements, rather than solely benefiting a narrow

elite or contributing to economic stagnation. The engagement in infrastructure development by these corporations demonstrates a commitment to using resource revenues to foster broader social and economic benefits, helping to avoid the pitfalls commonly associated with the resource curse.

However, the study also identified concerns among some participants regarding the TNCs' unilateral decision-making in selecting CSR interventions without considering the communities' priority needs. This echoes similar findings by Dauda (2019) in the mining sector, highlighting a lack of effective communication between mining companies and host communities. Similarly, Ovadia et al. (2020) noted that CSR projects in Ghana's oil and gas sector often did not align with local development priorities, resulting in community dissatisfaction and disputes. To address these challenges, effective CSR implementation requires the active engagement of traditional leaders, community members, local authorities and other stakeholders through participatory approaches. The findings substantiate Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation theory, emphasising the importance of meaningful citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Building strong relationships with communities necessitates robust company-community communication to prioritise community expectations and development needs. The TNCs challenged the beneficiaries' claims about their lack of or limited involvement as they highlighted their efforts to involve residents in intervention decision-making.

## 6. Implications for theory and policy

Drawing from the insights gathered, this study delineates theoretical and managerial policy implications. This study extends the boundaries of corporate citizenship theory by providing empirical evidence that highlights the importance of aligning CSR initiatives with community expectations. While corporate citizenship traditionally focuses on the broader social responsibilities of companies, this study underscores the critical role of local context and specific community needs in defining these responsibilities. The findings illustrate that corporate citizenship is not a one-size-fits-all concept. The specific needs and expectations of communities, such as those in Ghana's oil and gas sectors, must be integrated into CSR strategies. This nuanced approach can lead to more meaningful and appreciated community development interventions, thereby reinforcing the theory's practical applications.

The study supports the legitimacy theory by showing that companies must meet community expectations to maintain their social licence to operate. The significant expectations regarding education, healthcare and infrastructure demonstrate that communities use these criteria to assess the legitimacy of TNCs. The research emphasises that legitimacy is dynamic and contingent on the ongoing fulfilment of community expectations. It suggests that legitimacy is not merely about fulfilling basic obligations but about actively engaging with communities to understand and meet their evolving needs. This interactive process helps maintain and enhance corporate legitimacy over time.

By highlighting the importance of participatory approaches in CSR decision-making, the study expands the ladder of citizen participation theory. It emphasises the need for TNCs to move beyond tokenistic engagement to more meaningful and inclusive participation, as proposed by Arnstein's ladder. The findings suggest that effective CSR requires active and genuine community involvement in decision-making processes. This deepens the understanding of the highest rungs of Arnstein's ladder, advocating for partnership and delegated power as essential elements in CSR strategies to ensure that interventions are aligned with community priorities and foster long-term positive relationships.

Managerially, it advises TNCs to proactively communicate with stakeholders about conducting needs assessments for CSR initiatives. Reminders should be issued as an engagement approach, ensuring comprehensive stakeholder representation at meetings. TNCs are recommended to facilitate rather than dictate discussions on CSR intervention choices, emphasising a collaborative approach to identifying and addressing community needs.

## 7. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate community expectations regarding Ghana's oil and gas production and CSR initiatives. Overall, the findings indicated that residents of the Ahanta West Municipality held high hopes that oil discovery and production would address their developmental needs. Additionally, some

TNCs operating in Ghana's oil sector had initiated CSR projects such as school construction, sanitation facilities and boreholes, which were operational. These initiatives suggested a degree of commitment by the TNCs to fulfil their CSR obligations to the communities within their operational areas to promote community development. However, it was noted that some participants felt that the TNCs did not adequately consult with the communities before implementing these interventions, resulting in unmet expectations.

Conversely, another segment of participants expressed satisfaction with the implemented interventions and the overall CSR efforts of the TNCs, a perspective supported by the TNCs themselves. The study's findings present a complex picture that does not fully side with either perspective in the debate around CSR. While one group views CSR efforts as fulfilling their requirements, another group disagrees, suggesting that CSR initiatives do not meet their expectations. This indicates a diverse range of experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of CSR activities. While tensions between the communities and the TNCs were observed, they did not escalate into violent conflicts typically associated with the resource curse syndrome in other countries. It suggests that Ghana may not currently be experiencing the full-fledged resource curse phenomenon.

## 8. Limitation and future research

The limitation of this study was the difficulty obtaining information from oil and gas companies despite efforts to establish communication. For instance, attempts to access data on company profits concerning their investments in social development projects proved unsuccessful. Therefore, future research should explore the correlation between TNC profits and their CSR initiatives.

## Authors' contributions

Conception and design, ASM, EG, MNF; analysis and interpretation of the data, ASM, EG, MNF; drafting of the paper ASM, EG, MNF, BKT; revising it critically for intellectual content, ASM, EG, MNF, BKT; the final approval of the version to be published, ASM, MNF; and all authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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## Data availability statement

Data is available on request from the authors.

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