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Assessing the Performance of Corporate Social Responsibility in Nigerian Universities and Contribution to Development of Host Communities

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Abstract

The objective of Nigerian universities among others, and very important too, is to relate their activities to the social, cultural and economic needs of the people of Nigeria. This presupposes that the Nigerian society expects the universities to continuously adjust curriculum, teaching, and research to meet the needs of society. More than five (5) decades of experiment with university education in Nigeria, many stakeholders, particularly community members where universities are located have expressed disappointment over the seeming poor capacity of universities to perform their corporate social responsibility that raised two research questions and one (1) hypothesis. The population of study comprised all the 64 public universities spread across the six (6) geopolitical zones of the country. A total of six (6) universities representing ten (10) percent of the population constituted the study sample. The universities were stratified according to the six (6) geopolitical zones from which one (1) university each was randomly selected. The North-East geopolitical zone was excluded because of the persisting problem of insurgency perpetuated by the notorious Boko Haram terrorist group. All the officers of the Community Development Associations (CDAs) in the communities where the sampled universities are located serve as respondents for the study. A questionnaire titled: Universities' Performance of Corporate Social Responsibilities Questionnaire (UPERCOSEREQUE) was validated, pilot-tested ($r=0.91$) and administered on the respondents. The administration of the questionnaire with research assistants nationwide lasted for 8 weeks. Section "A" of the questionnaire collected demographic data while "B" and "C" contained CSR core areas performance and community development indices respectively. Respondents assessed on a 4-point rating scale. Data collected to answer the research questions were descriptively analysed using means and standard deviation. The result of the analysis revealed among others that the performance of CSR is low. Based on the findings, the study recommended that Nigerian universities should adjust their curriculum, pedagogy, and research to respond to the needs of their host communities

Keywords: Assessment, Performance, Contribution, Development, Universities, Social, Corporate, Responsibility

Introduction

The university is an institution at the highest level of education where persons study for a degree or do research. All over the world, the economy depends on the universities for production of high-level manpower to fast-track the processes of socio-economic development. It is for this reason that the government supports the development of university education in Nigeria. In the 1960s for instance, only four (4) universities were available and sparsely located in the North, East and Western regions of the country. Today, 58 years after, there is a proliferation of universities in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria bringing the total number of universities to over

178 (JAMB, 2018). The onerous mandate of these universities among others is to carry out Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in their areas of operation or immediate communities.

CSR refers to the social and philanthropic responsibilities organisations morally perform to improve the lives of people and the amenities in their immediate areas of operation. What this means is that CSR essentially refers to the economic benefits communities expect from corporate organizations operating in their environment. According to Ali, Rehman, Yilmaz, Nazir, and Ali (2010) "CSR is a business organization's configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness and policies, programmes and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's societal relationships." CSR is an approach to decision making, which encompasses both social and environmental factors. This means that firms do not only have the objective to make a profit, but also the objectives of adding environmental and social value to society (Olatunji, 2013). In the perception of Deetze (2003), CSR action is being reactive to the needs of the community.

Additionally, CSR has to do with an organization initiating actions that will impact positively on its host community, environment, and the people generally. Adeyanju (2012) averred that CSR is an approach that acknowledges the fact that some operations of the firms have adverse effects on the citizens, society and making efforts to ensure that such negative impacts are mitigated. It is for this reason the World Business Council on Sustainability Development (1998) described CSR as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while at the same time, improving the quality of life of the workforce and that of the local people. The thesis of this narration is that CSR requires organisations to balance and improve environmental and social impacts without slacking in economic performance. This, in turn, leads to a move from the mission statement of the firm (where the main responsibility is to provide goods and services) to one which sees the need for philanthropic contribution to the welfare of society.

Conceptualising the university as an organisation, Jabbour (2010) argued that it could cause "significant environmental impacts." This is because many of them as a result of their large size, expressive movement of people and vehicles, high purchases of consumables including strong development of complex activities may be considered as "Small Towns." Therefore, it is inferred that universities should be responsible for society and their stakeholders. This can be the underlying reason why local people expect universities to perform CSR (Mehran, Azadeh, Yashar and Mohammadreza, 2011).

Theoretical Foundation and Literature

The significance of theories in every study cannot be over-emphasized. Theories according to Amodu (2012) enable researchers to put facts in perspectives and to hypothesize what will happen. It is for this reason that the stakeholders' theory by Freeman Edward (1983) is chosen to explain this study. The stakeholder's theory of CSR is based on the assumption that organizations have obligations to several groups that make up the society. These constituents are referred to as stakeholders, that is the individuals and groups that are critical to the existence of the organization; they influence what the organization does and are also influenced by the organization's actions. The theory stipulates that management has a moral duty to protect not only the corporation but also the legitimate interest of all stakeholders. This presupposes that all stakeholders' interests are maximised at all times.

Dahan and Senol (2012) carried out a study on corporate social responsibility in Istanbul Bilgi University, Pakistan. The aim of the study was to analyse Istanbul Bilgi University in the context of corporate social responsibility practices. The scholars noted that for any institution, whether public or private, to be successful in corporate social responsibility implementation actors must be supported by the management of the University. If the management of an organisation does not support corporate social responsibility, there is nothing according to Obi-Omoh (2017) the workers can do to carry out corporate social responsibilities. So, the study examined corporate social responsibility performance of Istanbul Bilgi University and attempted to ascertain the factors which are likely to affect the corporate social responsibility performance of the university. The researchers adopted the interview as a technique for data collection. The researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with the interviewees and made use of published university documents, the website of the University and

unpublished reports to gather data for the study. The findings show that corporate social responsibility performance cannot be successful without the support of university management. The second finding shows that Istanbul Bilgi University carries out corporate social responsibility, but the extent to which it does is minimal. The authors concluded that Pakistani universities, only focus on teaching corporate social responsibility as a concept and do not perform corporate social responsibilities. The authors then recommended that universities should endeavour to carry out corporate social responsibility to win as it is the goodwill of their stakeholders.

Nejati, Shafaei, Salamzadeh, and Dareai (2011) conducted research a similar on top 10 world universities' websites. The researchers embarked on the research with a view to finding out whether the top ten world Universities actually leave up to expectation in terms of corporate social responsibility performance and if they do, to what extent?. In the study, the authors used content analysis to analyse the websites of the top 10 world universities ranked by Times Higher Education (2009). The authors in analysing the corporate social responsibilities of the universities paid attention to the core areas of CRS that include organisational governance, human rights, labour prices, environment, fair operating practices, consumer (students) issues, community involvement, and development. The study sample included Harvard University (US), University of Cambridge (UK), Yale University (UK), University College, London (UK), Imperial College London (UK), University of Oxford (UK), University of Chicago (US), Princeton University (US), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (US) and California Institute of Technology (US). The authors studied the content of the university official websites to analyse different aspects of the social communication and social reporting and tried to identify and match it with CSR core areas. The authors, therefore, reviewed all the related web pages of the universities, including news, media, department web pages, etc. The findings from the study show that leading universities in the world have taken corporate social responsibility seriously and announced this in their websites. Their findings further showed that all the 10 Universities studied publish the reports of CRS activities on their websites. The authors, therefore, concluded that the University's role in society is evolving. Universities are no longer just institutions of higher education and research, which grant academic degrees in a variety of subjects, but rather, they are turning into institutions of higher education and research that train responsible people, create cutting-edge knowledge to solve the issues and problem in the society. It is important at this point to provide information on the core CSR areas as drafted by ISO CSR, 2009 and cited in Nejati, Shafaei, Salamzadeh and Dareai (2011).

Organizational Governance: Organizational governance is the system by which an organization makes and implements decisions in pursuit of its objectives. Organizational governance in the context of social responsibility has the special characteristic of being both a core subject on which organizations should act and a means of increasing the organization's ability to implement socially responsible behaviour with respect to the other core subjects. Effective governance should be based on incorporating the principles and practices of accountability, transparency, ethical behaviour, respect for stakeholders' interests and respect for the rule of law into decision making and implementation.

Human Rights: Human rights are the basic rights to which all human beings are entitled because they are human beings, with an intrinsic desire for freedom, peace, health, and happiness. An organization has the responsibility to respect human rights, in its sphere of influence.

Labour Practices: The labour practices of an organization encompass all policies and practices relating to work performed within, by or on behalf of the organization. Labour practices include the recruitment and promotion of workers; disciplinary and grievance procedures; the transfer and relocation of workers; termination of employment; training and skills development; health, safety, and industrial hygiene; and any policy or practice affecting conditions of work, in particular, working time and remuneration.

The Environment: The decisions and activities of organizations invariably have an impact on the natural environment, no matter where they are located. These impacts may be associated with the organization's use of living and non-living resources, the generation of pollution and wastes, and the implications for the organization's activities, products, and services on natural habitats. To reduce their environmental impacts, organizations should adopt an integrated approach that takes into consideration the wider economic, social and

environmental implications of their decisions and activities. Environmental responsibility is a pre-condition for the survival and prosperity of human beings. It is, therefore, an important aspect of social responsibility. Environmental issues are closely linked to human rights, community involvement and development, and other social responsibility core areas.

Fair Operating Practices: Fair operating practices concern ethical conduct in an organization's dealings with other organizations. These include relationships between organizations and government agencies, as well as between organizations and their partners, suppliers, contractors, competitors and the associations of which they are members. Fair operating practice issues arise in the areas of anti-corruption, responsible involvement in the public sphere, fair competition, promoting social responsibility in relations with other organizations and respect for property rights.

Consumer Issues: Organizations that provide products or services to consumers and customers have responsibilities to them. These responsibilities include providing education and accurate information, using fair, transparent and helpful marketing and contractual processes and promoting sustainable consumption.

Community Involvement and Development: Community involvement and development are both integral parts of broader sustainable development. Community involvement – either individually or through associations seeking to enhance the public good – helps to strengthen civil society. Organizations that engage in a respectful manner with the community and its institutions reflect and reinforce democratic and civic values. Community involvement goes beyond identifying and engaging stakeholders in relation to the impacts of an organization's operations; it also encompasses support of and identification with the community. Above all, it entails acknowledging the value of the community. An organization's community involvement should arise out of recognition that the organization is a stakeholder in the community having significant common interests with all members of the community.

The Problem

The government has made commendable efforts to develop university education in Nigeria. The number of universities, enrolment, and funding have observably increased to the point of sighting universities in every nook and cranny of the country. This notwithstanding, uneasy calm characterises the communities where these universities are located. From reports and observations, these universities do not perform CSR to their host communities.

According to the Local people interacted with, the universities do not contribute to developing the communities particularly as it concerns the provision and maintenance of social amenities. They also allege that indigenes are not giving special considerations in admissions and employment matters, a claim that the university administrators denied. It is the intention of this paper therefore to investigate the extent to which universities perform their corporate social responsibility and assess their contribution to developing host communities. The paper also hopes to find out whether there is a strong relationship between the performance of CSR and university contribution to community development. To achieve the purpose of the study, the following two research questions and one hypothesis guided the investigation.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do Nigerian universities perform the core CRS practices?
2. To what extent do Nigerian universities contribute to the development of host communities?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between university performance of CRS and contribution to development in host communities.

Method of Study

The study adopted the survey research design with all the 64 public universities constituting the population. To choose the study sample, the stratified sampling method was used to randomly select 10 percent of the universities located in each of the 6 geopolitical zones of the country, excluding the North-East because of the persistent problem of insurgency by the notorious Boko Haram terrorist group. The design was considered appropriate because all the types of universities in the country were represented and given equal chance to participate in the study. In all, a total of 6 universities comprising Taraba State University, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Bayero University, The University of Benin, Lagos and Calabar constituted the study sample.

A questionnaire titled: "University Corporate Social Responsibility Impact on Host Communities Questionnaire (USOCOSOREQUE) was used to collect data for the study. Section "A" of the instrument collected demographic information about the host communities while "B" contained the 14 CRS core areas that respondents rated the performance on a 4-Point rating scale. The last section "C" of the instrument had 15 community development indices that the respondents rated their provisions and maintenance by the universities on a 4-point rating scale. The indices are roads, health centres, electricity, water, schools among others. The mean of the 4-point rating scale is 2.50 and was set as the benchmark for adjudging university performance of CRS and level of contribution to Host communities' development. Above and below 2.50 was described as "High" and "Low" respectively. The validated and reliable instrument ($r=0.91$, $N=20$) was administered on 402 respondents that comprised both Directors of Works in the selected universities and executive members of Community Development Associations (CDAs) in the respective host communities. Data collected to answer the research questions were descriptively analysed with means and standards deviation statistics while the research hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Description of the Study Area

Nigeria is situated on the west coast of Africa, lies on latitude 4° North of the Equator and latitudes 3° and 14° on the east of the Greenwich Meridian. Shares boundaries with The Republics of Benin and Niger in the West, Cameroon in the East, Niger, and Chad in the North and the Gulf of Guinea in the South. The landmass of Nigeria occupies 923,768.64 sq kilometres with Abuja and Lagos serving as political and economic headquarters respectively. Politically, the country with a population an estimated of 198 million people is structured into 6 geo-political zones namely South-south, South-west, South-east, Northcentral, North-east, and North-west. The study area covers all the zones as seen in Figure 1. Nigerians prefer attending universities to other forms of higher education, the reason why, on the average, about 1.7 million apply for placements in the universities every year.

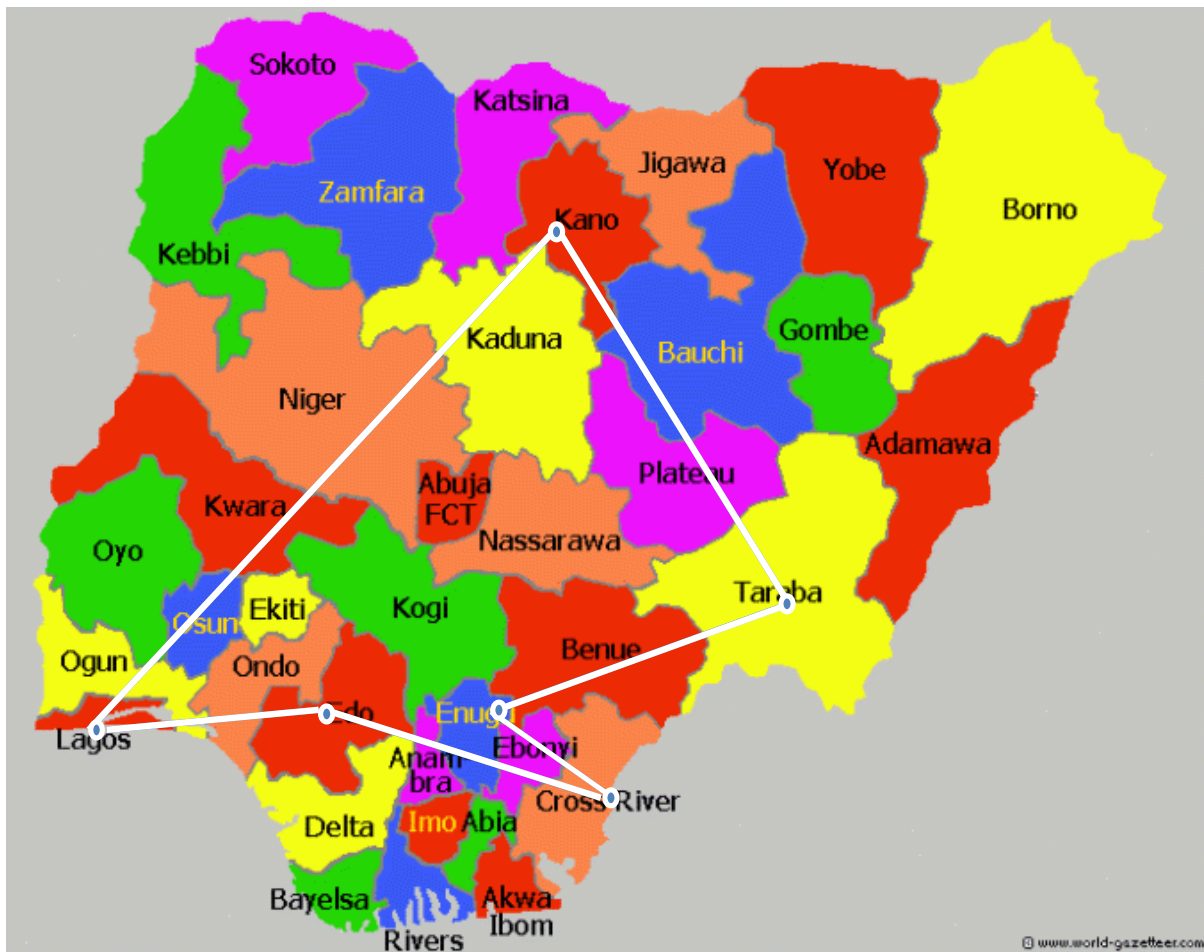


Figure 1: White Lines Showing Delineation of Study Area

As at the time of this study, Nigeria has a total of 178 universities out of which 64, that is 36 percent are publicly owned. The public universities according to Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB, 2018) has a total carrying capacity of 336,000 students representing about 20 percent of applicants to the universities every year. The remaining qualified students are not admitted to go into expensive private universities and other forms of higher education. The emphasis on university degrees for employment exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment in the country explains the excessive demand for university education. The high demand for university education notwithstanding, the state of development, particularly the provision and maintenance of social amenities of the host communities where these universities are located is observably very poor as shown in the pictures in figures 2, 3 and 4.



Figure 2: Unmotorable Road, Commonly Sighted in Many University Host Communities in Nigeria



Figure 3: Fallen Electricity Poles, a Common Sight in Some Communities in Nigerian Universities



Figure 4: Poor State of Hospital Wards, A Common Sight in many Nigerian Communities.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1

To what extent do Nigerian universities perform Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

To answer research question 1, a total of 402 stakeholders comprising Directors of Works in universities and executive members of Community Development Associations (CDAs) assessed the extent to which universities perform CSR on a 4-point rating scale. Their responses were descriptively analysed and results presented in Table1.

Table 1: Mean Analysis of CSR Performance in Nigerian Universities

S/N	CSR Core Areas of Performance	X	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Labour Practices	1053	2.62	0.9563	High
2	Fair Operating Practices	1029	2.56	0.9573	High
3	Human Right	981	2.44	0.9593	Low
4	Student Issues	2.66	90	0.9556	High
5	Community Involvement/Development	828	2.06	0.9657	Low
6	The Environment	828	2.06	0.9657	Low
7	Organizational Governance	1093	2.72	0.9546	High
	Mean Total	989	2.46	0.9592	High

$\bar{x}=2.50$, N=402

According to the data in Table 1, the performance of CSR in Nigerian universities is low (2.46). In terms of specific core areas of performance, it is high in labour practices (2.68), organisational governance (2.72), student issues (2.66), labour practices (2.62) and human rights (2.66). Performance of the remaining three core areas is low in the universities.

Research Question 2

To what extent do Nigerian universities contribute to the development of host communities?

To answer research question 2, a total of 402 stakeholders comprising Directors of Works in universities and executive members of Community Development Associations (CDAs) assessed the extent to which universities provide and maintain 5 core social amenities in the host communities on the 4-Point rating scale. Their responses were descriptively analysed and results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Analysis of University Contribution to the Development of Host Communities

S/N	Development Indices	X	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Access Roads	957	2.38	0.9603	Low
2	Employment Opportunities	929	2.31	0.9615	Low
3	Access to University Admissions	844	2.10	0.9650	Low
4	Water Supply	651	1.62	0.9730	Low
5	Electricity Supply	780	1.94	0.9677	Low
Mean Total		832	2.06	0.9657	Low

$\bar{x}=2.50$, N=402

According to the data in Table 2, the extent to which Nigerian universities contribute to development in host communities is low (2.06). The highest mean is observed in access roads (2.38) followed by employment opportunities for indigence (2.31) and access to university admissions (2.10). It is lowest in the water supply (1.62), followed by electricity supply(1.94).

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between university performance of CSR and contribution to development in host communities.

To test the research hypothesis, university performance of CSR and level of contribution to development in host communities were correlated using Pearson Product Moment correlation statistics at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between university Performance of CRS and level of Contribution to Development in Host Communities

Variable	N	X	SD	R	Sig	Remarks
Performance of CSR	402	989	0.959	0.102*	0.013	<0.05
Contribution to Development		832	0.966			

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

According to the data in Table 3, there is a significant relationship between university performance of CSR and contribution to development in host communities ($r=0.102$; $p < 0.05$). What this means is that the null hypothesis which states the absence of a significant relationship between university performance of CRS and contribution to development in host communities is rejected. It, therefore, shows that level performance of CSR by universities could influence development in host communities.

Discussion

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not seen as a priority in Nigerian universities, the reason why the performance of its core principles why university administrators are low. This situation is different from what from what obtains elsewhere in Pakistan as reported by Dahan Senol (2012) and the top 10 world universities in

the United States of America and United Kingdom (Nejati, Shafaei, Salamzadeh and Dareai, 2011). It is therefore imperative that the concept of CSR be popularised within the Nigerian space.

The growing importance of CSR in the business world is clear. Universities have an opportunity to lead in an area that most businesses have recognised as important. Universities can and should build on a tradition of the past decades of attempting to close the lacuna *between town and gown* engage in positive. Thus, universities that value CSR will enjoy the goodwill of their stakeholders. While CSR is partially about building positive relationships, Obi-Omovoh (2017) avers that it can help an institution to develop a competitive advantage and stand out from its competitors. Universities realise that it is a competitive market in terms of creating an ongoing stream of satisfied alumni, attracting new students and addressing the concerns of stakeholders. As argued by Alshuwaikhat and Abubakar (2008), many universities as a result of their large size, expressive movement of people and vehicles, high consumption of materials and strong development of complex activities may even be considered as small towns. Therefore, it is inferred that universities should be responsible for society and their stakeholders.

Nigerian universities contribution to development in host communities has been found to be low. This result is not unexpected because the performance of CSR is not a priority contrary to what is reported by the World Business Council on Sustainability Development (1998). There is no doubt, in the context of this finding, that the mandate of universities to render consultancy services be rejigged for the purpose of rendering accountability to stakeholders. This is in line with the argument of Mehran, Azadeh, Yashar and Mohammadreza (2011) and Adeyanju (2012) earlier cited an organisation's legal responsibilities are the requirements that are placed on it by the law. Legal responsibilities can range from securities regulations to labour law, environmental law and even criminal law. Universities ought to be socially responsible in this aspect. Universities also need to take into consideration philanthropic responsibilities. Philanthropic responsibilities are responsibilities that go above and beyond what is simply required or what the organisation believes is right. They involve making an effort to benefit society; for example, by donating services to community organisations, engaging in projects to aid the environment or donating money to charitable causes (Smith, n.d). Philanthropic corporate social responsibility involves giving funds, goods or services, sometimes serving as advertising.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The need for universities to engage in corporate social responsibility for the promotion of goodwill cannot be over-emphasised. This study has sufficiently demonstrated that universities need to perform CSR in order to win the goodwill of their host communities. In doing this, the required synergy will be created to facilitate the processes of development. The importance of reporting CSR activities to members of the host communities for them to be aware and provide supports cannot be over-emphasized.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Nigerian universities should be encouraged to increase the rate of CSR performance. This can be done through legislation to give an account of their stewardship before they are allocated public funds.
2. The universities should ensure that their teaching aid research activities are principally tailored to contribute towards the development of their host communities. In particular, practical efforts should be made to provide and maintain basic amenities for the local people. In this wise, rejigging the curricula contents of academic programmes will be the most appropriate thing to do.
3. Since the relationship between the performance of CSR and university contribution to community development is significant, it is important to unify the *town* and *gown* together. This will eventually become a norm as university effectiveness is measured to the extent it is able to contribute to the development of host communities.

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