

UTILIZING CREEKS FOR INTEGRATED RURAL COASTAL DEVELOPMENT OF ILAJE AREA OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Rural communities in the country are blessed with resources which need to be exploited to achieve rural development. This study examines the Utilization of Creeks for Integrated Coastal Development of Ilaje Area of Nigeria. The primary goal of the study is to carry out inventory on creek resources and how best it could be utilized for Integrated Coastal Development of the study area. Questionnaires which include close and open ended questions were administered to elicit information from household heads in the study area. Stratified-random sampling technique was employed in the administration of questionnaires, and 5% sample was adopted for this study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis method. Information gathered from the administration of questionnaires include: socio-economic characteristics of respondents, major uses of creeks, existing condition of the coastal area and infrastructural facilities in the study area among others. The study reveals the present level of creek utilization, poor fishing techniques, poor sources of water and navigation routes, and manual dredging among others. Based on the findings, it is recommended that government should employ the services of dredging companies to selected locations in the study area for dredging; this would increase the amount of sand turn over, thereby increasing revenue generated for local economic development. Periodic clearing of water weeds will also be of necessity, dredging and expansion of the creeks for navigation for modern boats and development of tourist and recreation centres will also enhance development of the area.

Keywords: Coastal development, creeks, Ilaji, navigation and rural communities.

Introduction

The global glamour for a livable and salubrious environment led to the creation of the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat) in 1978 whose goals among others are improving governance, reducing poverty, improving the living environment, managing disaster, etc. (UNCHS, 2000). Creeks, with their vast resources of food, energy, and minerals, not only are composed of various fragile ecosystems, but are scenes of a variety of often conflicting uses (Keller, 2009). At present, the uncontrolled development of the Ilaje and the almost haphazard exploitation of their natural resources threaten to turn the promise of economic prosperity into an environmental nightmare that portends great dangers for present and future generations (Ogunleye, 1994). Nigeria, like many other nations considers the issue of natural resource management along with the national desired development. This is because environmental deterioration has unquantifiable negative impact

especially on rural communities. There exists a wide divide between the urban and rural areas as a result of not well conceived government policies which are mainly urban – oriented. Studies have shown that there is a wide gap between these two points in the settlement continuum in terms of the level of economic development, quality of life, access to opportunities, facilities, amenities, standard of living and general livability (Olaseni, 2004). Ilaje, a coastal area of Ondo state, in Nigeria has not only been neglected in terms of infrastructural facilities but as also been christened as an area of underdevelopment, and high propensity for emmigration. Emigrating from Ilaje into the metropolis is rampant and worrisome. This has a lot of negative effects on the coastal community of Ilaje and as well as the state itself. In this way, the most vibrant and productive population of this area are being lost continually to the city while socio-economic activities in the region keep paralyzing as well as other direct and indirect consequent of rural to urban migration

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continues to increase the level of poverty in this coastal area (Fadayomi, 1998).

Past efforts on coastal development have not been effective because governments have not been harnessing the available potentials of the coastal communities particularly in the area of skill development and job creation; rather efforts have been merely on the provision of amenities through federal allocation (Olanrewaju, 2000)

This study looks at an alternative and sustainable approach to integrated coastal development in which Ilaje would be more enterprising and able to derived maximum and sustainable benefits from their natural endowment. The success of this approach will go a long way in stemming the tide of rural-urban migration, which seems to have defied solution. In addition, it will also serve as a strategy for revamping Nigeria's ailing economy.

The use of creeks as viable economic resources has received considerable attention around the world where all nations of the world are looking for sustainable ways of using this resource for regional and national development. Thus the subject of this study has gained the attention of notable scientists in the past who had devised various methods and techniques of putting this resource to maximum use (Ogunleye, 1994).

Creek is important to human life because it provides drinking water for domestic use, it provides avenue for fisheries, it provides water transportation routes, and is the source for irrigation farming and hydroelectric power in some cases. These diverse uses necessitate human being to have found creeks area as place of habitation since the beginning of civilization.

Two major areas of focus in the review of literature here are; the need for integrated coastal development and community participation in coastal management.

Need for Integrated Coastal Development

Environmental pollution or degradation and the loss of natural habitat are caused by people who should also be vested with the responsibility to find solution to associated problems (Singh and Karltho, 1987). For this to be efficient, integrated coastal development must enjoy grassroots response. Our environment being a totality of space, time and socio-cultural settings must be well managed to sustain biospheric components including land, water, air plants forests and

animals on one hand, and human settlements together with their indigenous technological knowledge and evolutions on the other. When all of these operate in harmonious equilibrium, continuity of human heritage and its life supporting system can be guaranteed (Lawal, 2011).

Integrated Coastal Development is needed to maintain environmental quality, protect human health and use natural resources sustainably not at the expense of on-coming generation (Abraham, 2010)

The Concept of Community Partnership in Coastal Management

Concerted efforts towards saving Nigerians environment started in 1988 with the establishment of Federal Environmental protection Agency (FAO, 2009). The agency is to develop plans of actions and advise government on natural environmental policies and priorities. Reducing or reversing environmental damage and promoting sustainable coastal management will require above all, changes in the way people live, farm and fish (Wikipedia, 2003). In the past many conservation projects have failed because they were imposed from the top, without sufficient cultural sensitivity or involvement of the local people (Adeyanju, 2007). A good environmental management policy framework may be developed but without empowering local communities through a strategically evolved participatory approach all such laudable initiatives will end as beautiful exercise in futility (UNDP, 2003).

Community participation implies involvement of local people in the development, management and maintenance of their natural resources (Olanrewaju, 2009). The concept insidiously hides the old mentality in which the state is seen as having primary responsibility for development. The concept has not removed the principle of state as developer; rather, it is based on the true mastery of natural resources by co-management. Sustainable coastal management relies above all, on the management of natural resources, it is important to create a shared perspective of the problem and jointly decide on specifications to be taken (Okunola, 2003).

It is to be acknowledged that sustainable utilization of creeks for integrated coastal development could be considered from both natural resources and socio-economic perspective,

cannot succeed if there is no strong relationship between different socio-groups who are engaged in various unsustainable utilization uses of creeks and advocate of sustainable practices. This is because, resources depletion whether water, forest, aquatic or marine life and bio-diversity are carried out by people at the community level. Participation of community members at all level will bring holistic approach to sustainable usage of creeks for integrated coastal development (Adeyanju, 2007) The partnership should be based on formation of a strong team who jointly carry out situation analysis, developed strategies together, implement, monitor and evaluate resources management activities together (Olurin, 2006).

Thus the specific objectives of this study are to:

- i) Identify the existing creeks and rivers in the area
- ii) Determine the potential use of these creeks and rivers
- iii) Determine the current level of utilization
- iv) Examine the problems of utilizing these

resources, and

- v) Proffer lasting rural developmental strategies for the economic potentials of the study area

The Study Area

Ilaje LGA was carved out of the former Ilaje/Ese-Odo LGA on 1st October 1996. The total land area of the LGA is 2,300 square kilometres. It lies within $5^{\circ}45' - 6^{\circ}15' N$ and $4^{\circ}30' - 5^{\circ}00' E$ while the headquarters is located at Igbokoda town. The 2006 population of the LGA is 290,615 according to the 2006 National Population Commission census figures. The major tribe is Ilaje while the dominant occupation of the people is fishing and major festivals are Malokun and Ere. There are two dominant kingdoms namely the Mahin and the Ugbo kingdoms with minor kingdoms as Aheri and Etikan. Major settlements include Igbokoda, Ode-Ugbo, Ugbonla, Ayetoro, Ode-Mahin and Ode-Etikan. The study area as shown in figure 1 is bounded in the North by Okitipupa Local Government, in the East by Ese Odo Local Government, in the West by Ogun State and in the South by Atlantic Ocean.

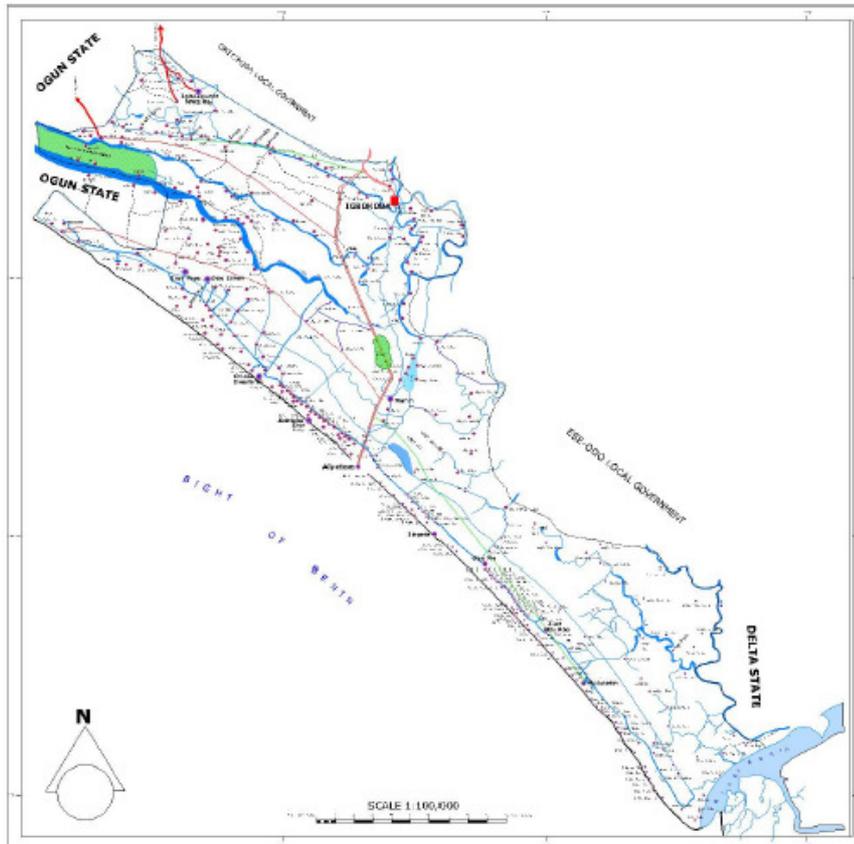


Figure 1 Map of Ilaje Local Government area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

In carrying out this study, both primary and secondary sources were employed. After the reconnaissance survey, three hundred and thirty-one (331) structured questionnaires were administered on the residents. Thereafter, stratified random sampling was employed to select the investigated settlements in the LGA. The 12 existing political wards i.e the four sub-regions were employed as the strata for the research. 5% of the settlements in the stratum were randomly selected to represent the sample size. Simple statistical analytical techniques were adopted for data analysis. These include frequency distribution, percentages and charts among others.

Results and Discussion

Findings about the situation of creeks in the coastal area of Ilaje were revealed and discussed below:

The creeks in the study area are used for the transportation of people and logs from one settlement to another or from settlements to neighbouring urban areas. Other uses include fishing, dredging of sea sand for construction works, timber lumbering and domestic use. The major uses are as shown in table 1 with fishery recording the highest use.

Table 1 Major Uses of Creeks in the Study Area

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Transportation	40	12.1
Sand Dredging	56	26.0
Fishery	205	61.9
Total	331	100.0

Some of these creeks are not navigable as boats mounted with out-board engines cannot pass through them easily. They are either too shallow with an average depth of about 4.5 metres or blocked by strong and heavy water lettuce-which is an impediment to water transport in the area.. It was also noted that despite the modern day technology in fishing and sand dredging, these activities are still done manually in the study area, this is because adequate loan were not provided to support them the operators. In the area of marketing the fishes, people came from other local government areas of Ondo State and other States in Nigeria to buy fishes in the study area. Unfortunately, the fishing catchment centre at Igbokoda has been allocated as Naval Base while

that of Ayetore is abandoned, thereby the boat terminals are now used as a catchment points, thereby fish market is not organized and consequently increasing the rate of water pollution in the study area.

Occupational Structure of the coastal area of Ilaje

In spite of various socio-economic activities such as agriculture (fishing, farming), mineral exploitation (sea sand, water consumption), small scale industry (agricultural produce processing plant, etc), transportation (passenger and cargo movement), commerce (trading) etc. predominant in the area, there is still a low level of development. From Table 2, fishing seems to be the basic and most fundamental means of livelihood, follow by sand dredging and farming. Despite the concentration on fishing activities in the area very little is done to promote fishing in a sustainable way through the use of modern fishing techniques.

The problem associated with fishing in the area has often resulted in the over-exploitation of this natural resource. This resource is also replaceable provided the number of fish caught does not exceed the number replaced either by natural means, or by man- controlled fish breeding. Most countries which have large fishing industries stipulate that all small fish which are caught must be returned to the sea immediately to enable them reproduce themselves. This is not done in this area, the small fish are not thrown back into the water as large number of them are caught and sold. This has adversely affected the natural balance among the marine animals in this area.

Table 2 Occupation of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Farming	50	15.1
Civil servant	15	4.5
Fishing	106	32.0
Trading	15	4.5
Boat operator	29	8.8
Thrift collector	29	8.8
Sand dredger	87	26.3
Total	331	100.0

Regional Development of the creeks and coastal area

From all indications, it is evident that the coastal areas have suffered neglect in terms of development policy and programme by government. Although government has several policies in place but the problem has always been

that those policies are wrongly or not implemented at all or the pace of implementation is slow. The educational status for instance revealed that one of the factors that have affected the slow pace of regional development in the area is low level of education by the residents. For instance people with no formal education from table 3 accounts for 45.0% this is as a result of the way and manner in which the schools have been politicized, therefore, making it extremely difficult for many people in the area to have access to tertiary education.

Table 3 Educational Status of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
No formal education	149	45.0
Primary school	67	20.2
Secondary school	100	30.2
Others (Specify)	15	4.6
Total	331	100.0

The immediate past and the present Ondo State Government has also achieved a lot through Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (OSOPADEC) in the construction of more roads. Okitipupa road which terminated at Igbokoda in the resent past has been extended to Ago - Agbede, Ebute-Ipare, Kurawe, Zion Village, Mahin, Ugbo and Ugbonla. Also work is on-goung on the roads from Atijere linking Ogun State, Mahin to Araromi Seaside, Aboto to Atijere, while Ugbonla to Awoye has been earmark as a proposed road (OSOPADEC, 2010). The existing condition of Ilaje settlements and the level of living standard have not changed significantly as some buildings were built with bampoo and leaf as their roofing materials

Low Standard of Social Services and Infrastructure

In terms of social services and basic infrastructure (such as potable water, electricity, health, water ways, motor parks, jetties, ferry services, etc.) the area has limited number of basic amenities which are of low standard. Despite the enormous water resources and its available potentials in the study area, it is expected that government provides commensurate level of basic amenities to the people such that standard of living as well as investment could be encouraging. Rather the prevailing situation is the reverse. In this way government is causing more harm to itself and its people because the government will deny itself

expected taxes to be derived from the use of such facilities if provided. Thus people find it difficult to see reason why they should pay other mandatory taxes when they are denied of basic amenities. See table 4 & 5 below

Table 4 Sources of Water Supply

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Well	51	15.4
Tanker service	29	8.8
Bore hole	15	4.5
Public Tap	15	4.5
Stream / River	221	66.8
Total	331	100.0

It can be inferred from table 4 that majority of the inhabitants of the study area source for water from the streams/rivers. This accounts for 66.8% of the total respondents. This however necessitates why the creeks have to be used in an effective and hygienic manner so as to prevent the outbreak of diseases through water pollution since the stream/river is the major sources of water although not hygienic enough for human consumption.

Table 5 Source of Electricity and its Supply Per Day

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
PHCN	207	62.6
Generator	63	19.0
Lantern	44	13.3
Candle	17	5.1
Total	331	100.0
Period of Electricity/Day		
Less than 6 hours	110	33.2
6 - 12 hours	100	30.2
12 - 24 hours	29	8.8
Not available	92	27.8
Total	331	100.0

Table 5 infers that the major source of electricity is through the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) which accounts for 62.6% of the total respondents. Other sources are generator, lantern and candle with 19%, 13.3% and 5.1% respectively. We gathered that the supply is highly erratic and undependable. This has negative impact on industrial development as people would have to spend additional money to fuel their generator.

Recommendations and Policy Guidelines

It is recommended that the creeks be dredged and expanded to make them more navigable for modern boats and for the benefits of the riverine settlements. Also there should be a periodic clearing of water weeds to make the creeks navigable by canoes and boats

The proposed arterial major roads that run from Ugbonla, Eruna, Idi Ogba, Ajapa, Orotu, Ilepete, Obanla, Ojumole through to Awoye in the State Regional Plan would open up developments in this area when fully implement and would boost Industrial Development in the coastal area. It is therefore the recommendation of this paper that the state regional development plan for the area be implemented without delay.

The swampy areas of Ilaje viz-a-vi Ilepete, Jinrinwo, Ojuala and Muluteyin should be seen as usable land. They could be improved by afforestation, swamp rice cultivation and fish pond construction. Other economic activities which can be supported and which would open up the potentialities of the area are water transportation, tourism, recreation, saw-milling industry, among others can be invested on by the collaboration of private partnership for the development of the area.

The development policies of the government do not necessarily imply government putting the investment in place but it can also imply active encouragement and support for active private sector participation, also formulation of national rural/urban policy that will take care of creeks and coastal areas. Such policy should give Physical planning activities more votes in our national, state and Local Governments budget. Presently various tiers of government allocate more votes yearly to economic planning at the detriment of physical planning this trend should be reversed to safe our environment from imminent collapse.

Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) whose function is to develop plans of actions and adverse government on natural environmental policies and priorities should be strengthened. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be made compulsory for every new and major developmental project so as to reveal the feasibility studies of the EIA before the commencement of the operation. This will safeguard the natural eco-system from destruction and make these areas appealing for tourism and recreational development.

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