

Expanding mandate and corporate social responsibility in the management of National Parks and protected areas in Nigeria

J.O. Ewah

Department of History international studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, e-mail: jamesewah@yahoo.com

Abstract: Park's objectives in Nigeria have evolved and been added over time. Four main phases are evident: Establishment of reserves to protect game, fauna; preservation of spectacular landscapes including cultural and scientific sites for the benefit, enjoyment and education of the public (Roosevelt 1929); Conservation of biological diversity from genes to ecosystem and evolutionary processes (Decree 11 (1985) and decree 35 (1991). The last and most recent phase places increasing emphasis on the challenges of land and resource alienation on indigenous populations that answers to protected areas. The first three phases have been largely achieved through establishment of fortress conservation called National parks, reserves and Protected areas. The State's seeming failure to meet the challenges of the fourth and recent phase has exposed the poverty of fortress conservation and threatened the integrity of protected areas. This paper posits that to sustain conservation in Nigeria and beyond, the State should establish Conservation Agency that will collaborate with conservation partners, encourage community participation and seek partnership with other stakeholders to promote rural development and capacity building amongst indigenous populations within protected areas.

Keywords: Nigeria National Parks, protected areas and social responsibility

Introduction

This study reviews 'failed' efforts at fortress conservation by the state and the unfolding 'contradiction' between conservation and transformation within *Cross River National Park, Okwangwo Division* as a case study of the plight of both enclave and support zone populations, found within protected areas in Nigeria.

National Parks in Nigeria are found within under developed communities.

Within these areas, economic growth and development is rudimentary and externally stimulated by the state. Within study area, the evolution of Boshi Forest Reserve, Gorilla Sanctuary and Okwangwo Forest Reserve to Cross River National Park Okwangwo Division have remained a source of controversy between the state that seeks to conserve the forest and the people who claim historical rights over protected areas and quest for expected rural development and freedom to exploit the forest for livelihood (F. Bisong). The reactions of indigenous populations within the reserves and later park area from 1956 when the reserves were created, 1990 when the park was created, and 2000 when Cross River National Park/World Wide Fund for Nature/Overseas Development Agency/European Union made attempts on rural development and conservation, have remained similar.

The study suggests that to sustain conservation with development the state should create a Conservation Development Agency, with the mandate to initiate private sector partnership and also encourage community development, and participation in the management and control of protected areas. The significance of this study lies in the identification of the contradictions between conservation and rural development and the implementation of suggested recommendations to reduce conflict and challenges. The methodology applied, involve a review of related literature and reliance on oral evidence to reconstruct the social conditions of host communities under pressure from fortress conservation in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Most relevant to this study is the park management development plan, which defined the role of the state in the development of support zone communities and park management activities. Designed to gain legitimacy amongst the people, the plan was put together by Calde John Cott and Oats in *Cross River National Park Okwangwo Division: Plan for Developing the Park and its Support Zone*. The plan influenced the perception of support zones communities to view Park Management as a development, rather than a conservation agency. Between 1990-2000 when the plan was demonstrated, the management and its development partners, WWF/ODA/EU rather placed emphasis on survey of alienated lands, rivers, monitoring bush tracks, scientific research, office accommodations, transit camps, residential quarters and capacity building for management staff, especially park rangers.

Community development and non-agro-forestry livelihood and lifestyles for the alienated people was paid little attention by the state. Today, the effects of

land and resource alienation in support zone communities is biting hard. In view of this, the elites within support zones communities make reference to the Development Plan, like the Niger-Delta agitators refer to the 1959 Willink Commission and the quest for resource control with rising anger, frustrations and petitions to the state and the international community. Between 1990-2000 when the plan was initiated, implemented and abandoned, no meaningful dialogue or developmental activity has been done to reduce the effects of land and resource alienation on Support Zone Communities.

The enforcement of Decree No. 11 (1985) and Decree No. 36 (1991) amended by CRNP/WWF/ODA/EU prohibiting hunting, exploitation of forest resources and trespassing into Park Areas, without viable non-agro forestry economic activities and rural development of host communities, is promoting widespread frustrations and agitations. These frustrations were reviewed by Ewah, J.O. in a study titled 'Community Response to Conservation in Cross River National Park in Okwangwo Division: 1990-2000'. The study examined the relationship between fortress conservation, alienation, decapitalization and income loss on indigenous populations within the Park area. The article examined the limited but commendable efforts in the community development and capacity building by CRNP/WWF/ODA/EU for host communities (1990-2000) and further recommended the need for Conservation With Development (CWD) to reduce the effects of fortress conservation in Nigeria.

On what is to be done to harmonize conservation with development, the study examined a few related experiences. In South Africa, Brian Child in his study (ed) *Parks in Transition: Biodiversity, Rural Development and the Bottom Line*, writers and contributors center discussions on who are the Parks for? It examined whether protected areas should be managed by the state or transit into public/private sector partnership or privatized to meet the demands of the state, international community intellectual inquiry, policy change and impact on protected areas. The result of the discourse center on provision of a synthesis of South African experiences in public and private sector management. This could improve the Nigerian situation in terms of governance and relationships between protected areas and support zone communities. It equally shed light on how protected areas can act as enquiries of rural economic growth and entry points for expansion of a conservation colony in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa.

Another illuminating study relevant to the Nigeria situation, is Joan Martinez-Alier's work on the *Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study on Ecological Conflicts and Valuations of Ecological Conflicts and Valuations*. The text helped to establish a relationship between two emerging field of study: Political ecology and ecological

economics. The author examined in details, many ecological conflicts in history and at present, in urban and rural setting. It demonstrated clearly how poor people often favour resource conservation. The environment is thus, not so much a luxury of the rich as a necessity of the poor. It concluded with fundamental issues such as who has the right to impose a language of valuation and protection and also the power to simplify complexities arising from environmental protection. The author's logic is relevant in constructing platforms for rural development and capacity building for alienated population in protected areas in Nigeria and beyond.

The relevance of the rain forest and its resources was examined by Roger D. Stone and Claudia D' Andrea in *Tropical Forests and the Human Spirit*; based on extensive field research, the book identified communities, individuals, loggers, agencies and local groups who vie for forest resources worldwide. It highlights one solution for preserving the precious resources of the forest: empowerment of local people who depend on the forest for survival. Using Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, India, Africa, Central and South America, the author revealed the many reasons why most international institutions, national governments have been unable and unwilling to stem the accelerating loss of tropical forest lands and how local communities can often do it better.

Study Area

The subject matter covered in the study include all areas defined as National Parks and protected areas in Nigeria. Most of these areas, include lands and communities define in the National Park Decree No. 36 (1991) amended. The Decree created eight National Parks, Reserved Areas and Tourist Sties (see figure 1). These areas were created to enhance the enforcement of Endangered Specie Decree No. 11 (1985). The area ecosystem and coverage in National Parks and protected areas in Nigeria, involve about 46 sites, covers 466,569.8 hectares totaling about 10.5% of Nigeria's landmass. Within these areas, about 10-15 million indigenous populations are directly dependent on land and forest resources for livelihood (CPE 2005).

For instance within the case study area, Cross River National Park (CRNP) comprised of Okwangwo and Oban Divisions lies between 5005'-6029 north and 8015'-9050 east and covers about 400km in S/Eastern Nigeria (see figure 2). The area extends along the Republics of Cameroon-Nigerian Border. Oban Division covers about 4,424sq.km and is contiguous with Korup National Park in Cameroon (WWF/EU/ODA). Okwangwo Division covers about 920sq.km, and

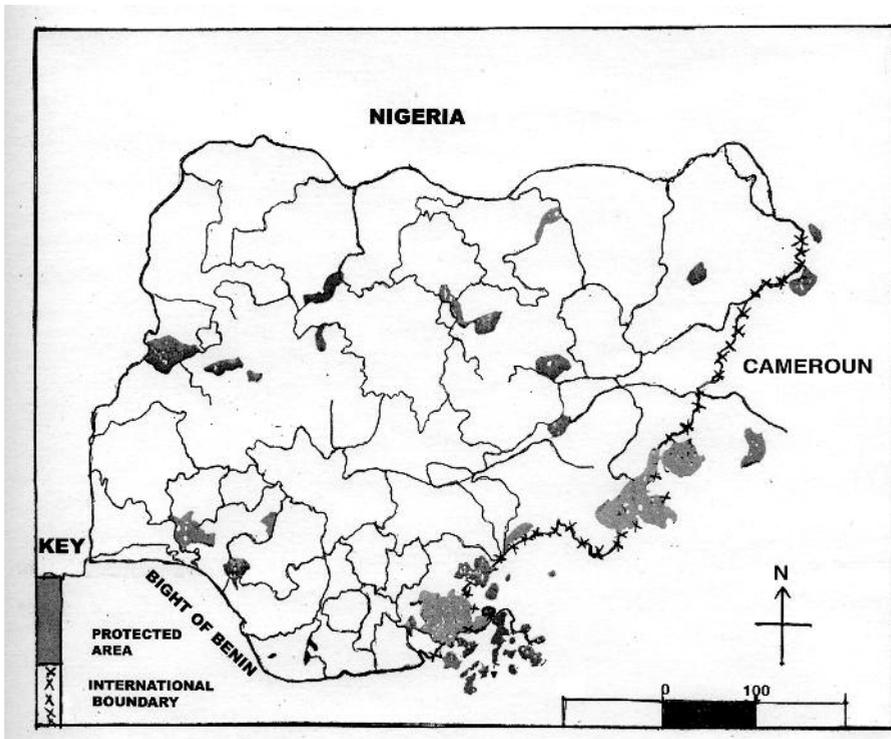


Figure 1 – Map of Nigeria showing protected area

ecologically contiguous with Takamanda Forest Reserve in Cameroon (WWF/ODNRI).

In Oban Division, 39 villages with estimated population of about 75,000 are classified as host communities. Within Okwangwo Division, 66 villagers with estimated population of about 50,000 also claim historical rights over protected area. Both divisions are largely dependent on the protected rainforest area for income and livelihood. These 105 villagers have over the years, developed agro-forestry mentality for sustenance of lifestyles through persistent exploitation of land and forest resources such as hunting, fishing, gathering, timber extraction, plantation farming, livestock and other forest products. (Ewah, J.O. 2006). Unfortunately, Decree 36 (1996) alienated 6674 square kilometers from both Okwangwo and Oban Divisions, and this represents about 70% of the rainforest area that houses indigenous populations.

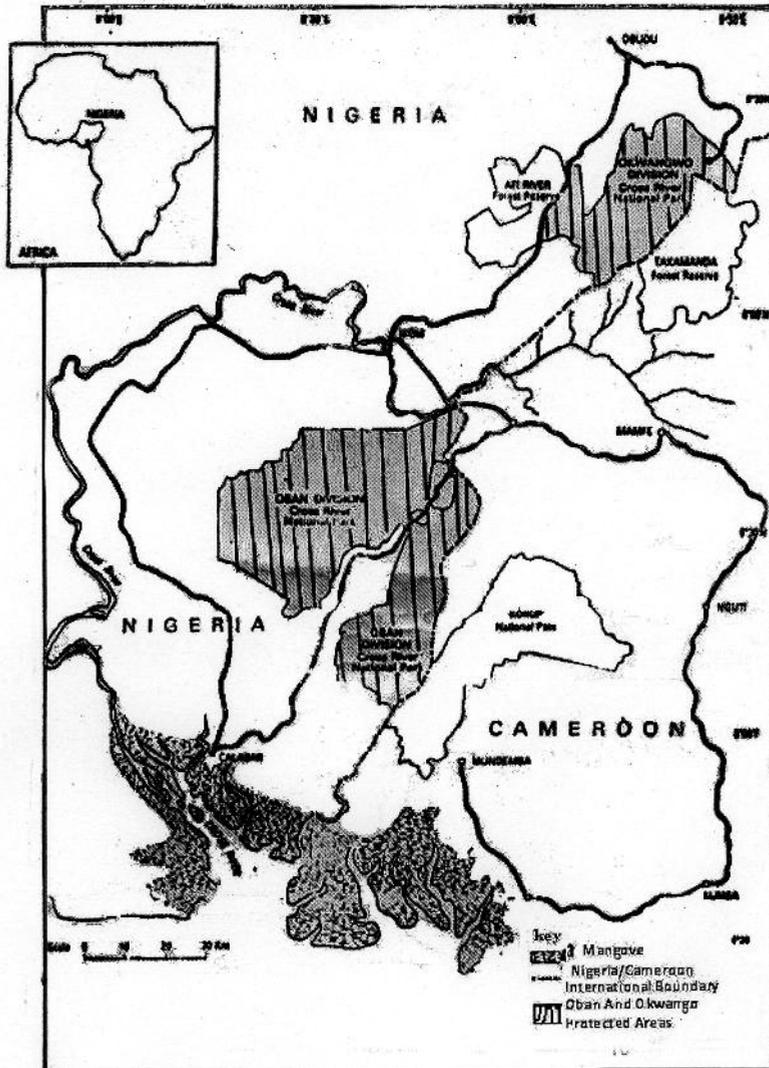


Figure 2 – Map of Cross River National Park showing Oban and Okwangwo Division

Fortress Conservation in CRNP Okwangwo Division

The Park Management and Cross River Forestry Commission prohibits all forms of agro-forestry activities within protected areas. Trespassers are arrested

and prosecuted in regular courts. When not prosecuted, their work tools, farmlands and exploited forest products are impounded and destroyed by Park Rangers. Enabling laws that protect the form and content of fortress conservation derived additional strength from Land Use Act (1978) amended. The Act appropriated all community lands and vested ownership on the state.

Besides endangered species, landscapes, fauna and flora that characterized the divisions and other protected areas, the Park is located within rural and under-developed communities. Within these communities, rural poverty is the major cause of illiteracy and rudimentary levels of macro-economic activities. These indices are products of neglect and inequitable resources allocation by different levels of government within Nigerian economic system. This informed dependence on the exploitation of natural resources from protected areas by indigenous populations that claim historical rights over them. The above scenario, also creates rural expectation and dependence on external institutions for development initiatives such as provision of portable drinking water, electricity, road construction/rehabilitation and other social amenities. These expectations are legitimate and constitutional rights of the people within the Nigerian legal system (Uwem Ite).

Within Cross River National Park, the fortress approach to conservation has limited significance. Beyond protection and preservation for scientific research and eco-tourism of the remaining rain forest area, no emphasis on sustainable agriculture, self-employment, vocational education and environmental management to reduce dependence on agro forestry by host communities. Rather, emphasis is on, the enforcement of restrictive and prohibitive conservation laws by park management and forestry commission. This approach, minimizes the benefits of conservation in the perception of the host communities who declare conservation laws as anti-people. Within enclave communities of Okwa I, Okwa II, Okwangwo and Itara of Cross River National Park, the consequences of land and resources alienation including resettlement, have generated controversy and opposition amongst host communities.

In 1996, the park management unfolded plans in a resettlement conference at Butatong to resettle enclave communities outside protected areas. At the end of the conference both enclave and support zone communities expressed strong reservations on the consequences of land and resource alienation acting together with resettlement. At the end of the conference most delegates and majority of community participants, rejected resettlement of enclave communities and instead canvassed for integration into the management of protected areas and increased access to restricted areas. The rejection was informed, by the following active and

potential consequences.

The reality of income loss from pre-alienated income generated from forestry resources promoted by unrestricted access to high forest areas. Since 1991 when the parks were created, pre-alienated income conditions, contrast sharply with present dwindling economic status of farmers, hunters and gatherers. Besides income loss, increasing cases of landlessness and its implications on expanding population and land disputes are equally obvious consequences of fortress conservation and resettlement of enclave communities. Some of these active and dormant consequences include change of environment and exposure to more interactions without forest life. This tend to promote multiple healthcare risk such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Diarrhea and Dysentery. The shift from foraging to intensive farming in resettled areas, promotes overall decline in health (Cernea and Soltan).

Other consequences of land and resources alienation and resettlement options of the Park Management include re-orientation amongst the displaced people. This leads to adjustment problems such as de-attachment from religious sites, special tress, rivers, caves and stones. This often leads to calamity or untimely death on the aged and alienated populations. Amongst the alienated, emotions from ancestral areas means emotional pain and stress of transformation from commonwealth to technology, social disarticulation and changes in lifestyles that obviously undermines existing social structure and linkages of alienated population in relocated sites (Ewah J.O.).

Current institutional efforts to promote conservation and development within protected areas only have incidental rather than structural benefits to enclave and support zone communities. Infrastructural development and employment of management staff are in fact designed to enhance the efficiency of fortress conservation. The development of office and residential accommodation for staff, survey of protected areas, construction of footpaths for rangers, tourist and researchers into the high forest, transit camps and other related conservation equipment only help to enhance fortress conservation rather than development of host communities. Infact, limited rehabilitation of a few existing feeder roads linking host communities to Ikom-Obudu-Ranch Highway, eco-tourism, research, prevention of trespass, and persecution of trespassers in regular courts, have no direct bearing with human capacity building, poverty reduction and improvement in livelihoods of host communities (Chief Osang Aria and Others).

The only Park Management Programme that benefited host communities was counterpart-funding initiated by CRNP/WWF/ODA/EU in 1990. Counterpart funding involved provision of funds and materials by Park Management to assist

in the completion of community sponsored projects.

It also included collaboration with Boki and Obanliku Local Government Councils and Local Pressure Groups BDA: (Buentsebse Development Association), EBU (Eastern Boki Union) and SZDA (Support Zone Development Association) in health care delivery, provision of town halls and educational facilities in primary schools. Between 1990-2000 when the programme was initiated, operated and abandoned, the park/communities constructed and equipped about twenty healthcare centers, thirty markets, ten boreholes and rehabilitated major access roads within host communities. (Chief Phillip Obi and Others).

Community's response to counterpart funding was positive. Most communities initiated development projects, which the park management funded to the extent that the projects are not injurious to park integrity. This participatory approach helped present the park management as community friendly and development oriented notwithstanding the fact that the programme did not address individual lifestyles and livelihoods dependent on agro-forestry orientation. However, this short-lived and eventful programme ended when WWF/ODA/EU who acted as technical partners to CRNP withdrew funding and support staff of Okwangwo Division in 2000.

After the withdrawal, no fresh initiatives or sustained counterpart funding of rural development projects has been earmarked or carried out by the park management. No further employment of empowerment of host communities. No capacity building programmes or rehabilitation and expansion of existing infrastructures. Rather there is a gradual decay of available infrastructures, retrenchment and retirement of indigenous park staff without replacement. The only functional and often replenished departments are the park and tourist guides, used to police the Park and repress perceived trespassers. Impoverished indigenous communities alienated from land and agro-forestry livelihoods have adopted different survival strategies including confrontation and erosion of the rainforest integrity. The challenge of poverty, hunger and disease amongst the alienated represents a serious time bomb the state and conservation stakeholders cannot afford to ignore any longer.

What is to be done

To meet the dual mandate of Conservation With Development, (CWD), the National Assembly should legislate on the consequences of fortress conservation on indigenous populations found within protected areas in Nigeria. The enabling

law (Conservation Development Agency) should target host communities and aim at alleviating the pains of land and resource alienation created by fortress conservation. The beneficiaries should include enclave, support zone and other groups that derive substantial livelihood from protected areas.

Funding expanded mandate is possible through the following areas; state ecological funds, grants from international development partners (NGOs and organizations) and local government councils. Beside state and international funding, income from royalties derived by states in exploitation of agro-forestry products paid to communities can be channeled as counterpart-funding to fast-track rural development within protected areas. Royalties are paid to communities from income generated from lumbering, concessionaries, rents, research and tourism promoted by the state within protected areas, presently, only 15% of generated revenue is paid to landlord communities. Revenues generated from grants, eco-tourism and research within park areas is not shared to host communities. State partnership with landlord communities in the management and sharing of generated revenue will give the communities a deeper sense of ownership and belonging and move protected areas from vital supermarket to insurance policy, through derivation generated from agro-forestry and tourism management. (Peter Mgbang and Others).

Perhaps the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary experience is instructive for stakeholders with agenda on parks and protected areas. The sanctuary was created in 2000 specifically for Cross River Gorilla Conservation. It is managed by Cross River State Forestry Commission with support from the following conservation oriented NGOs: Fauna and flora international (FF) Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Pandrillus. The Cross River State Forestry Commission encouraged active participation of community stakeholders especially Buanchor host community in the management of Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. (John Oates).

Within Afi Mountain Ranges, the Drill Ranch and Canopy Walkway are located within Buanchor Community Forest. The state promoted rural development, conservation, community development and personal income gain through partnership and collaboration with, NGOs, Buanchor community and individuals. In 1990, Pandrillus an NGO committed to conservation of wildlife and its habitate, setup a Drill Ranch within Buanchor high and secondary forest areas covering about 3.2sq miles. In 2000, the State Forestry and Tourism Commissions established the highest and longest canopy walkway in the world within Buanchor forest area to promote nature based eco-tourism, conservation of drills, chimpanzees, gorilla, elephants and other endangered species trapped within Afi

mountain area. This action attracted the attention of NCF and WCS to the area to protect endangered wildlife especially swallows migrations from Europe to Boje granite hills and Mbe Mountain Ranges in Kayang. Within Afi Mountain Area, Buanchor, Olum, Boje, Katabang and Kayang communities depend on agro-forestry activities for livelihood. Non forestry alternative livelihoods and lifestyles constitute only about 5% of the population who are either artisans, teachers, traders or transporters.

To practice conservation with development, the Cross River State Government, Pandrillus and the Buanchor Community agreed to collaborate on rural development and conservation. The state paid compensation in cash to households whose lands are alienated. Pandrillus pays annual royalty in dollars to Buanchor Community. The state also provided electricity, portable water, healthcare center, functional primary and secondary school while Pandrillus, ensures periodic rehabilitation of Buanchor – Katabang – Kayang earth road linking Ikom – Obudu – Ranch Highway. The community provides counterpart funds derived from royalties and community tax to partner with Cross River State Poverty Reduction Agency / World Bank to construct and equip a vocational training center for skills acquisition on non-forestry dependent vocations especially eco-tourism (Chief Peter Odua and Others).

Tourist guards, park rangers, transit camp managers and other support services, are provided mainly by support zone communities who appear increasingly capable of managing the canopy walkway, Drill Ranch, swallow project and protection of the forest from loggers, hunters and trespassers with minimal external or technical assistance. Because of community support and control, hunting is restricted to farmlands. Logging is permitted for construction purposes. Within the last five years, informants are firm that timber dealers have abandoned Afi Mountain Forest Area because of community hostility and collaboration with the state and Pandrillus against them. In Afi Mountain Forest Reserve, the forest is transiting from being a vital and only viable supermarket for host communities to an insurance agency that guarantees the existence of the present and the future. (Chief Peter Odua and Others).

The Indonesian experience like the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, also offers great lessons for the Nigerian State. In 1996, the World Bank designed a project to support the role of local communities in forest conservation. The project aimed at strengthening the integrity of the Indonesian's largest National Park managed by the state and WWF Indonesia. The bank voted 47.3 million dollars to promote conservation and community development. The state provided 10.5 million dollars as counterpath-funds. The state and WWF jointly worked out

a conservation agreement with local communities, establish community base tourism around the Park and trained trekking guides who organize cultural and ecological tours within the area. The Indonesian project, represents a response to redress the lack of consideration for indigenous peoples rights and relevant roles in the management of forest and wildlife resources. (Roger D. Stone and Claudia D' Andrea).

The above response is in harmony with the international labour organization's 1979 convention No. 169 which concerns the indigenous and tribal peoples. The convention recognized and emphasized local rights of ownership and possession over customary lands. Equally influential, on the World Bank approach in Indonesia, is the convention on biodiversity that originated from Rio 1992 Conference on indigenous knowledge for conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity (Betty 's Managers). Equally, relevant to Nigeria is the Kenyan experience. In Kenya, non-governmental organization teamed up with indigenous population to promote alternative life support system between protected mountain areas and adjacent communities. The Kenyan state and conservation agencies, collaborated in monitoring, protecting and researching on conservation including providing alternative livelihoods for indigenous populations in areas such as animal husbandry, bee-keeping, eco-tourism, and self-employment. Other strategies include sustainable practices in agriculture and establishment of agro-allied industries for adjacent communities (Samuel Mwagi). Despite these realizations, moving from recognition and acknowledgment to action especially in sub-Saharan Africa, remains a challenge.

Conclusion

From the above examination of Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in Nigeria, the World Bank Project in Indonesia and the Kenya experience, it is clear that conservation represents a relocation of resources and the restructuring of social institutions in ways that could strengthen the Park and remove any significant threat to conservation. Conservation is not simply about protection. It is about reallocation of resources and the restructuring of social institutions. The state and the conservationist must realize that the forest and its game cannot be saved by excluding indigenous population through fortress conservation. The state and the conservationist must work with the people to achieve conservative goals.

Finally, to attain conservation with development in Nigeria, the state should intervene with the establishment of Conservation Development Commission. This will reduce the chances of the alienated destroying the integrity of protected

areas, promote criminality and armed conflict as occasion in Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria. Conflict at the local level, can be resolved by ascertaining the real concerns of local communities and determining what kind of responsibility communities are willing to take on in return for secured rights to land. To achieve this, the Nigerian State should expand its mandate and corporate social responsibility to support zone communities in Nigeria.

Bibliography

- Amos Afolabi, 2008. *Nigeria's Forest Disappearing at rate of 1.36 percent annually*. In Vanguard Newspaper, Volume 24, N 60530 2008, Lagos: Vanguard Media Ltd 2008. p.7.
- Betty J., 1971. *Meggers Amazonia, Man and Culture in a counterfeit paradise*. Chicago: Aldine Atherton Inc.
- Bisong F.O., 1994. *'Boki' Resistance to protected forest Reserves: 1956-1990*. Unpublished B.A. History Project University of Calabar, Calabar.
- Brian Child (ed), 2004. *Park In Transition: Biodiversity, Rural Development and the Bottomline*. London: Earth Scan.
- Cernea M.M. and Soltan K.S. (ed), 2003. *Is Population Resettlement the Solution?* Washington, George Washington, University.
- Chief Osang Aria and others, 2008. *Boki Historical Text V (BHT)*, Butatang Village August 2008.
- Chief Peter Odua and others, 2008. *(BHT) III Buanchor Village August 2008*.
- Decree No. 11 (1985) of Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Decree No. 36 (1991) as amended of Federal Republic of Nigeria. Country Profile on Environment, Nigeria, Lagos CPE Press, 2005.
- Elder O., 2008. *Obi and others BHT IV*, Bukalum Village August 2008.
- Ewah J.O., 2007. *The Socio-Economic Implications of 1996 Resettlement of Enclare and Host Communities in Cross River National Park Okwangwo Division*. In: Journal of Applied Social Sciences, Volume 6 Nos 1 and 2 2007, University of Buea Cameroon.
- Ewah J.O., 2000. *Community Response to Conservation in Cross River National Park in Okwangwo Division 1990-2000* In: Ibom Journal of History and International Studies Volume 11, 2000, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
- File: A/Biodiversity and protected Areas-Nigeria htm Pp1-8, (Google file http://Earthtrends.wri.org/pdf/library/country_profiles/Biocon566.pdf).
- Martinez-Alier J., 2002. *The Environmentalism of the poor: A study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. London: Edward Elgar.

- Mofnews, 2005. *Cross River State Monthly Bulletin* September – October 2005. Calabar: Ministry of Information.
- Oates J., 2005. *Update on Nigeria: Recent works by the wildlife conservation society*. In Gorilla Journal No. 30 June 2005 Pp 1-3 Republic of Nigeria.
- Oban Division, 1989. *Cross River National Park Plan for Developing the Park and its Support Zone*. WWF and ONDRI for Nigeria and Cross River Government.
- Okwangwo Division, 1990. *Cross River National Park Plan for Developing the Park and its Support Zone*, prepared by: WWF/EU/ODA for Nigeria and Cross River Government).
- Poore D. and Sayer J., 1991. *The Management of Tropical Moist Forest Lands: Ecological Guidelines*, IUCN, Switzerland- England.
- Samuel Mwangi, 2006. *Indigenous Knowledge Policy and Institutional Issues for collaboration between Mountain adjacent communities and management Agencies*. In: Kenya Resource Journal for Indigenous Knowledge, Nairobi, Museums of Kenya.
- Stone R.D. and D'Andrea C., 2001. *Tropical Forest and The Human Spirit. Journeys to the Brink of Hope*. London, University of California.
- Uwem E. Ite., 1996. *Community Perceptions of the Cross River National Park*. In: Journal of Environmental Conservation Vol. 4 No. 23 1996, United Kingdom, Lancaster University.
- Uwem E. Ite., 2005. *The Challenges and Imperatives of Conservation with Development in Cross River National Park, Nigeria*. United Kingdom, Lancaster University.