

Environmental Social and Governance: An Evaluation of the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Organizational Performance in United Bank of Africa

Happy Pere-ela Omodu, PhD

Department Of Geography And Environmental Management, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200227>

Received: 08 February 2026; Accepted: 13 February 2026; Published: 02 March 2026

ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a critical element in enhancing Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) performance, particularly in the banking sector. This study evaluates the impact of CSR initiatives on organizational performance in the United Bank for Africa (UBA), focusing on community development, education, healthcare, gender inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability. Drawing from secondary sources, including policy reports, sustainability disclosures, empirical studies, and bank publications, the research examines how UBA's CSR programs influence stakeholder trust, employee morale, brand reputation, and financial performance. Findings indicate that UBA's CSR initiatives, such as the UBA Foundation programs, Read Africa, National Essay Competition, Food Bank, and Women Sustainable Finance, positively contribute to both community development and organizational growth. The bank's focus on education, healthcare, and gender diversity has strengthened relationships with local communities, enhanced employee engagement, and attracted socially conscious customers. Environmental sustainability initiatives, including energy efficiency, waste management, and paperless banking, align UBA with ESG trends, ensuring long-term competitiveness. The study also identifies challenges related to program reach, effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement, highlighting the need for regular evaluation, improved communication, community collaboration, and integration of measurable ESG metrics. Recommendations emphasize enhancing employee training, incentivizing participation in CSR, and expanding focus on critical environmental issues. Overall, the research concludes that CSR, when strategically aligned with ESG principles, significantly enhances UBA's organizational performance, operational stability, and long-term business sustainability.

Keywords: CSR, ESG, Organizational Performance, UBA, Community Development, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The modus operandi of businesses around the world seems to transform completely since the dawning of the "Golden 21st Century." Businesses are more interconnected now more than ever with swift advancements in tech-evolutions; AI mimicking and almost replacing human-intelligence via data-driven decision-making, and even greater focus on long-term growth of enterprises (Karma, 2024). In such "a noteworthy period" with unprecedented transformations in enterprise-culture, how organizations lead with honesty, and how they answer the people they serve, businesses in today's world develops as "a complex mix of problems and possibilities." Corporations across sectors are currently changing their main business goals to meet social, ethical and environmental standards (Karma, 2024). Thus, it is not optional for corporations like Banks to reconsider their ESG methods to stay in business, be trusted and remain competitive (Tanaka, 2025).

CSR is a key part of ESG and shows how an organization chooses to do good for society, act ethically and protect the environment even when not legally required. The banking sector plays a unique role in economic development by mobilizing capital, influencing investment decisions, and supporting community development (Angelini & Nieri, 2022). Banks act as essential components of contemporary economies, not only facilitating the flow of funds between depositors and borrowers but also promoting economic growth and stability through

a wide range of financial services and developmental activities (Angelini & Nieri, 2022). Commercial banks facilitate financial inclusion by expanding access to banking services, credit, and investment opportunities, particularly for underserved populations (Tanaka, 2025).

Looking back on how the finance sector in Nigeria has evolved, 2024 was an “intermission period” called by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for the reformation of banking in the country. These reforms showed the commitment of the CBN to keep the economy stable, improve financial services and strengthen banks to help Nigeria reach “a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.” Key changes aimed at strengthening banks, protecting the naira, and controlling inflation, were made to these policies to make banks and other financial institutions stronger and better able to handle economic challenges (Udoma & Belo-Osagie, 2024). Changes like these have increased pressures on organizations to be open, socially conscious and responsible. These changes therefore compel banks to adopt CSR plans that make money while also supporting long-term social and environmental development (Adelabu & Salaudeen, 2025). UBA operates across Africa and promotes itself as “a socially responsible bank” through organized CSR programmes run mainly by the UBA Foundation (Punch News, 2025). Although these initiatives are widely visible their impact on organizational performance has not been thoroughly studied, particularly in the context of ESG. This study addresses this gap by examining how CSR through ESG dimensions affects organizational performance at UBA.

The UBA has become a leading African bank focused on giving back to society, mainly through “the UBA Foundation.” The foundation has launched several CSR programs, such as a \$100 million plan to empower 10,000 entrepreneurs across Africa over 10 years, and donations of over \$20 million to 20 countries to help fight COVID-19 (Sofowora, 2025). To help build skilled human resources, the UBA Foundation supports education and works to reduce illiteracy across the continent. In 2011, the foundation started the 'Read Africa' program to address declining reading habits among young people. Many students are distracted by social media and other factors, which harms learning and the overall education system in Nigeria and Africa (Sofowora, 2025). The 'Read Africa' project provides recommended English literature to junior and senior secondary school students to encourage reading and improve educational outcomes (The Cable, 2025). However, the impact of these initiatives on UBA’s long-term sustainability is not well studied. CSR, which is when companies voluntarily take actions to benefit society and the environment, helps businesses balance profit-making with social responsibility and strengthens relationships with stakeholders like customers, employees, shareholders, and communities. Nigerian banks, including UBA, have increasingly adopted CSR through community development projects and environmentally friendly practices (Sofowora, 2025). This is especially important as the banking industry in Nigeria has faced major changes, including consolidation, cashless policies, stricter regulations, more competition, and a changing customer base.

The impact of CSR emphasizes that although it is known to “improve the image and long-term survival of a company,” its real impact on business performance is still debated. Some believe that CSR wastes money that could be used to make profits, while others believe it builds trust, reduces risks, and increases long-term business value (Santoso et al., 2024). Nigerian banks spend heavily on CSR, especially on areas such as environment, education, health, entrepreneurship, and governance but these efforts are often assessed separately and not clearly linked to ESG goals or measurable business performance (Santoso et al., 2024). According to Khare (2025), ESG goals are clear and measurable targets that companies set to help them operate responsibly, reduce risks, and perform better over time. These goals focus on three main areas: protecting the environment by managing energy use, emissions, waste, water, and climate impacts; supporting people through fair labor practices, inclusion, human rights, community involvement, and customer satisfaction; and ensuring good governance through transparent leadership, fair executive pay, compliance with regulations, and ethical business practices (Khare, 2025). These efforts however, are often assessed separately and not within a clear ESG framework that connects CSR activities to measurable business performance results (Khare, 2025; Lawal &

Oyebade, 2025). Most studies on CSR and bank performance in Nigeria mainly use survey data and additionally focus on a few financial measures while paying little attention to the quality of governance, stakeholder trust, brand value, and long-term sustainability (Lawal & Oyebade, 2025). And as a result of this, there is limited understanding of how CSR especially when aligned with ESG principles contributes fully to overall performance in banks such as UBA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literatures on ESG agrees it is “a most widely used way to measure how sustainable companies are.” It is closely linked to ethical and socially responsible investing and is now seen as an important indicator of how well companies are managed, how they handle risks, and how they perform beyond financial results (Lawal & Oyebade, 2025; Adegboyegun, et al., 2020; Oladele, 2024; Ashiedu, et al., 2020). ESG covers a wide range of issues, including environmental concerns like climate change and emissions, social issues such as human rights, employee well-being, and product safety, and governance matters like board independence, transparency, and corruption control (Oladele, 2024). Interest in ESG has grown rapidly in finance and the wider economy, with investors increasingly recognizing that climate risks can affect investment returns. Many investors now include ESG factors in their investment decisions, and socially responsible investing has grown significantly worldwide (Adegboyegun, et al., 2020). However, despite its rapid growth, ESG has also faced criticism and political debate, highlighting the need for deeper understanding to support balanced discussions among investors, policymakers, and society.

These views are strengthened in the “Think IBM” which observes that the term “ESG” became popular in the 21st century and is often discussed alongside sustainability and CSR. While sustainability and CSR are mostly guiding ideas or long-term goals, ESG is more practical because it uses data and measurable indicators to support decision-making by companies and investors (IBM, 2025). Companies now clearly see how their activities affect the environment and society, both globally and within their local communities. At the same time, public concern about issues such as climate change, human rights, and executive pay has increased, making sustainability an important priority for today’s business leaders and investors (IBM, 2025).

According to Encyclopedia, CSR has evolved from voluntary ethical actions into ESG principles and the more advanced “ESG 2.0.” Unlike traditional CSR which focuses mainly on optional good practices, ESG makes sustainability a core part of business strategy which shapes “how companies respond to environmental and social issues while also creating value for shareholders.” This shift has been especially strong in Europe and North America due to regulations, investor pressure, and rising public expectations (Passas, 2024). Understanding this move from CSR to ESG is important because companies now face complex global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and governance failures (Jessen, 2025).

The Encyclopedia also added that ESG 2.0 represents a major shift in how companies approach sustainability, making it a central part of business strategy and value creation rather than “an add-on.” This development further shows how CSR (which was once mainly about charity and ethical behavior) has evolved into ESG and then into ESG 2.0, especially in Europe and North America where strong regulations and investor pressure have driven the change (Kulkarni, 2024). Growing global challenges such as changes in climate, inequality, and demands for transparency have pushed companies to move from simply following rules to actively embedding sustainability into their operations (Kulkarni, 2024). ESG 2.0 places sustainability at the core of decision-making which also helps businesses create long-term value, improve accountability, and contribute to sustainable development while meeting the rising expectations of regulators, investors, and society (Kulkarni, 2024).

Organizational performance (OP) refers to “how well an organization achieves its goals and is no longer measured only by financial results.” In today’s interconnected world, rising stakeholder expectations and environmental challenges have changed how performance is defined and assessed. Organizational performance includes multiple dimensions such as profitability, liquidity, growth, and market performance, but it also goes beyond these to include brand reputation, customer loyalty, employee commitment, risk management, and longterm sustainability (Khan et al., 2024; Bashir et al., 2022; Saini et al., 2023). Within this broader view, Cardillo and Basso (2025) argues that well-designed CSR activities aligned with ESG principles can improve organizational performance by building stronger stakeholder relationships and increasing organizational trust and legitimacy.

This study builds on earlier ideas of CSR imbibed by the UBA, including stakeholder management, corporate citizenship, strategic CSR, and shared value, and introduces the newer concept of CSR 2.0. CSR is no longer limited to transparency, ethical behavior, and stakeholder engagement, but is increasingly built into sustainable

business models that address environmental, social, and governance challenges (Awa et al., 2024). Fatima, et al. (2023) suggested that adopting a strategic approach to CSR can help companies stand out from competitors and deliver benefits to both business and society. It also shows that there is a strong business case for CSR 2.0, as responsible environmental and social practices can support profit-making activities by improving efficiency, reducing costs, and strengthening relationships with regulators, communities, and other stakeholders (Fatima, et al., 2023; Awa et al., 2024). These ideas are stressed further in the following paragraphs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The roadmap for this paper is based upon stakeholder theory, being that the Stakeholder theory explains that a company's success depends on many groups, not just shareholders and managers. According to Investopedia (2025), these groups include employees, customers, suppliers, banks, governments, and communities. Knowing that these groups have different interests, companies must carefully manage relationships and possible conflicts among them. This idea has become widely accepted and is now used in corporate governance and CSR. Unlike the traditional view that companies exist mainly to maximize shareholder profits, stakeholder theory argues that businesses should balance the needs of all stakeholders to achieve long-term success (Keremidchiev, 2021).

Stakeholder theory is built using ideas from many other fields, including social, economic, political, and legal theories. It draws especially from concepts such as how corporations are defined, what motivates people, how systems work, strategic management, industrial relations, and legal and political thinking. These ideas together sum up how stakeholder theory developed and how it guides the way organizations understand and manage relationships with different groups (Keremidchiev, 2021).

Important events have pushed companies to rethink their responsibilities beyond just making money. They showed the need to balance short-term profits with social, ethical, and environmental duties. As a result, businesses are now expected to consider the interests of many stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, regulators, and the environment. Transparency, accountability, and sustainability have become key principles, and companies measure success not only by profits but also by their positive impact on society and the planet (Abdeladim and Yahyaoui, 2024). ESG and CSR practices help organizations grow in a way that is responsible, ethical, and sustainable. This study uses Stakeholder Theory to show how CSR activities at UBA help improve the bank's performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a conceptual framework approach based only on secondary data. It reviews and combines existing research, sustainability reports, policy papers, industry publications, and studies on CSR, ESG, and bank performance. The study develops a clear understanding of how CSR affects organizational performance by looking for common themes and patterns. This method is useful for building theory and gives a broad view without the challenges of collecting new data.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The synthesized literature indicates that CSR initiatives aligned with ESG principles contribute positively to organizational performance in banks. Ibinyi and Aikomo (2024) show that banks like UBA, Zenith, and Fidelity contributes positively to community development through its CSR activities, for example, environmental sustainability ideals and efforts. Environmental problems, especially climate change according to Ibinyi and Aikomo (2024), are among the biggest challenges facing both developed and developing countries. Climate change affects governments, industries, and societies by increasing health costs, disrupting supply chains, raising operating expenses, and putting pressure on public infrastructure and social services. Developing countries like Nigeria are particularly affected because they are still growing economically and socially, while also relying on global climate finance to support climate protection and mitigation efforts. Although climate change is a major concern, it is only one part of the wider issue of environmental sustainability. As a result, there has been growing pressure on banks to take greater responsibility for societal development through effective CSR practices. For

CSR to be successful, these banks must show strong commitment by providing quality services, supporting communities, and protecting the environment in which they operate (Ibinyi & Aikomo, 2024).

Chimezie (2025) recognized UBA’s efforts in supporting local growth. However, Chimezie (2025) also noted that these efforts are not always evenly felt across all communities. This has created mixed opinions about how effective and sustainable the initiatives are in the long term. In the area of education, Chimezie (2025) agrees that UBA’s programs help improve literacy and learning. According to researcher, UBA carries out several CSR initiatives, including its foundation programs, entrepreneurship and mentorship schemes, Read Africa project, National Essay Competition, Food Bank initiative, and Plant a Tree initiative. These programs are designed to support education, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability, and overall, UBA’s CSR initiatives have contributed positively to the bank’s business sustainability (Chimezie, 2025). They help improve the bank’s reputation, boost employee morale, and attract customers who value social responsibility. Chimezie (2025) also agrees that by aligning these initiatives with its sustainability goals, UBA gains long-term support from stakeholders and achieves lasting benefits for both the bank and society. Despite this, Chimezie (2025) also argue that the results differ by location and how the programs are implemented. As a result, these views on the effectiveness of UBA’s education-related CSR initiatives are either clearly supportive or openly critical.

With regard to healthcare, international reports by Eze et al. (2025) describe the initiatives of commercial banks as addressing the “unmet healthcare needs in Nigeria” and how this has a positive impact on public health and community well-being. A large national study in Nigeria found that many people still do not get the healthcare they need. About 5 out of every 100 Nigerians, which is roughly 11 million people, reported unmet healthcare needs. The main reasons were the high cost of medical care and the belief that some illnesses were not serious enough to visit a health facility.

Eze et al. (2025) also showed that unmet healthcare needs are more common among poorer households, people with chronic illnesses, those living alone, and families facing food insecurity. In their view, the healthcare-focused initiatives of commercial banks help reduce some of these unmet needs. Through CSR programs such as free medical outreach, health screenings, support for hospitals, health education, and subsidies for vulnerable groups, banks help ease the financial burden of healthcare (Eze et al., 2025). Eze et al. (2025) however points out that some communities may not benefit fully from these programs. The overall works of Eze et al. (2025), and Chimezie (2025) reviewed here reveals a balanced picture which acknowledges the strong contributions of UBA and other commercial banks.

In a comparative analysis between 3 selected banks (UBA, Fidelity, and Zenith) carried out by Ibinyi and Aikomo (2024), UBA is widely recognized for its strong commitment to environmental sustainability. The bank actively focuses on key areas such as energy consumption, carbon emissions, water use, paper usage, and waste management, as shown in its 2022 sustainability report. Ibinyi and Aikomo (2024) demonstrates a clear and organized approach to reducing the environmental impact of its operations. While other banks like Zenith and Fidelity are also engaged in environmental initiatives, UBA stands out for the clarity and comprehensiveness of its strategy. Zenith addresses similar areas (energy, emissions, effluents, and waste) while Fidelity’s approach, though meaningful, is less structured and presented in a more fragmented way (Abbas, 2020).

Table 1. Shows implementation of CSR initiatives

Bank	Energy Consumption	Carbon Emission	Waste Management	Water Efficiency
UBA	-	One hundred and nineteen (119) alternatively powered ATM producing clean energy to reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper waste disposal • Paperless policy 	-

		carbon emissions		
Zenith	Upgraded system applications and sensors			
Fidelity	Reduction of power usage through energy efficient LED lighting			

Table -1 above shows the activities carried out by UBA, Zenith, and Fidelity banks to support their environmental goals. UBA demonstrates its commitment to waste management by using registered vendors for proper waste disposal. The bank also continues to expand its paperless portal, moving more banking processes and services online to reduce paper use and limit contributions to landfills.

The 2024 ESG report from UBA also suggests that the UBA is widely regarded as being committed to environmental sustainability. Based on the report, the UBA’s vision to be the leading financial services institution has driven strong performance in ESG areas. The bank actively works toward a more inclusive and sustainable future which aims to positively impact the communities where it operates (UBA Report, 2024). UBA recognizes that its success is linked to the well-being of the businesses and communities around it, and this understanding shapes its CSR initiatives (UBA Report, 2024). Through the UBA Foundation, as well as its products and services, the bank strives to enrich the lives of customers, employees, and communities while supporting financial stability and social development (UBA Report, 2024). To strengthen its impact, UBA has formed strategic partnerships and increased support for the human health and social sectors, providing over N1.2 billion in funding. The bank also invests in the well-being of employees, their families, and communities through programs that promote mental and physical health. These initiatives include annual wellness checks for all employees, mental health and wellness training attended by 5,846 staff members, occupational health and safety training totaling 1,756 program hours in 2024, and quarterly fitness sessions to encourage healthy lifestyles and team bonding (UBA Report, 2024; Chimezie, 2025).

Although available literatures on ESG reports on the CSR and organizational performance of the UBA is very scarce (that is apart from the UBA 2024 Sustainability report), Chimezie (2025) in a SAMK review on the impact of social responsibility initiatives of UBA, carried out a series of surveys and adopted a singular approach that used quantitative methods focusing on numerical data only. The survey was balanced between both genders: Most of the respondents are male (56.3%) compared to females (43.7%). In terms of age, the largest groups are 41–50 years old (34.1%) and those 51 years and older (32.1%), showing that the sample is mainly middle-aged and older adults. Younger respondents aged 21–30 and 31–40 make up smaller shares, at 16.0% and 17.7% respectively. Most respondents are married (53.2%), while 21.2% are single, and smaller percentages are separated (13.0%), divorced (4.8%), or widowed (7.8%). Regarding education, the largest group has a Master’s degree (21.2%), with fewer holding a Bachelor’s degree (12.3%) or other qualifications (2.0%). Most respondents work in lower-level management (65.9%), followed by middle-level managers (28.0%) and toplevel managers (6.1%).

Chimezie (2025) found out that most respondents believe that UBA contributes positively to community development. About 67.6% agree or strongly agree that the bank supports community growth. However, 15% disagree, suggesting that some people feel the bank’s efforts are not enough or not effective. The 14.7% who are undecided show that while UBA’s CSR activities are mostly viewed positively, some people are still unsure about their real impact. Regarding education, 67.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that UBA’s educational programs improve literacy. However, 23.2% disagree, indicating that not everyone believes these programs are effective. The small number of undecided respondents (8.9%) shows that most people have clear opinions about the education initiatives. For healthcare initiatives, a large majority (80.6%) agree or strongly agree that UBA’s programs have a positive effect on public health. However, 15.4% disagree, suggesting that some communities may not be benefiting fully or have unmet expectations (Chimezie, 2025).

On the issue of environmental sustainability, Chimezie (2025) found that about 77.1% agree or strongly agree that the bank takes part in environmental activities through its CSR programs. This shows that many people see UBA as environmentally responsible. However, 16.4% disagree, which suggests that some people are either unaware of these efforts or are not convinced they are effective. Chimezie observed that support for small businesses and entrepreneurship receives very strong approval from stakeholders and about 86.0% of respondents agree or strongly agree that UBA helps promote economic growth in local communities.

Chimezie (2025) revealed that most respondents believe that UBA's employee volunteer programs improve employee satisfaction and community involvement and about 67.2% agree or strongly agree, showing a generally positive view. However, 27.0% disagree and a small number (5.8%) are unsure, meaning the impact is not felt by everyone. Transparency in UBA's CSR activities is viewed very positively because about 88.8% of respondents agree that transparency helps build trust with stakeholders, while only 7.6% disagree. Public awareness of UBA's CSR activities is also strong, with 91.5% agreeing that the bank communicates its CSR efforts well. This shows that UBA has been effective in promoting its social initiatives (Chimezie, 2025). Most respondents feel that UBA's sustainability efforts address environmental issues. About 73.7% agree that the bank takes meaningful actions to protect the environment. Some respondents nonetheless either disagreed (12.0%) or are unsure (14.3%), which may be due to limited information or unclear impact. UBA's efforts to reduce carbon emissions are widely recognized. Also, about 80.6% agree that the bank has strong strategies to lower its carbon footprint. Only a small number disagree (11.6%). Support for sustainable banking practices among employees and customers is also viewed positively since about 86.0% agree that UBA actively promotes sustainability to both staff and clients, with very few disagreeing (4.4%).

Chimezie (2025) stated that opinions on UBA's investment in renewable energy are more mixed. While 67.2% agree that renewable energy is an important part of the bank's sustainability plan, 27.0% are unsure or disagree. The study revealed that UBA's investment in community projects is strongly supported, with 88.7% of respondents agreeing that these projects help long-term business sustainability. Very few disagree (5.1%), showing that these efforts are widely valued. Many respondents altogether believe that UBA's CSR activities help attract and keep socially conscious customers, and about 84.6% agree with this view.

Further investigations showed that most respondents believe that UBA's CSR activities increase the bank's operating costs. About 85.7% agree that CSR adds extra expenses, showing that many see it as costly. 12.1% however disagreed; rather suggesting that some people believe the long-term benefits of CSR such as better reputation and future gains, are worth the cost. There is strong agreement among the respondents that involving stakeholders more closely would improve the impact of CSR initiatives and about 95.6% of respondents agree that greater participation by customers, employees, and local communities would make CSR more effective and support long-term business sustainability. Only a few respondents are unsure or disagree, indicating that most people see value in stronger stakeholder involvement. Findings also revealed that engaging local communities in CSR planning is also considered very important. This is because about 85.7% of respondents agree that CSR programs should be designed to meet the specific needs of local communities.

Chimezie (2025) also uncovered that most persons believed that community-focused CSR programs were important because they addressed local problems and create long-lasting impact. But while the majority supported this approach, a small group (of about 11.9%) were still unsure or did not completely believe that these local initiatives were fully effective. Clear communication about CSR activities is seen as very important and about 94.8% of respondents agree that better communication would help people understand and support UBA's sustainability efforts. This showed that transparency and clear information are key to building public trust. Only a few respondents (3.1%) disagree, suggesting they want more detailed or clearer information about CSR results. Training employees to support and implement CSR initiatives is also strongly supported. About 88.1% agree that staff need proper training to understand and carry out CSR activities effectively. Very few respondents (3.0%) disagree, showing strong overall support for employee training.

The 2023 and 2024 sustainability reports of the UBA are loud on the bank's efforts to support local growth. However, Chimezie (2025) notes that these efforts are not always evenly experienced across all communities,

so opinions differ on their overall effectiveness. While UBA's community initiatives are generally seen positively, there are still some uncertainty about their long-term impact (UBA Report, 2024).

In the realm of education, the report indicates that UBA's initiatives help improve literacy and learning even though some studies still suggest the results may vary depending on location and access. For example, the UBA Foundation continues to host the National Essay Competition (NEC) to encourage reading and intellectual competition among secondary school students in Nigeria and across Africa. In 2024, the prizes were N7.5 million for first place, N5 million for second, and N3.5 million for third. The Read Africa initiative donated 11,228 books across Africa in 2024 to promote a love of reading educational and informative books. UBA also supports women in business through its Women Sustainable Finance and Investment program (UBA Report, 2024).

In 2024, UBA provided N4.31 billion in working capital loans to women-owned and led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at concessional rates. This initiative aims to empower women by giving them access to capital and increasing their representation in UBA's micro-SME loan portfolio. Regarding gender diversity, UBA is committed to equal pay for staff at the same level, following International Labour Organization standards (UBA Report, 2024). UBA also promotes gender inclusiveness in its corporate governance. In 2024, females made up 47% of board members, 48% of total employees, and 29% of senior management positions (UBA Report, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The CSR initiatives of UBA, including its foundation programs, entrepreneurship and mentorship schemes, Read Africa, National Essay Competition, Food Bank, and Plant a Tree initiative, have played a key role in enhancing the bank's ESG performance. These programs have strengthened UBA's brand reputation, fostered employee morale, and attracted socially conscious customers, creating long-term support from stakeholders. This article stands on the findings which posits that by focusing on community development, environmental sustainability, education, and healthcare, UBA has improved relationships with local communities while building trust and loyalty among customers and other stakeholders. These initiatives have also helped retain talent and motivate employees, creating a positive cycle that contributes to operational stability and sustainable growth. Moreover, UBA's commitment to social and environmental causes aligns with global sustainability trends, keeping the bank competitive and relevant in an increasingly ESG-focused market. While challenges exist, UBA's strategic approach to CSR ensures these efforts continue to support both organizational performance and long-term business sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can strengthen UBA's CSR and ESG performance:

- i. **Regular Evaluation of CSR Initiatives:** UBA should continuously assess its CSR programs to ensure they align with community needs and the bank's sustainability goals. The researcher also suggests that periodic evaluations will allow for timely improvements, making initiatives more responsive and effective.
- ii. **Broader Stakeholder Engagement:** The bank should involve a wider range of stakeholders (including customers, employees, and community leaders) in planning and implementing CSR activities. Greater inclusion in these areas will enhance participation, relevance, and impact.
- iii. **Community Collaboration:** UBA should work closely with local communities and organizations to tailor CSR programs to specific local needs. These community-driven initiatives, in the view of this article, are likely to achieve more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.
- iv. **Enhanced Communication:** Clear and transparent communication about CSR efforts can strengthen public trust and support and go a long way to reinforce UBA's commitment to ESG principles.

- v. **Employee Training and Incentives:** Investing in employee education on CSR and sustainability can build a more knowledgeable and capable workforce. Also, incentive programs can motivate staff to actively participate in CSR initiatives and hence cultivate a strong culture of sustainability within the organization.
- vi. **Partnerships with NGOs:** Collaborating with nongovernmental organizations that specialize in social or environmental issues can provide additional expertise and resources thereby amplifying the impact of UBA's CSR programs.
- vii. **Integration of Sustainability Metrics:** Incorporating measurable ESG indicators into CSR reporting will ensure accountability and demonstrate the tangible impact of initiatives on both the environment and society.
- viii. **Focus on Environmental Sustainability:** UBA should expand efforts to address critical environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution, and natural resource conservation which are essential for long-term business resilience.
- ix. **Transparency in Impact Reporting:** Regularly assessing and sharing the social and environmental outcomes of CSR initiatives with stakeholders will reinforce UBA's dedication to ESG principles and highlight its role in driving positive change.

REFERENCES

1. Abbas, J. (2020). Impact of total quality management on corporate green performance through the mediating role of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 242, 118458
2. Abdeladim N. and Yahyaoui T. (2024), A New Perspective on Stakeholder Theory. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 12(8): 1621-1636.
3. Adegboyegun, A. E., Alabi, O. J., Awoniyi, S. S., BenCaleb, E., & Eluyela, D. F. (2020). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance: Evidence from Nigerian listed firms. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(9), 578–585.
4. Adelabu I. T. & Salaudeen A. G. (2025). 'The Effect of Corporate Governance on the Profitability of Money Deposit Banks in Nigeria' *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)* 12(10): 3306.
5. Angelini, A., & Nieri, F. (2022). Corporate social responsibility in the banking industry: An overview. In B. Luceri & E. Martinelli (Eds.), *Managing sustainability*. Springer.
6. Asiedu, E., et al. (2020). Integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into corporate strategy: A critical review of literature. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 1-15.
7. Awa, H. O., Etim, W., & Ogbonda, E. (2024). Stakeholders, stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR). *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 9, Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-024-00094-y>
8. Bashir, M., Alfalih, A., & Pradhan, S. (2022). Sustainable business model innovation: Scale development, validation, and proof of performance. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 7(1), Article 100243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2022.100243>
9. Cardillo, M. A. dos R., & Basso, L. F. C. (2025). Revisiting knowledge on ESG/CSR and financial performance: A bibliometric and systematic review of moderating variables. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 10(1), Article 100648. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2024.100648>
10. Eze, P., Aniebo, C. L., Ilechukwu, S., & Lawani, L. O. (2025). Understanding unmet healthcare needs in Nigeria: Implications for universal health coverage. *Health Services Insights*, 18, 11786329251330032. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329251330032>
11. Fatima, T., & Elbanna, S. (2023). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) implementation: A review and a research agenda towards an integrative framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183, 105–121. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05047-8>
12. Folajin, O. O., Ibitoye, O. T., & Dunsin, A. T. (2014). Corporate social responsibility and organizational profitability: An empirical investigation of United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(8), 205.
13. Ibinyi P. T. & Aikomo A. D. (2024), Comparative analysis of Nigerian commercial banks' corporate social responsibility for environmental sustainability. *World Scientific News* 188(1): 81-92.

14. International Business Machine (2025), 'What is environmental, social and governance (ESG)?' IBM Think Blog <<https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/environmental-social-and-governance>> accessed on February 1, 2026.
15. Investopedia (2025), Stakeholders: Definition, Types, and Examples, Investopedia (November 26, 2025) <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/stakeholder.asp>> accessed on February 1, 2026.
16. Jessen J. (2025), ESG, CSR & Sustainability: What the Terms Really Mean. Sustainability <<https://sustainabilitymag.com/news/esg-csr-sustainability-what-the-terms-really-mean>> accessed on February 1, 2026.
17. Kamra N. (2024) 'Navigating The Challenges: Contemporary Issues In Business' IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) 26(8): 47-53.
18. Keremidchiev S. (2021), 'Theoretical Foundations of Stakeholder Theory' Economic Studies 30(1), 70-88.
19. Khan, H. H. A., Ahmad, N., Yusof, N. M., & Chowdhury, M. A. M. (2024). Green finance and environmental sustainability: A systematic review and future research avenues. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 31(6), 9784–9794. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-023-31809-6>
20. Khare K. (2025), Integrating ESG in Business Strategy: A Pathway to Long-Term Sustainability. *International Journal of Global Research Innovations & Technology (IJGRIT)* 3(2): 19-22.
21. Kulkarni, S. (2024). Editorial: Global sustainability: Trends, challenges, and case studies. In S. Kulkarni & A. K. Haghi (Eds.), *Global sustainability (World Sustainability Series)*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-57456-6_1
22. Lawal, Q. A., & Oyebade, B. A. (2025). The relationship between corporate social responsibility and financial performance of deposit money banks in Nigeria. *SSR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (SSRJEBM)*, 2(6), 24-30.
23. Oladele S. O. (2024), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities and the Financial Performance of Commercial Banks in Nigeria. *FUOYE Journal of Accounting and Management*, 7(1).
24. Olateju D. J., Olateju O. A., Adeoye S. V., Ilyas I. S. (2021), A critical review of the application of the legitimacy theory to corporate social responsibility. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR)*, 9(3): 1-6.
25. Passas, I. (2024). The Evolution of ESG: From CSR to ESG 2.0. *Encyclopedia*, 4(4), 1711-1720. <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia4040112>
26. Performance of Banks In Nigeria. *International Journal of Business & Law Research* 9(4): 179-186.
27. Punch News (2025), UBA plans expansion to 100 countries. *Punch News* (April 28, 2025) <<https://punchng.com/uba-plans-expansion-to-100-countries/>> accessed on January 28, 2026.
28. Saini, M., Aggarwal, V., Dhingra, B., Kumar, P., & Yadav, M. (2023). ESG and financial variables: A systematic review. *International Journal of Law and Management*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLMA-02-2023-0033>
29. Santoso R. A., Harefa T., Fuadah L. L. (2024), Corporate Social Responsibility: A Literature Review On Practices, Implications, And Future Directions. *International Journal of Economics Accounting and Management* 1(4): 209-214.
30. Sofowora O. (2025), UBA at 75: Tony Elumelu's legacy of vision, grit, and transformational leadership. *Business Day* (April 28, 2025) <<https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/uba-at-75-tony-elumelus-legacyof-vision-grit-and-transformational-leadership/>> accessed on February 1, 2026.
31. Tanaka Y. (2025). 'Sustainable Banking: How Financial Institutions are Adapting to ESG Demands' *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, 29(1), 1.
32. The Cable, Tony Elumelu at 62: A Legacy beyond Wealth. *The Cable* (April 16, 2025) <<https://www.thecable.ng/tony-elumelu-at-62-a-legacy-beyond-wealth/>> accessed on February 1, 2026.
33. Udoma U & Belo-Osagie (2024). An Overview of the Regulatory Changes in the Nigerian Banking & Financial Sector in 2024 and Outlook for 2025.
34. United Bank for Africa Plc. (2024). 2024 sustainability report, UBA environmental, social and governance report. <https://www.ubagroup.com>.
35. Youssef, O., (2024). The role of commercial banks in economic development and financial inclusion. *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, 28(S5), 1-3.