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IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON AVAILABILITY OF SELECTED NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS AROUND OMO FOREST RESERVES OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the impact of conflict on the level of availability of selected non-timber forest products around Omo forest reserve of Ogun State. Data was collected with the aid of well-structured questionnaire on one hundred and twenty marketing households using multistage sampling technique. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, categorization method and t-test. The data analysis targeted socio-economic characteristics, the level of availability of NTFP before/after the conflict in the study area. It was revealed that majority (69.2%) were farmers and (75%) had experienced conflict more than 3 times. It was discovered that the selected NTFPs were available in abundance with bitter kola and kola nut recording higher levels respectively before conflict, while wild mango and walnut were NTFPs that were still available in excess after conflict. The test of difference analysis result shows that there is a significant difference in the availability level before and after conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Forests can be simultaneously recognized as a 'daily net' and a 'safety net' for the rural dwellers that use forest resources (F.A.O 2005). Forests have sustained life on earth through the ages. They supply food, medicine, energy, shelter, fodder, wood and non-wood forest products and are a source of economic development for individuals and communities. They have cultural and spiritual values. It is estimated that 90% of the world's poor depend on forests for at least a portion of their income (World Bank, 2000; Scherl et al., 2004; USAID, 2006). In Nigeria, users of forest products include forest dwellers, nearby farmers, commercial users (including small traders, producers and employees) and the urban poor. Timber, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and animal protein are all used by the rural poor for subsistence, and also as a source of income and employment. Nigeria NTFPs are a key resource for many poor communities. NTFPs are often open-access resources and require little processing or the use of low cost (often traditional) techniques. An overview of case studies indicates that forest products contribute between 20% and 40% of total household income in forest areas and that poor households tend to be disproportionately dependent on forest resources (especially fuel wood and fodder) (Vedeld et al., 2007). Based on this type of findings, investment in NTFPs use has often been proposed as a method of poverty alleviation (Brown & Williams, 2003). Conflicts have several times been related to poverty. Little wonder it is often said that a hungry man is an angry man. As stated by Draman (2003), with the end of the cold war, poverty and conflict have become the biggest challenges to sustainable development. Furthermore, he submitted that (even though debatable) poverty is continuously cited as one of the principal factors responsible for instability in many parts of Africa. Onigu (2001) in his view of conflict stated that what makes a society an ideal

polity is the extent to which the conflicting interests and needs in the society are constructively managed so that violence does not threaten its continued existence. In Omo forest reserve, the dwellers around the reserves depended on the NTFPs for their income and survival. The income generated from the NTFPs was being threatened by various forms of conflicts around the reserve. In 2009, there was a serious conflict between the dwellers and government which threatened the livelihood of the dwellers within the forest reserves. The Ogun state government forcefully displaced the dwellers in the enclaves resulting in the destruction of lives and properties. The displacement of people from the enclaves lasted for a period of two years before the government was ordered by the court of law to allow the people continue with their day to day activities. Against this background, the study intends to ascertain the effect of recent conflict on cost and return of NTFPs in the study area as well as level of availability of the identified selected NTFPs before and after conflicts.

METHODOLOGY

The Study Area

The study was carried out in Omo Biosphere Reserve, the largest reserve in Ogun State, situated in Ijebu East and North Local Government areas located between latitude $06^{\circ} 35'N$ to $7^{\circ} 05'N$ and Longitude $04^{\circ} 19'N$ to $4^{\circ} 40'E$ in the South-West of Nigeria; about 135km North-East of Lagos, about 120km East of Abeokuta and about 80km East of Ijebu-Ode. The Reserve covers about 130,500 hectares in the area. There are more than 30 communities/enclaves within and around Omo Forest Reserve with a population of 59,100 (N.P.C, 2006). A 460 hectares forest block is found within the expanse of land to the south of the confluence of Omo river and has a tributary in Owena river. The population of the study is the rural households in the forest communities within the J4 enclaves of Omo forest reserve. Multistage random sampling method was used in carrying out this study.

First stage

There are four (4) zones (J1, J3, J4 and J6) in Omo forest reserve with 50 enclaves. J4 was purposively selected because of records of conflicts and excess availability of NTFP. The J4 comprises of 27 enclaves- Osoko, Abeku 1, Abeku 11, Temidere, Aba Baale (Ajebandele), Eseke, Etemi, Sojukodoro, Tamitami, Erin Camp, Queens Forest, Opepe, Esiri, Ori Apata, Ologuna, Imopa, Gbonpa, London village, Erinla, Eleyele, Owonifari, Oloji, Ejegun, pocket money village, Aba tutun, Adekanbi Abatutun, Eriin.

Second stage

Simple random sampling method was used to select eight (8) enclaves that are mostly affected by conflicts in J4 – Aba tutun, Oloji, Aba, Baale, Etemi, Tamitami, Temidere, Osoku, Erinla. In Aba tutun, 38 households were identified, 32 in oloji, 30 in Aba Baale, 16 in Etemi, 20 in Tamitami, 38 in Temidere, 50 in Osoku and 16 in Erinla.

Third stage

Systematic random sampling techniques were used to select 19 in Aba tutun, 16 in Oloji, 15 in Aba Baale, 8 in Etemi, 10 in Tamitami, 19 in Temidere, 25 in Osoku and 8 in Erinla. The differences in the number of respondents selected per enclaves are due to the differences in the number of households in these enclaves. In all, a total of 120 respondents were selected for the

study. The heads of selected marketing households were interviewed by means of structured questionnaires.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The socio-economic characteristics from Table 1 shows that majority (60%) of the respondents belonged to age bracket of 50- 59 years and those in the active age of 30 and below were 5.8%. Those between the age group of 40- 49 years recorded 21.7% while age group above 60 years was 12.5%. This implies that the NTFPs marketing and collecting is less flexible and much easier for older people compared to real farming which requires energy. This is in agreement with F.A.O (2005) which stated that old people engaged in the collection of NTFPs. On marital status distribution of the respondents, the result showed that majority (65.8%) were married while 18.4 % were divorced, single and widow were 2.5% and 13.3% respectively. This revealed that marriage confines responsibilities. This is in agreement with the submission of Afolayan (1998) that majority of the married people were engaged in processing and marketing of NTFPs in the rural area.

It was revealed from the table below that females (55.8%) were into NTFPs collection and marketing than their male (44.2%) counterpart. This finding is in agreement with FAO (1991) report that women often dominate forest gathering activities for household production, consumption and income. On occupational distribution, the result revealed that majority (69.2%) were farmers while the remaining 30.8% were non-farmers. This implies that farmers in the study area combined gathering of NTFPs with farm work to assist them in generating more income to improving their standard of living. Furthermore, it was revealed from the table that majority (75.0%) of the respondents had experienced conflict in the area more than three times while 15% had experienced less than three cases of conflict. This implies that the respondents interviewed were aware of the effect of conflict on the gathering of non-timber forest products.

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
<39	7	5.8
40 – 49	26	21.7
50 – 59	72	60.0
> 69	15	12.5
Total	120	100
Marital Status		
Single	3	2.5
Married	79	65.8
Divorced	22	18.4
Widow	16	13.3
Gender		
Male	53	44.2
Female	67	55.8

Total	120	100.0
Occupation		
Framers	83	69.2
Non-Farmers	37	30.8
Total	120	100.0
Conflict experienced		
Less than 3 times	18	15.0
Above 3 times	108	75.0
Total	120	100.0

SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY 2013

LEVEL OF AVAILABILITY OF NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFPS) BEFORE AND AFTER CONFLICT

Table 2 shows the level of availability before and after conflict. The level of the five selected NTFPs was high before the conflict with all the mean values for each NTFPs higher than the calculated mean which is 4. The availability varies with Walnut having the higher mean value of 4.36 which was closely followed by mango with mean value of 4.30. Bitter kola which has cultural and traditional value had a mean value of 4.57 while kolanut and African star apple had the mean value of 4.53 and 4.30 respectively. This supported the finding of Aluko et al. (2013) who reported that livelihood activities of dwellers within and around forest reserves can only be sustained in the atmosphere of peace.

The table reveals that the availability of non-timber forest products dropped drastically after conflict. It was observed that the mean value of bitter kola (*Garicinia kola*), kolanut (*Cola acumulata*) and African star apple (*Chrysophyium conophorum*) were 3.03, 3.50 and 3.50 respectively. Also, wild mango (*Irvingia wombulu*) and walnut (*Tetracarpidium conophorus*) were low compared to the value before conflict. In general, it was deduced that the level of availability of NTFP was low after conflict. This implies that conflicts led to destruction of NTFPs which in turn resulted in the reduction of products. This is in line with Aluko et al (2013) that NTFPs will be reduced when there is displacement and conflict within and around forest reserve.

Table 2: Availability Level of NTFPs Before and After Conflict

Before conflict					After conflict			
Product	Yes	No	Mean	Level	Yes	No	Mean	Level
Bitter kola (<i>Garicinia kola</i>)	78 (65.0)	42 (35.0)	4.57	High	27 (22.5)	90 (75.0)	3.03	Low
Kolanut (<i>Cola acumulata</i>)	70 (58.3)	50 (41.7)	4.53	High	45 (37.5)	75 (62.5)	3.50	Low

African Star apple (Chrysophyium conophorum)	61 (55.0)	54 (45.0)	4.30	High	45 (37.5)	75 (62.5)	3.50	Low
Wild mango (Irvingia wombulu)	99 (82.5)	19 (15.8)	4.79	High	61 (55.0)	54 (45.0)	4.30	High
Walnut (Tetracarpidium conophorus)	90 (75.0)	30 (25.0)	4.72	High	69 (57.5)	51 (42.5)	4.36	High

Source: Field Survey 2013

Note – Calculated Mean = 4 , therefore < 4 = Low and > 4 = High

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The availability of products was discovered to decrease except wild mango and walnut. The drastic reduction was as a result of conflict in the study area.

Conflict can have great consequences on both forest products and non-forest products if not properly managed by the stakeholders in the forest environment. It is therefore recommended that efficient conflict management should be put in place to address the issue of conflict in the forest environment so as to reduce or solve completely the problem of conflict. Also, the dwellers should form a habit of tolerance with each other to prevent conflict. It is also recommended that proper policies should be put in place to discourage people from planting food crop in forest reserves but rather focus on NTFPs plantations.

Finally, government should provide funds for researchers to engage in the domestication of NTFPs in large quantity which in turn will be passed across the NTFPs farmers. This will reduce the pressure on the NTFPs in the wild.

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