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Towards Transparency in Oil Spill Management in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian oil and gas industry has undergone significant changes in exploration, production, transportation and processing of crude oil and refined products due to several key reforms in the sector over the years. These reforms have positioned the upstream, midstream and downstream of the petroleum industry for global competitiveness. Despite these feats, the petroleum industry has a long history of giving lukewarm attention to the issues of environmental management, especially in the Niger Delta region where oil operations are prevalent. The unsustainable exploitation of natural resources by the oil and gas industry, and the reactionary approach of third party activities have resulted in the significant degradation of ecological systems, adversely affecting biological diversity and life support functions for local communities. The legal, regulatory and institutional framework in place has proved inefficient for the holistic protection of the environment, economic livelihood and health of people in the region. As we move into the next decade, there is need for all concerned stakeholders in the oil sector to proactively work together to map out a new path to sustainable exploration of natural resources and improve transparency in the management of oil spill to halt and reverse the environmental degradation in the region.

Keywords: spill prevention, spill reforms, spill management, Niger Delta, environmental protection

INTRODUCTION

While transparency has been seen as rather fluid across academic disciplines to get to grips with, it essentially revolves around substantial work-relevant openness. It has been defined as the deliberate attempt to make available all legally releasable information, whether positive or negative in nature, in a manner that is accurate, timely, balanced, and unequivocal, for the purpose of enhancing the reasoning ability of publics and holding organizations accountable for their actions, policies, and practices (Rawlins, 2008). Interestingly, while information disclosure, clarity and accuracy appear to have been generally identified as the three dimensions of transparency (Schnackenberg and Tomlinson, 2014), three types of transparency