



ASSESSMENT OF THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN EKITI STATE FORESTRY COMMISSION AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION [NGOs] TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTRY SUB-SECTORS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

*This study assessed the collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) towards the development of forestry sub-sectors in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Directors and the Deputy Directors were purposively selected in the Commission based on the hierarchy in the service and were interviewed through semi-structured questionnaire. Through the collaboration with the NGOs in the State, the Commission has been able to established one hundred and ninety-seven hectares (197ha) of both *Gmelina arborea* and *Tectona grandis* plantation in the free areas (Table 2) (private sector) while one hundred and fifty-five hectares (155ha) of plantation of *Terminalia superba*, *Gmelina arborea* and *Tectona grandis* were also established (Table 3) in the government forest reserve. As a result of collaboration between the Commission and NGOs there was an increase in the participation of private tree growers in forest plantation development in Ekiti State. The Forestry Commission and the NGOs meet often and engaged in both closed and opened form of collaboration. The commission is committed to the effectiveness of the NGOs by recommending them to International Donor Agencies and Organizations and giving land to them to operate. As part of the*

commitment, the Commission regularly meet with the NGOs to assess and review its achievements and make necessary inputs to enhance productivity. Despite their valuable contributions, NGOs face significant obstacles, including insufficient funding and communication breakdowns among stakeholders. Therefore, the study recommended that Ekiti State Government should support the NGOs, to promote, expand and strengthen the roles of NGOs by giving financial support through grants and giving of loan.

Keywords: Forestry Commission, Forest Plantation, Non-Government Organizations, and,

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INTRODUCTION

Forests, with their complex ecology and renewability, are vital to sustainable development, the economy, and the maintenance of all life forms. They provide food, medicine, wood, and rich biodiversity (Motiejūnaitė, 2019). Forests and trees cover 30% of the Earth's surface, supporting the subsistence, livelihoods, employment, and income of 25% of the global population. According to (Ahmed, 2019), noted that the rapid deforestation of the Nigerian forest at an alarming rate, is a situation that calls for urgent attention by all farmers, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), researchers and conservationist must all wake up to the risk of ecological imbalance that is already caused by deforestation. Regeneration and afforestation can help to reverse the trend of global warming and climate change in Nigeria, (Abdullahi, I.N., 2020).

Forestry in Ekiti State is among the most significant in Nigeria for employment and livelihood. The sector has created approximately 10,000 to 12,000 direct and indirect jobs and supported over 500,000 livelihoods in forest-dependent communities (Nelson *et al.*, 2016). This impact was particularly notable in the first decade (1996-2006) following the state's creation, with contributions from 268 sawmills and their value chain operations. Despite the significant contributions of forests to the Ekiti State economy, like other regions in Nigeria, Ekiti State really enjoyed these benefits. This is largely due to the fact that the State recent drive to increase internally generated revenues and renew policy to curb the tax evasion and avoidance have undue consequences on the economic activities of small

and medium scale enterprises (Aidonojie, 2023). Numerous charges, levies and taxes are common feature in order to rump up drive for internaly revenue generation in the State. Despite these, forest is faced with a serious concern because core foresters desire sustainable forest management while the state government desires increased revenues from the estates. There is no dedicated financial institution for providing funds for small scale wood based enterprise with moderate interest rate, reduced risk and any form of tax holidays. This is because there is no easy way to estimate a single, fully agreed-upon and universal funding institution which provide a clear information on capability of small and medium wood base industry, risk assessment and encourage forest sector development in order to meet sustainable development goals (Joshi, 1989 and Macqueen, 2008). This paper focuses on evaluating sources of the financing, common timber species used, and and constraints in financing of wooden panel enterprise. lacked defined forest management principles. Ineffective management of the forest corridor persists due to lack of scientifically-

backed management plans and infrequent patrols, compounded by inadequate equipment for guards. These shortcomings culminate in devastating environmental consequences, including deforestation, forest degradation, and depletion of natural renewable resources (Falade, 2023). The forest reserves lack work plans, their boundaries are not maintained, coppices of felled exotic species are not pruned (i.e., no silvicultural practices are adopted), and when plantations are established, they are often not maintained. Several indigenous species of hardwood in Ekiti are already on the danger species list because nearly all the parent trees have been felled (Owens 2012). Research by Owen (2012) and Pinho et al. (2013) has shown that poor forest management practices has led to the closure of 115 sawmills, caused by timber resource scarcity and others like high costs and irregular electricity supply, and outdated equipment.

Government reserves in Ekiti State have been overexploited and depleted due to many years of use without sustainable regeneration and afforestation programs (Olajuyigbe, 2018).

Currently, government reserves in Ekiti State exist only on paper (Ekiti State Forestry Sector Review and Strategic Analysis, 2012 and Forestry Law, 2016). The effect of forestry collapse would be the same as a giant industry going bankrupt (Owen, 2012 and Forestry Commission Records, 2021). The forestry sub-sectors like sawmillers, timber contractors, and timber traders association have seen and agreed that without prompt action at the current rate of forest over exploitation, the forestry industries would find it difficult to see raw materials for their business (Peck *et al.*, 2000). Depletion of Ekiti forests is connected to an excessive focus on their capacity to generate revenue, neglecting other potential payments for environmental services from forest conservation. Before the creation of forestry commission, no government has carried out meaningful regeneration or any afforestation project in the State. The little number of hectares of *Tectona grandis* and *Gmelina arborea* planted was contracted out to contractors instead of allowing competent professional to handle the planting. It is unimaginable to know that contractors planted tree

seedlings during the dry season. The money released was not well managed and the few plants that survived were all strangled to death by weeds (Padgett, 2020). There was no silvicultural maintenance carried out due to mismanagement. Now, due to establishment of the commission the present administration has determined to reverse the pattern of mismanagement of forest resources over the years. The Forestry Commission is committed to strengthening the protection of forest reserves.

The initiation of commission brings up the potential of forest plantation. Inclusion of Private Sectors such as forest growers and sawmillers as members of the commission board also enhanced more potential in forest development. Many private sector entities have adopted biodiversity practices, incorporating native tree species into their planting initiatives, and demonstrating a heightened understanding of sustainable forest management.

Since the establishment of the Forestry Commission in partnership with non-governmental organizations, there has been a

notable rise in interest and awareness of tree planting in Ekiti State. This initiative involves private investors, communities, civil society organizations, and other sub-sectors. NGOs have been known to help government to combat various environmental challenges worldwide, (Ekiti State Forestry Law, 2016). (Fonjong, 2007) supported that the roles of NGOs in rendering help in the management of forest resources in Nigeria can therefore not be overlooked. Taking a critical look at the collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and NGOs will help in forestry policy formulation. It will also help in having a clearer understanding of how to improve the collaboration with a view to bringing improvement to the management of forest resources. It will help to shed light on how the collaboration can be strengthened. (Ekiti State Forestry Commission 2021).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area.

The study was carried out in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The State is situated entirely within the tropics, it is located between longitude 40° 51' and 50° 45' 1'

East of the Greenwich meridian and latitudes 70° 151' and 80 °51' north of the equator with a total area of 5887.890sqKm. It lies south of Kwara and Kogi, East of Osun State and bounded by Ondo State in the east and in the south and in the west by Osun State (Adedayo and Falade, 2019). Important aspect of Ekiti State vegetation is the prevalence of agricultural tree crops. The major tree crops include Cocoa, Kola nut, bitter kola, Coffee, Oil palm and Citrus (Asare, 2005). As a result of degradation of the natural forests, exotic tree has been introduced and established in the forest plantation of Ekiti State (Olajuyigbe, 2018). The dominant exotic species include *Tectona grandis* (Teak) and *Gmelina arborea*. *Terminalia superba* and *Nauclea diderrichii* are native species that are cultivated in plantations in Ekiti State (Ikemeh, 2013).

Methodology of Data Collection

Semi structure questionnaire was used to obtain information for this study. The questionnaires were administered to the management of the Forestry Commission in the study area which were: Directors, Deputy Directors and the Zonal

Directors of the Forestry Commission, on the assessment of the collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and NGOs towards the development of forestry sub-sector in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The research identified the significant impact of collaboration between Non-Governmental Organizations and the Forestry Commission. It examined the form of collaboration that exist between the NGOs and the Forestry Commission. It assessed the significant impact of the NGOs on the tree planting in Ekiti State.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were screened and coded, and subjected to descriptive statistics using statistical package for social scientists spread sheet (SPSS) in form of frequency and percentage distribution at 95% confidence limit. The results were presented in tables and bar graphs.

Results and Discussion

The Collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Ekiti State Forestry Commission collaborated with four NGOs in the State, as shown in Table 1. The Directors of the Commission, based on the percentage distribution, that collaborated with South-West Niger Delta Project and Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management (NewMap) were 37% while the Directors that collaborated on behalf of the commission with Green to Abundance Development and Empowerment and Ekiti “the Forest we Want” were 13% respectively. The rapid deforestation of the Nigerian forest at an alarming rate, is a situation that needs urgent attention by the farmers, government, non-governmental organizations, researchers, conservationist, to wake up to the risk of ecological imbalance that is already caused by deforestation (Gbadebo *et al.*, 2022; Raimi, 2022 and Persson,*et.al*; 2022).

Table 1: Collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organisations	No of Director (Frequency)	Distribution Percentage	
South West Niger Delta			• Niger-Delta Conservation Project for conservation of Nigeria-Cameroon Chimpanzee in Ise- Ekiti forest reserve.
Project	3	37%	
Green to Abundance Development and Empowerment	1	13%	• Green to Abundance Development and Empowerment and Ekiti": Awareness on tree plantation campaign.
Ekiti" the Forest we Want	1	13%	• Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP):
The NEWMAP	3	37%	Reforested almost 155 hectares of mixed indigenous and exotic species in the nine
Total	8	100%	

Collaboration with the Non-Governmental-Organization provides public awareness, understanding and support for forest resources conservation, regulate the rate of harvesting forest resources, and facilitates the restoration of degraded landscapes (Doucet, 2024).

The result of this study revealed group of NGOs that collaborated with Ekiti State Forest Commission, as listed below:

- The roadmap for the “Ekiti Forest We Want, 2035”: They provide the commission the needed direction and injecting huge investment funds for forest restoration.

forest reserves (one in each local government) and encouraged private participation in forest regeneration and gave incentives like rain coats, rain coats, helmets, sprayers and seedlings of different economic tree species to the farmers as shown in Table 2.

(Nambiar, 2021) noted that a number of studies investigated the impact of NGOs on efforts in forest regeneration and afforestation. (Mung'ala, 2023) emphasized on the collaborative effect of international partners on forest projects as linked with the New Initiative for Social Development (NISD) and the Environmental Investigation

Agency (EIA) funding of NEWMAP project from this study. (Prause, 2024) also noted that the Forestry commission Ghana partner with German Embassy and others to plant 700 trees. The tree planting exercise form the part of activities to celebrate the 2021 German week by the German Embassy in Ghana and its partner for joining the global community in mitigating the effects of climate change through tree planting. Cross-River State Forestry has also called for synergy across all stakeholders to ensure sustainable forest management in the State. Therefore the roles of NGOs in development, conservation and

sustainability of Ekiti-State forest cannot be tone down.

Table 2: The Impact of NGOs on Tree Planting in Ekiti State through Private Participation in Forest Regeneration and Incentives

LGAs	FOREST RESERVE	HECTARE PLANTED	PARTICIPANT	INCENTIVE
Ado	Ogbese	20	60	Helmet,rain boat, Knapsack sprayer
Gboyin	Egbe	20	60	Helmet,rain boat, Knapsack sprayer, rain coat
Ekiti -East	Aramoko	20	60	Helmet,rain boat, Knapsack sprayer
Ekiti-South-West	Ogotun group of reserves	10	60	Helmet,rain boat, Knapsack sprayer
Ekiti-West	Aramoko	10	60	Rainboat, Knapsack sprayer, Chemical
Ikere	Ikere	10	60	Helmet,rain boat, Knapsack sprayer, cutlass

Emure	Little	20	60	Helmet,rain boat,
Ise/Orun	Ose/Eporo	20	60	Knapsack sprayer, cutlass
Oye	Ise	25	60	Helmet,rain boat,
	Ayede/Isan	25	60	Knapsack sprayer
Total		155	540	

Forms of collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and NGOs

Figure 1 presents the results of the forms of collaboration between the Ekiti State Forestry Commission and NGOs in the study area. It shows that approximately 75% of the Directors of the Ekiti State Forestry Commission are involved in open collaboration with NGOs, while 25% engage in close collaboration. According to Mung'ala (2023), collaboration offers numerous benefits for organizations and team members, with individuals working together on projects experiencing increased productivity in their roles. The result also shows that open collaboration is the major form of collaboration which exist between Ekiti State Forest Commission and the NGOs in the study area. This form exist when urgent needs arise to solve some problems. The management invites all the Staffs and Stakeholders with the

NGOs to interact, share opinion together, and partake freely in knowledge sharing. Open collaboration enables the staff to access a diverse variety of opinion and expertise. (Osborne, *et.al*, 2024) noted that in an open collaboration everyone can joined, there is no principled or artificial barriers to participate in an open collaboration. According to Al-Zoubi *et al.*, (2020), an open collaboration encourage improved knowledge sharing, open communication, improved communication skills, better quality and more efficient work, and benefit from other talent. But there was close collaboration and this exist only between the management and the NGOs which involves working closely together in a cooperative manner to ensure project success.

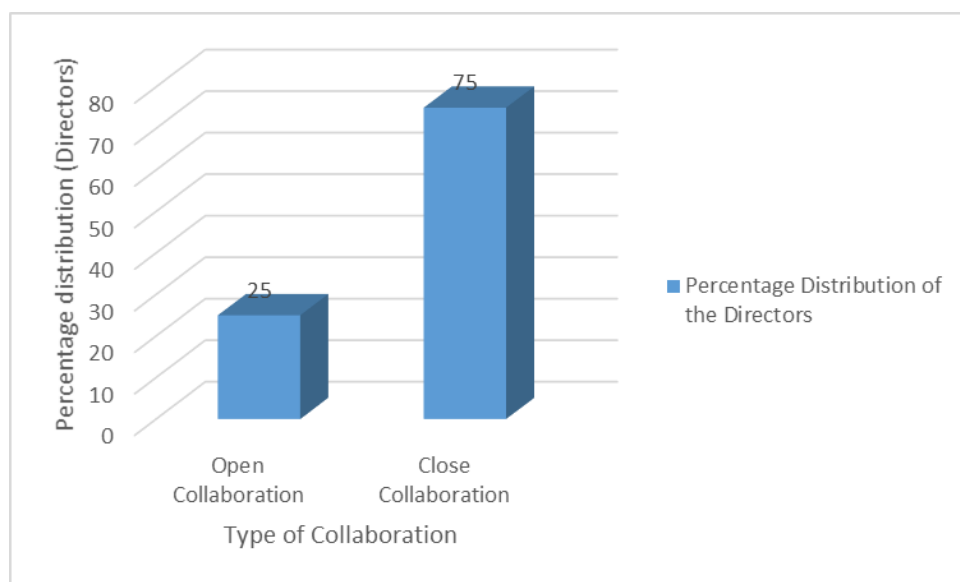


Figure 1: Forms of collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and NGOs

Roles Played by NGOs in Promoting the Activities of Ekiti State Forestry Commission

Figure 2 showed the percentage distribution of the Ekiti State Forestry Commission Directors assessment of roles played by NGOs in promoting the activities of Ekiti State Forestry Commission. This work showed that 58% of the Directors agreed that NGOs helped them in the sensitization of people on tree planting and on the training of people on forest silvicultural

operations. Also, 28% of the respondents (Directors) said that NGOs helped the commission in the conservation of flora and fauna species while 14% of the Directors affirmed that NGOs have helped the Ekiti State Forestry Commission by making funds available for forestry operations in the State.

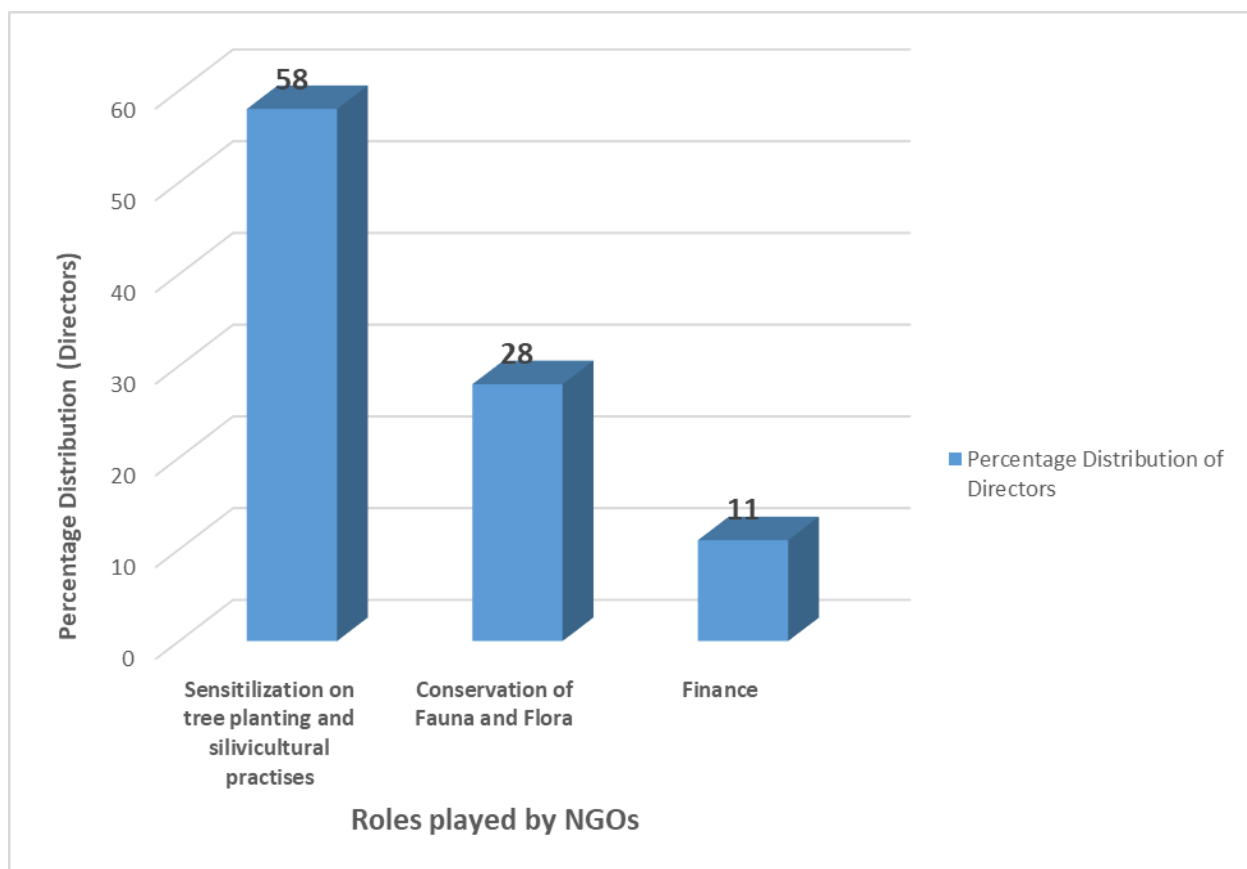


Figure 2: Perception of the roles played by NGOs in promoting the activities of Ekiti State Forestry Commission in the study area.

The Impact of Collaboration with Non-Government Organization on the Tree Planting in Ekiti State.

The Forestry Commission in Ekiti State has created more awareness on involvement of private plantation participation in plantation development within the state. Tree planting campaign programme and distribution of different seedling of economic tree species has promoted sustainable forest and has significantly reduce pressure on the

already degraded forests and allow restoration supported by (Tiebel *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the result from this study (Table 3 and 4) shows the total number of hectares of forest plantation established in government forest reserves and private sector (free areas). The total number of hectares established through the effort of Forestry Commission financed by NGOs were one thousand, one hundred and ninety-eight hectares (1,198ha) which were regenerated in the

free areas by the plantation developers (table 4) and one hundred and fifty-five hectares (155ha) in all the forest reserves in Ekiti-State (table 3) and this were also regenerated through enrichment planting. According to (Jarrett, 2024), there is an increasing participation of private sector in forestry programme most especially in forest plantation establishment. Consequently there is a great awareness and active interest on tree planting in Ekiti State among private investors, farmers, communities and civil society organizations respectively. The investment made by the timber growers in the study area were planting indigenous and exotic tree species, with *Tectona grandis* and *Gmelina arborea* dominate which might be connected with its high economic value and moderate fast growth rate and high demand in the market. The respondents claimed to have encountered a lots of difficulties in attempting to raise indigenous species such as *Melicia excelsa*,

Nauclea diderrichii, *Triplochiton* e.t.c and more so, it is not easy to get seed because most of the parent tree have being cut down without replacement, (Matey,2024).

The role of NGOs in forest plantation establishment in Ekiti-State cannot be underestimated, these include: free distribution of different economic tree seedlings and provision of technical assistant, training of stakeholders in forestry through the forestry commission officials on various forest operations such as sustainability, management and silvicultural practices (land clearing, seed procurement, nursery operations, planting, time of weeding, thinning, pruning, beating up, fertilizing and fire tracing and selective harvesting at maturity stage) and provision of some forest equipment like rain boat, helmet, apron, cutlass, watering can, sprayer and chemicals (herbicide).

Table 3: Forest Plantation Established in Government Forest Reserves

Forest Reserve	Past Status	Present Status	Hectare Planted
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Egbe	Depleted	Regenerated	20
Eda 1 & 11	Depleted	Regenerated	20
Ayede/Isan	Depleted	Regenerated	25
Ogotun group	Depleted	Regenerated	10
Ikere	Depleted	Regenerated	10
Emure	Depleted	Regenerated	20
Ise	Depleted	Regenerated	20
Ado	Depleted	Regenerated	20
Aramoko	Depleted	Regenerated	10
Total			155 ha

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4: Forest Plantation Established by the Private Sector (free areas) in the study areas

S/No	Senatorial District	No of Hectares Established
1	North Senatorial	385
2	South Senatorial	533.5
3	Central Senatorial	278.5
	Total	1,197

Source: Field Survey, (2023)

Frequency of Engagement between Different Departments of the Commission and the Related NGOs

The NGOs are instrumental in the Commission development project and focus on a wide range of

forestry activities in the study area. As shown in

Figure 3, Forestry department of the Commission affirmed that they meet regularly with the NGOs, having seventy-eight percentage distribution (78%) of frequency of engagement. Wildlife and

Afforestation department confirmed equal

meeting times with their related NGOs on yearly and quarterly basis, their frequency of engagement showed eleven percent (11%) both yearly and

quarterly respectively. The meeting times are to assess and review the set goals and its achievements.

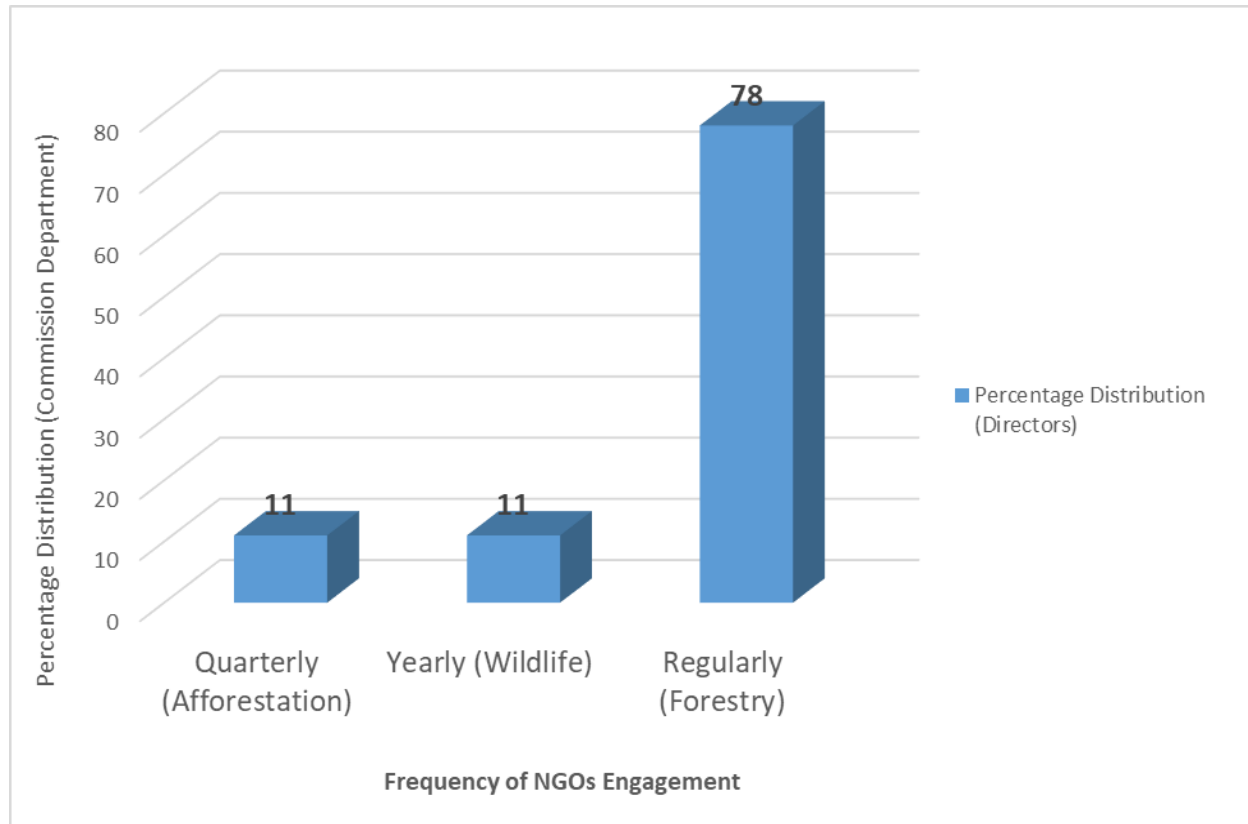


Figure 3:

Frequency of Engagement between the Commission Departments and their related NGOs

Contributions of the Commission to the NGOs

The commission is always ready to encourage the NGOs to make their work to be effective. Figure 4 showed that the percentage of the Directors that attested to the fact that the Commission always recommend the NGOs to International Donor Agencies and Organizations was 15% and that 30% percentage of the Directors confirmed that

the Commission is in the habit of giving land to the NGOs to operate as the case of Ise Forest Reserve while 45% of the Directors confirmed frequent meetings between the Commission and the NGOs and finally 10% of the Directors were of the view that NGOs are always involved in the master plan and activities of the Commission

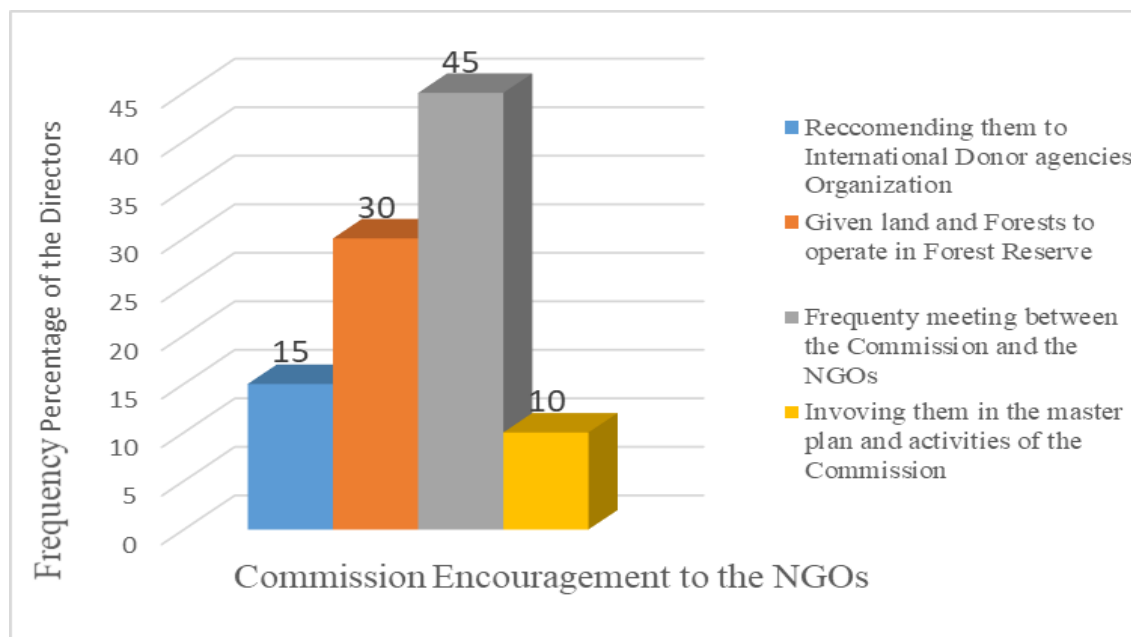


Figure 4: Contributions of the Commission to the Encouragement of the NGOs

Conclusion

This study showed the collaboration between Ekiti State Forestry Commission and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) towards the development of forestry sub-sector in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The forestry Commission and the State Government are in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations: “The forest we want”, A roadmap for sustainable management of Ekiti forests 2021-2035, Green to abundance development and empowerment, the Nigeria Erosion and Water Management Project

(NEWMAP) for forest restoration and the South West Niger delta project for sustainability of ecosystem wildlife and climate. These NGOs provided the Commission with the needed support in mobilizing people for forest restoration. They also provide support by making funds and some incentives available for forest restoration. The commission is committed to making the work of the NGOs to be more effective by always recommending the NGOs to International Donor Agencies and Organizations and giving land to the

NGOs to operate as in the case of Ise Forest Reserve. The Commission always have frequent meetings with the NGOs to assess and review its achievements and make necessary inputs to enhance productivity and finally NGOs are always involved in the master plan and activities of the Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the crucial roles played by NGOs in restoring and sustaining Ekiti State's forest plantations, they continue to face various challenges, including inadequate funding, which hampers their ability to achieve project targets, as well as communication gaps between their stakeholders (Raimi, 2022). However, collaboration of all relevant stakeholders and donor partners is needed to assess and arrest climate change impacts and vulnerability through regeneration/afforestation and enrichment planting.

Therefore, efforts should be made by Ekiti State Government to assist the Forestry Commission to encourage more collaboration with NGOs and International organizations. Government should

be encouraged on constant release of funds and see to how the collaboration between the NGOs, International Donors and Forestry Commission can be improved in Ekiti State.

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