

## CSR in Nigeria

**By Wayne Visser**

A few thoughts after my trip to Lagos last month ...

I am not naive enough to believe that CSR heralds a new dawn for Nigeria. The general consensus was that most companies are stuck in the Ages of Philanthropy and Marketing. Nevertheless, CSR has the potential to advance transparency and to create a platform to discuss the ethics of business and government. It also has the potential to be corrupted, which sadly is already happening in some instances where corporate sponsorship of government 'CSR projects' is practiced as an indirect form of bribery.

Shell Nigeria's reputation seems as sullied as ever, 15 years after the Ken Saro Wiwa fiasco. It seems like a viscous cycle of destructive relations. According to Tony Attah, Manager of Sustainable Development and Community Relations, 90% of the oil spills in 2009/10 were as a result of saboteurs, vandals and those trying to steal oil from the pipelines. Also, the Nigerian government takes more than 90% of the earnings of the business through taxes, royalties and their own equities (it has a 55% equity stake in the company).

Of course, there are examples of good practice, such as the Global MOUs between companies and communities, and conservation projects like the Chevron preserved urban forest which I visited. Yet even here, one senses that these are fragile fortifications against a relentless tide of oil-slicked growth and car-jammed urbanisation. I was there during the scheduled first weekend of elections, but these were postponed due to printed ballot papers not arriving in time. The Nigerians take it all in their stride, as if fighting the behemoth of inefficiency is as futile as cursing the manic traffic.

One encouraging initiative is the Social Enterprise Reporting Awards (SERA), run by Trucontact. It was refreshing to see reporting where a level of verification (including site visits) takes place, and where the UN Millennium Development Goals are used as criteria to judge "CSR Projects". On request, I helped to redesign the questionnaire for 2011 (initially, literally on the back of a serviette/napkin, although we worked on it in more detail later), so that the awards will start measuring Strategic CSR, rather than the current Philanthropic & Promotional CSR focus. Judging against Transformative CSR (CSR 2.0) may be a little ambitious at this stage.

If all goes according to plan, I will be back in Lagos around 15-17 June to speak at the 1st Africa Roundtable Conference on CSR and November, and again in November to deliver more CSR training hosted by Trucontact. Meanwhile, I wish this complex, intriguing, vital country well. After all, as my poem puts it, Lagos Lives.

### Article reference

Visser, W. (2011) CSR in Nigeria, *Wayne Visser Blog Briefing*, 26 April 2011.

### Source

Extracted and adapted from Visser, W. (2011) *The Age of Responsibility: CSR 2.0 and the New DNA of Business*. London: Wiley.

\*\*\*

**Part of the WAYNE VISSER BLOG BRIEFING Series**

**Copyright 2011 Wayne Visser**