

Assessment of Support Zone Community Programme in Old-Oyo National Park, Oyo State

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Abstract

The foremost threat to the continued survival and development of National Parks in Nigeria is adverse human factors. The paper examined the effectiveness of the Nigeria National Park's community-based conservation policy in Old-Oyo National Park (OONP) after twenty (20) years of its operation. The method adopted was a descriptive survey involving the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data and were administered on local people living adjacent to and within the park. The result revealed that 82% of the community's perception on the importance of the park in the support zone of OONP is to earn their livelihood from the natural resources in the park. Therefore the research indicates that the programme contribution to the community welfare was marginal; as a result, the local communities are not interested and did not genuinely support the project. The study recommends that the National Park Service should develop and encourage alternative means of livelihood and properly implement the Park's conservation policy for the support zone community, in OONP.

Keywords: Wildlife, benefit, community, conservation, support

Introduction

Old-Oyo National park (OONP) was created in 1991 from upper Ogun and OyoIle forest reserves. It is located in Oyo State in the south west of Nigeria. It has a total land area of 2,512 sq. km, making it the fourth largest park in Nigeria, with approximately 160km from Ibadan the capital of Oyo State (Marguba, 2001).

The park has 24 identified species of large mammal, including lion, elephant, etc. and several species of birds, fishes, reptiles and monkeys. These resources are however increasingly coming under pressure from excessive hunting, over grazing, logging, slash and burnt agriculture, shifting cultivation, etc. As a result many of the large mammals species have locally extinct or migrated away since the area was first created as a game reserve (Marguba, 2011).

Community-based conservation system known as Support Zone Community Programme (SZCP) in Nigeria is a national policy designed to reduce or totally eliminate pressure on park resources and focus attention on welfare and development needs of local people in the communities around the park,. These communities apart from being the immediate stakeholders traditionally depend directly on the resources of the forest reserve from which the national park was created for their livelihood need.

Realizing that the survival of the National park conservation was linked to the host community, the support zone community was adopted by the Nigeria National parks service over twenty years ago. This was considered an integral part of its solidarity and contribution to the development of rural communities around its national park. This is to be supported by

efforts that would make benefits of national park protection and conservation available to local communities with the following projects provided in support of surrounding communities.

- i. Procured and distributed essential drugs to communities in health institutions in Sepeteri, Ajebandele and Tede.
- ii. The provision of employment to the indigenes of the areas
- iii. The renovation of Sepeteri town hall
- iv. The provision of concrete well and a borehole at Tede and Ogundiran communities.
- v. Construction of link roads from Sepeteri town to Akoto Base camp (Marguba 2001).

The aim of this paper therefore is to assess whether these incentives have impact on local behavior of the community in a manner consistent with conservation and sustainable livelihood objectives, particularly in reducing poaching in old Oyo National park.

Materials and Methods

In a bid to investigate the local communities' perception in wildlife conservation of the park; its consequences on conservation; and sustainable livelihood, the method used was a descriptive survey involving the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore a combination of methodologies which has led to the development of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), including schedule questionnaire, focus group discussion, interview and community participation method were utilized for the study. The reasons for these methods included the nature of the research problem; and the fact that the population under study with majority

of the responsibilities was none literate and might not be reached with questionnaires. Observational and participatory rural appraisal methods were therefore adopted to crosscheck some of the claims made by respondents.

Nabasa, Rutwara, Walker, and Were, (1995) affirmed that in the context of rural development, it is important to employ participatory learning techniques because the learning process itself has a great influence on the willingness of adults to accept new ideas or behavioral changes. Adults readily accept new ideas if they evolve from dialogue and discussions rather than formal lectures or training sessions. In contrast new ideas imposed by another person are often viewed with suspicion (Schulz, 2000). The primary focus of PRA therefore was using problem owners as partners in the research process; according Nabasa, et al. (1995), they hear relevant knowledge, they learn and apply solution better when they are part of the reach.

In line with the above, PRA techniques were used to generate first-hand information on the following;

- (a) Community perception and level of satisfaction with tourism project in Old-Oyo National Park
- (b) The extent to which local communities benefits (or anticipate benefits) and whether these benefits impact local behavior in a manner consistent with conservation and sustainable livelihood objectives, particularly in reducing poaching.

Twenty villages that were perceived to have negative impact on the Flora and fauna resources of the park form the sampling frame for the study. Nine villages out the sampling frame based on 45% were selected for detail field study. These

villages fall within 0-10km distances from the park boundary. (10km distance was recommended by World Tourism Organization, WTO [1996] for the study of this nature).

The populations of these nine communities were geometrically based on 2006 National Population Census to the population of 2012 as shown below using geometric method (The Research Advisors, 2006).

$$pt = Po(1+r)^t$$

where pt = population of time t
 t = time (6 years) 2006 2012
 r = rate of population growth (2.83%) year for rural settlement.

Table 1: Adult population of the study area and the sample size

Name of community	Male	Female	Total	Sample size
Tede	8017	9843	17860	376
Ajebandele	8732	10916	19648	380
Sepereti	4084	4340	8424	369
Igbo-Ologunla	417	489	906	270
Gboduro	709	902	1611	309
Abaja	77	91	168	117
Dogari-Iju	709	870	1579	310
Tessi-Koro	123	195	318	175
Soro	272	290	562	228
			51076	2534

Source: 2006 population census

Determination of sample size: (The Research Advisors, 2006).

$$S = \frac{Z^2(p(1-p))}{e}$$

Where S = the sample size
 Z = No relating to the degree of confidence you wish to have in your result.
 P = an estimate of the proportion of people falling into the group in which you are interested in the population.
 e = proportion of the correct factor.

For a finite population the correction formula =

$$\text{New SS} = \frac{S}{1+S-1} \text{Pop}$$

New SS = New sample size

pop = population of the community concerned (Table 1) 51,076 adults comprising 23,140 males and 27,936 females are resident in the

nine selected settlements located within 10km range from the park boundary. The economy of the area is largely, agrarian, and of great importance to hunting, trapping and collection of non-timber forest products by household.

A multi-stage sampling method was adopted in the study. First, all the settlements in the support zone that fall within 0-10km from the boundary of OONP were selected from the sampling frame. The second stage involved the selection of nine communities for detailed study (i.e 45% of sample frame).

Three main selection criteria were used namely;

- Proximity to OONP boundary
- Geographical distribution 4
- Perceived impact of each village on the park

Table 2: selection for survey villages (communities)

Village	Geographical location	Distance(km from nearest boundary)	SZCP priority score	Acceptance of park project
Tede	West	10km	High	Yes
Ajebandele	West	5km	High	Yes
Sepereti	West	10km	High	Yes
Igbo-Ologunla	South	9km	High	Yes
Gboduro	South	1km	High	Yes
Abaja	East	4km	High	Yes
Dogari-Iju	East	6km	High	Yes
Tessi-Koro	North	Within	High	Yes
Soro	North	Within	High	Yes

About 51,076 adults comprising 23,140 adult male and 27,936 adult females are residing in the nine selected settlements located within 10km range from the park boundary. The economy of the area is largely agrarian, and of great importance to hunting, trapping, and collection of non-timber forest products by household.

Purposive sampling method was used to select aged household heads with their group of elders including religious leaders in all the sampled settlements. According to Marguba (2003), decisions affecting the environment must be taken by adult so as to protect and preserve the environment for use by the younger generation. On the whole, a total of

2,534 households sampled in each community varied from 117 to 380 per community, depending on the size of the community.

The study adopted the following framework to evaluate the success and failure of the support zone community programme (SZCP) in the study area and identified factors responsible for programme outcomes. The study focused on the following;

- Participation and resource ownership rights have been transferred to the local communities by measuring their participation in key decision making process.
- Local communities benefits or anticipated benefits were examined.
- Whether these benefits impact local behavior in a manner consistent with conservation and sustainable livelihood objectives.
- Whether or not the SZCP has had any significant impact on wildlife conservation and management, particularly in reducing poaching and illegal activities in the study area. The above frame was used by (Charlie & Grazia, 1994; Rutten, 2002; & Tijani, 2006) in their various studies of community-based wildlife resource management.

Results and Discussion

Community perception about importance of the Old-Oyo National Park (OONP) is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: community perception on the importance of OONP

In OONP Reason for conservation	Number of respondents in support	Percentage (%) in support
It is reserved for plants and wild animals	309	14
It is an important source of meats and timber harvest	1873	82
OONP is conserved for future generation	99	4
Total	2281	100

One of the core objectives of the National park is to preserve, enhance, protect and manage the vegetation and wildlife in the park. Therefore conservation is the most important activity of OONP.

The result above shows that a notable portion of the local population in OONP relies on a significant part of the park's wildlife resources for their livelihood. The Perception of the community on the importance of OONP in their vicinity has been demonstrated by the results as follows; 14% of the respondents saw the OONP as a reserve for plants and wild animals, 82% of the respondents in OONP adamantly believed that the park is an important resource for harvesting of meat and timber, while only 4% supported the park's conservation in their areas for future generation.

According to Ayodele (1998) who stated that for a very long period in the past, the area has suffered indiscriminate and uninhibited destruction of human activities including hunting as a result animal species have been greatly depleted and some species have either become locally extinct or rare.

Discussion with community leaders about their level of involvement in park management in OONP revealed however that indigene of the areas working with National Park are essentially junior staff and that the management of the park usually transfer them to another station the moment they approach senior staff. This according to them alienates the community members from decision-making process of developing tourism on their land.

The park official's explanation on this, indicate that its not necessary for the indigene at senior staff cadre to work in their locality. According to WTO (1996) who reported that local people, however knows their needs and circumstances, taking time to listen to them can

greatly improve project outcome rather than forcing it on them. For instance David (1997) and Chris (1998) reported that the Aborigines who are the traditional owners of tourism resources in Kakadu National park Australia constitute about two third (2/3) of the management team of the park. With this arrangement they are able to contribute their ideas on developing tourism, learn ways in which they can participate in the benefits of tourism and therefore support tourism development.

The non-involvement of community members in park management also alienates them from commercial undertaking in the park. The table 4 shows wildlife based commercial undertaking in old-Oyo National park.

Table 4: *Wildlife-based commercial undertaking in OONP*

Commercial undertaking	Frequency (f)		Percentage %		Cumulative	
	Significant	Not significant	Significant %	Not significant %	Frequency	%
Accommodation	376	1,905	16.48	83.52	2,281	100%
Restaurant	328	1,953	14.38	85.62	2,281	100%
Tour guide	1,365	916	59.84	40.16	2,281	100%
Production of souvenir/gift items	1,918	363	84.09	15.91	2,281	100%

The communities in the support zone programme are not fully involved in accommodation and restaurant in OONP. This is not unconnected with non-involvement of community member in park management where 16.48% of the SZCP were involved in provisional of accommodation and 14.38% in restaurant business in the park. The areas where the local communities are involve; are Tour guide with 59.84% and production of souvenir/gift items with 84.09%. This is also contrast with Kakadu National park where the

Aborigines (local people) owns all the accommodation facilities in the park and also manage yellow water boat tours. More than 20% of the gate receipts also go to the local people of Kakadu National Park. Also in Kenya 25% of the Kenya wildlife service funds go to the neighboring rural communities in terms of schools, clinics and water supply (Rulten, 2002). They therefore do not have the economic need to engage in illegal poaching and encroachment. They are now greatly involved in anti-poaching activities and regard

the wildlife in their areas as an important source of community development.

Community Benefits and Impact on Wildlife Conservation

Table 5, 6 and 7 show the benefits that accrue to local community as a result of the establishment of Old Oyo National Park in their area. In terms of actual benefits received, 12% agreed that they benefited from hospital, 41% benefits from road development, 31% from development of schools while 16% benefited from Town hall renovation.

Table 5: *Type of benefits to the OONP community*

Type of benefit	Frequency	%	Cumulative frequency
Hospital	276	12	12
Road	932	41	53
School	708	31	84
Town hall	365	16	100
Total	2,281	100%	

Table 6: *Significance of OONP to the Community*

Significance	Frequency	%	Cumulative frequency
Not Significant	1,575	69	69
Significant	705	31	100
Total	2,281	100%	

Table 7: *Monetary Compensation for Conservation of Wildlife*

Money compensation	Frequency	%	Cumulative frequency
Not Significant	94	4	4
Significant	2,187	96	100

Also, of all the respondents who held the view that the project has not been of any benefit to their community: 69% asserted that with the change in life style to resource protectors that the park becomes for the local communities there is an increasingly need to earn. In some area people now buy firewood rather than collecting freely from the forest. Also 25 liters of water goes for ₦200.00 and above in some places in the park.

On money compensation for conservation of wildlife in OONP; 96% of all respondents supported monetary compensation while 4% of them only supported conservation of wildlife for future generation and development. An attempt to analyze the effect of infrastructural development (road, school, renovation of town hall) on residents incentives to support and participate in wildlife conservation, show that the benefits have no influence on local behavior and desire/readiness to participate in wildlife management in OONP. Local people fail to link wildlife conservation and management to provision of social services, since government has the traditional right to provide these services at no expense to any community.

It is therefore difficult to explain and convince local communities that these services have been made possible because of wildlife conservation. The outcome of community based conservation system in old Oyo National Park in terms of its inability to influence community to participate in wildlife conservation is linked with the implementation of the CBC. According to Marguba (2011) the implementation does not adequately address the conservation objectives or community development needs. This could be attributed with policy flip-flops by policy makers.

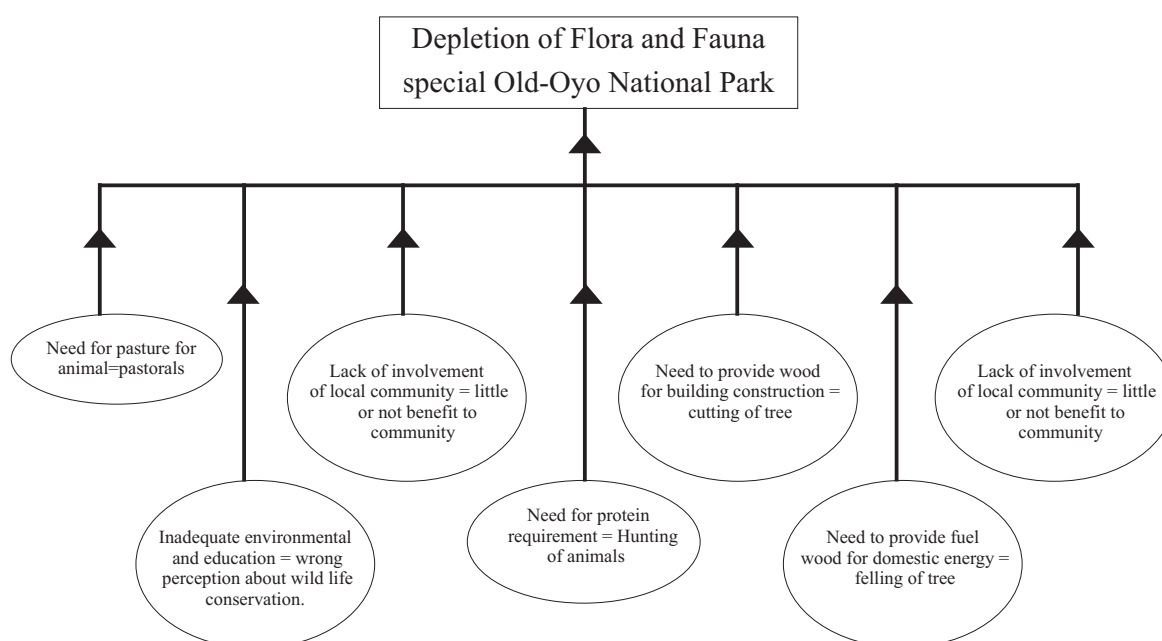


Fig 1.0 Illustrates various factors accounted for depletion of flora and fauna resources in Old-Oyo National Park.

Conclusion

The study analyses the contribution of support zone community programme in Old-Oyo National Park to wildlife conservation. The SZCP is designed to reduce or totally eliminate pressure on park resources and focus attention on the local people and their welfare. The main findings from the study are as follows:

- The local people within the OONP do not have a good understanding of the importance of the park and do not see any reason why they should be denied access to resources which by tradition had been theirs.
- The park management do not also allow local communities to participate in decision-making; neither are they consulted or informed about policy goals and outcomes.
- The SZCP contribution to community

welfare was also marginal, if not negative; as a result, local communities are not interested and did not genuinely support the project. The initial support giving to the project influenced by promised socio-economic benefit which was largely unfulfilled due to low level patronage in the park, resulted into low revenue. The capital allocation from Federal government is also inadequate and highly epileptic.

- Data suggested that the local communities in OONP do not see any reason why they should be denied access to resources which by tradition had been theirs. There was also no indication to suggest that residents actually involved in wildlife conservation in their area. Involvement of local community in the decision-making process of developing tourism in their area is however essential for residents to understand tourism as a new activity in their area, and contribute

their idea on developing tourism.

- That the benefits have no influenced on local behaviour, nor particularly affect the resident's incentives to poaching in OONP. This is because the services provision does not distinguish those who comply with natural resources management rule from those who do not. Also local communities cannot identify the benefit of incentives with wildlife management since government has traditionally being providing these services at no expense to the community.

The above conclusion proven that the implementation of community-based conservation policy in Old-Oyo National Park failed to adequately address the conservation objectives, because communities were not really involved in wildlife conservation in the areas. For people to be active on the project, they must have the authority and responsibility to do so. Lack of participation in wildlife conservation arose because people do not feel in charge or indeed, do not have the power to act. If Nigeria National Park service wants to involve people in the sound management of wildlife resources, there is need to empower local community. The park management in conjunction with other governmental bodies should fashion out a process to facilitate community empowerment with a view to diverting the attention of the inhabitants of the surrounding communities from park resources.

Recommendation

For protected area management to be sustainable, especially in the developing countries, adequate provision of natural resources base to cater for livelihood needs of the host communities must be put in place, side

by side with protection measures.

The government should encourage the communities in the support zone programme to support the project by strictly comply to their policy. Policy flip-flops by policy makers on support zone community development programme should be stopped.

There is need for the park service to strengthen and perhaps review the support zone program after twenty years of existence, especially in the following areas:-

- Decentralizing control over wildlife resources: The existing system that place control or management of wildlife and forest products under the Federal/State government is extremely difficult to enforce due to great distances from administrative centres and lack of Government resources. Resources control cannot be arrogated to the state alone. Control at the lower echelons is necessary because a feeling of stake increase with decrease level of governance.
- Encouraging the development of alternative means of livelihoods for the host communities.
- Embarking on the restoration of depleted resources of the buffer zones, especially those fast yielding natural species that will yield quick and tangible benefits to the local people.

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