

Scris de Pierluigi Orati  
Joi, 15 Iulie 2010 08:11

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*Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed*  
Mahatma Gandhi

Maybe not everyone is aware of the fact that lately in Nigeria became more difficult to find drinking water and edible fishes due to the fact that several oil spilling happened on their coast and soil, just as the one that BP recently caused in the Gulf of Mexico. This time to be responsible for the “silent disaster” is another oil multinational: Exxon Mobil, American, just like the president that is trying to fight the environmental “oil’s Tsunami” affecting the coasts of Florida and Louisiana.

During the last weeks the American Company has been sanctioned by the Nigerian Government for some 300 (three hundred) barrel of oil spill accident happened in May 2010.

The “yellow card” from the Nigerian Government to Exxon Mobil is just a signal of deep concern due to the fact that during the last four years there were something in the round of 2,400 (two thousand and four hundred) oil spills caused by oil company in that area.

Each of this leak, happening in the very deep sea or on the coast, around the delta of Niger, is causing consequences on the local economy and nutrition as it seems that is becoming difficult to fish a not oil stinking fish in that area. Nigeria is among the other problems, already affected by one of the highest child death rate in the world. When “Sustainable Corporations” go to destroy their territory this sad rate is likely to increase due to their “environmental friendly practices”.

First of my remarks is a despised observation on the international press, ignoring (with the exception of very few cases) this problem, probably because there is not a famous President like Obama interested in the issue and walking concerned those coasts in front of a famous broadcast TV network, or just because the topic is not that appealing like the one affecting the Gulf in front of the rich Miami.

When surfing the Exxon Mobil Internet web page dedicated to CSR, even if they call this section: Community and Society, that’s the list of topics I have found: malaria, math and science, womens economic opportunity, community investment, human rights, safety health and the workplace, transparency, worldwide giving, Corporate Citizenship Report.

I go and focus on some of the aspects that could bring me straight to the recent problems (not

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mentioned of course in their nice and clean website): safety health and workplace is the one attracting my attention at first and they say “We strive for an incident-free workplace and a culture that complies with our clear and simple objective: Nobody Gets Hurt.” And then clicking again on this, desperately searching for something that is not just words, I have found: “ExxonMobil is committed to conducting business in a manner that protects and promotes the safety and health of our employees, those involved with our operations, and the communities where we work” and even “ExxonMobil is dedicated to minimizing adverse risks and impacts associated with the manufacture, use, and disposal of our products”.

In my opinion, it is a crystal clear case of “they talk the talk, but don't walk the walk” or literally they do not practise what they preach.

Of course and unfortunately, Exxon Mobil is not the only case on earth of this misleading so called “CSR” or “sustainable” attitude that tends to, literally, fool the stakeholders and the Socially responsible Investors choosing this or that company for their “good practices”.

Corporations discovered the Greenwashing practices already long time ago and the definition of Greenwashing is as follows (from Wikipedia): “... the practice of companies disingenuously spinning their products and policies as environmentally friendly, such as by presenting cost cuts as reductions in use of resources. It is a deceptive use of green PR or green marketing. The term green sheen has similarly been used to describe organizations that attempt to show that they are adopting practices beneficial to the environment.”

Enough is enough! As mentioned in one of my previous articles once the Companies, pressed by the public opinion and by some “seriously investigating press”, or even by Sustainability analysts, they are obliged to admit their fault, and they adopt the “polluter pays principle” (not a solution as mentioned in my article telling about the BP case).

It is the time instead to start a “greedwashing” policy for these Multinationals just oriented towards the profit even if obtained through “dangerous and arming practices”.

To inspire me on the coinage of the term “greedwashing” the book (“Avarizia, la passione dell'avere” or “Greed, the passion for having”) written by of one of the most recognised and remarkable professors in Italy and worldwide on these issues, the economist Stefano Zamagni, University of Bologna and Johns Hopkins University of Bologna, he theorized and wrote also concerning the so called *Economia Civile* (Civil Economics).

Zamagni, after giving the readers a very deep and pleasant outlook on the history of the greed as deadly sin from an economic point of view, claims that “in the last quarter of century, this became more virulent than before, growing spectacularly”.

I think this is a fundamental key to interpretation for the current state of “CSR fake policies” treated in this and in my previous article.

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Rather than these marketing exercises of greenwashing Corporations, starting from their Board of Directors till their CSR officers (too often not dedicated to the problem but just afraid of their bosses), should put in act some greedwashing with the purpose to not just maximize the profit in a very blind perspective but creating value through real sustainable practices that, on the long run, could guarantee the Companies' virtuous performances.

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**Pierluigi Orati** has a Master Degree in Social Sciences and he is a doctor in Economics with a strong background on these topics, he has been several years in charge of relations with Sustainability Analysts and Social Responsible Investors answering their questions and providing them with all the necessary information about Enel's CSR.

The creation of a section of Enel's CSR home page to involve stakeholders directly through multidimensional scaling (Sustainability Meter) was one of Pierluigi' specific tasks and the broad response of stakeholders seemed to indicate the success of the initiative.

Pierluigi has been a member of the international GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) Working Group Board, involved in revising and discussing worldwide with Enel's competitors and NGOs in order to cooperate with them in writing the new CSR guidelines and detecting the key performance indicators for companies in the energy industry (EUSS).

He is also a free lance journalist and a member of the International Scientific Board Committee of "La Finanza" two-monthly magazine of Economy, Finance and Geopolitics.

Pierluigi is currently working, in the little spare time, as free lance independent sustainability consultant and daily with renewed interest and effort in the Country Risk Management unit for Enel where he manages relations with the ECAs (Export Credit Agencies) at a global level.

@ LinkedIn: <http://it.linkedin.com/in/pierluigi1973>

@ Twitter: mindipendent