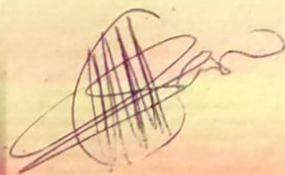


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## ATTITUDINAL CHANGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN SANSANI AND KUBLE COMMUNITIES OF KAINJI LAKE NATIONAL PARK, NIGER STATE NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Rural communities, beside being directly associated with the environment, have a lot to offer in efforts that are geared towards environmental management, which will subsequently improve their livelihood. Therefore, unless they are adequately sensitized and educated on the causes of environmental degradation and how it fuels poverty, they may not be in the position to understand, appreciate and embrace the teaching to practice what is right and avoid what is wrong. The study analyzes the stages of behavioral changes as a result of knowledge acquired on Environmental concern in two communities around Kainji Lake National Park. The methods adopted involve Semi Structured Interview, Questionnaire administration and Focus Group Discussion as well as library research. The finding reveals that communities that get more sensitization are flexible to change their practices toward the environment than those with less. It was clear that such sensitization when essentially undertaken will enhance positive environmentally sustainable practice. However enormous change in behavior will likely be more sustained with motivation from people oriented programs such as micro credit and socio economic support as featured in the response.

**Keywords; Behavioral Change, Environment, Communities, Sensitization.**

### INTRODUCTION

With today's population level, many of our current practices are not sustainable; meaning the consequences of our actions and limitations of resources will make it impossible to conduct business as usual for future generations. The bottom line is that all human inhabitants of the earth require its resources to meet their basic needs of water, food and shelter. And many of us require substantially more to meet our perceived needs of comfort, convenience and transportation. There are consequences to meeting each of these needs that extend beyond resource depletion. Most of what we do and consume requires energy, which we generate by burning fossil fuels. Extracting, processing, transporting and burning fossil fuels produces pollution and negatively impacts natural environments. The state of the world's environment is of growing global concern. Its present deterioration has come about mainly as a result of human activities resulting in colossal economic losses and health implication. The issues become a contemporary one because of the present unprecedented land use mixes that have resulted to unsustainable environment (Olorunfemi et al 2000). Ultimately, human behavior is the root cause of all environmental challenges. Understanding how people think about the environment and the reason why they behave in particular ways vis-à-vis the environment can pinpoint potential solutions to environmental challenges. Knowing why people act the way they do and what can be done to encourage them to adopt more environmentally friendly behavior can make the difference between environmental project that work and those that don't (World bank 2005). Communities, are therefore target of natural resource management since they are directly involved in the exploitation of natural resources and control of specific and significant domains of local knowledge and information on the environment. Many countries therefore have made some considerable efforts through different organization to ensure adequate involvement of communities in environmental management program (Annabel 1994). The tree is an extraordinary plant. It produces leaves, fruits and nuts year after year, season after season. Because of its deep roots, it can do so at time when annual plants are either dead or scarcely germinated. Forest accumulates its productivity in the form of wood that if not harvested one year, is safely preserved for another. Its size above and below the ground allow it to provide shade and to increase soil fertility. Once established, forests do all these with little or no human attention. In the forest, some communities depend for their livelihood on such product but most rural communities throughout the world also depend for many of their needs on the product of the tree and the wildlife. Ignorance being mostly associated with poverty accelerates activities that degrade the environment without the victim knowing its implication on their well being. The goal of

environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, which has the knowledge, skills attitudes, motivation and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solution of current environmental problems and the prevention of new ones.

In an intervention that combined educational information with commitment, Thompson and Stoutmeyer (1991) found that a message focusing on the long-term environmental consequences of water conservation was more effective in decreasing household water consumption than a message that focused solely on the personal economic benefits that could be gained from conservation. Similarly, Staats et al. (2000) found that office workers improved their energy-conserving behaviors (keeping thermostat settings consistent and removing objects from heating grates) immediately after an informational brochure was delivered. According to finding by Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project development plan (LEEMP, 2006). It is estimated that about 70% of the Nigerian population are illiterate but, illiteracy cannot explain the low level of environmental awareness among many highly educated Nigerians. Nigerians, all groups and at all levels needs to be sensitized to environmental issues and problems without which no national strategy for the environment can succeed (Aina and Salau 1992).

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Despite the effort to create awareness on the need to mainstream environment in development efforts, environmental issues still rank low in the concern of many Nigerian communities even in communities around the Kainji Lake National Park (KLNP).

Knowledge and information are key factors in the quest for achieving sustainable environmental management particularly amongst rural populace who might because of ignorance deem it necessary to be part of the drive and hence continue in their activities considered detrimental to the environment and natural resources.

The problem of conservation in Kainji lake national park is the issue of "Illegal" settlement in the park in search of economic livelihood. All the squatters (except less than 1%) are farmers and fishermen. Hunting is covertly practiced (LEEMP, 2006).

However, changing the behavioral orientation of people is a long term process as such developing messages based on audience readiness to change calls for a specific strategy and message emphasis for each type of audience. Message to an uninformed audience will aim to raise awareness of environmental issues and recommend solutions. Message to those who are already aware, concerned, and knowledgeable need to focus on information to help them evaluate the benefits and the cost of the new behavior for people who are already motivated to change behavior, messages need to provide logistic information where to obtain supplies and service, how to use them for those who have tried the new behavior, messages need to provide them encouragement to continue: Guidance to correct use, reassurance on the benefit, and information on how to overcome perceived obstacles (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2005). As people move through these stages of change, their needs for information and skills also change. A gap is created if these stages identified during communication evaluation are not addressed such that behavioral change is encouraged and sustained.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

This study aims at analyzing the stage of behavioral changes as a result of knowledge acquired on Environmental concern in Kuble and Sansani communities of the Borgu sector, around Kainji Lake National Park. While the specific objectives are to:

Determine the level of involvement of community members in environmental activity and how they have been sensitized by different development effort.

Compare the stages of behavioral change in the two communities and identify factors that inhibit environmental awareness.

Proffer sustainable environmental awareness program in the communities.

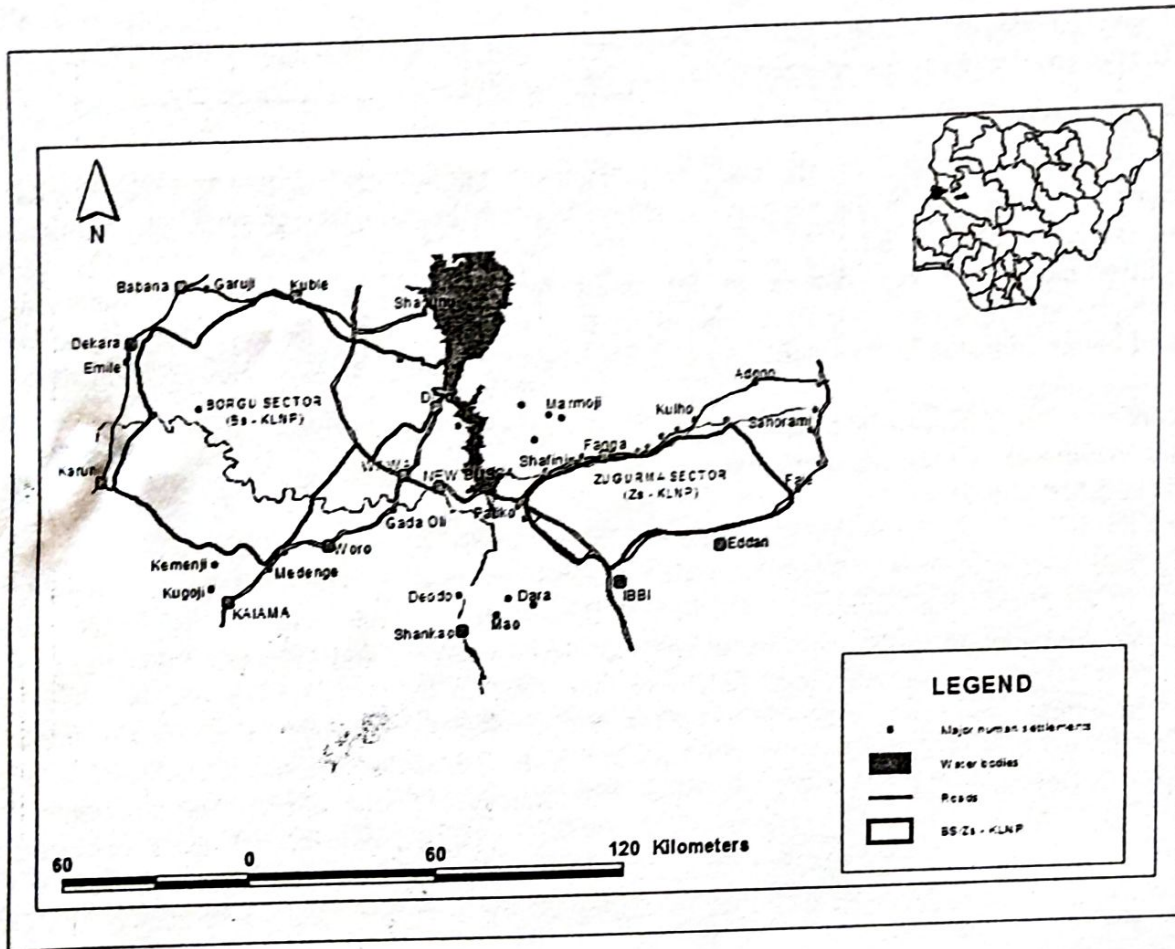
### **THE STUDY AREA**

Kainji Lake National Park, one of the most effectively protected National Park in Nigeria has a total land area of 5,370.82km<sup>2</sup> of which Borgu sector account for 3,970km<sup>2</sup>. The objectives of the reserve are to promote biodiversity conservation for sustainable development, research/ scientific, cultural and historical development of the people within the support zone, and the development of ecological tourism as means of recreation. Located in the middle belt of the country, at approximately latitude 9° 40' N to 10° 30' N and longitude 4° 30' E to 5° 50' E.

## Attitudinal Change to the Environment in Sansani and Kuble Communities of Kainji Lake National Park, Niger State Nigeria

Kuble community was said to have relocated to its present location from old Luma in the early 60's. Predominantly muslim (95%) living in a dispersed settlement. Majority of the resident are Borko by tribe, with few Hausa's, Yorubas, Fulani and kambari. There is presence of strong Community Based Organization. Most of the people earn their living by practicing agriculture, cattle rearing and hunting (despite the legislation of anti-poaching). The community lack basic social infrastructure, such as portable water, primary health care, rural road, electricity and market stalls.

Sansani community has a population of between 3,500 consisting of 80% Larum and 20% Hausa, Fulani, Kambari and Ibos. The people depend on crop farming, livestock rearing, hunting and collection of forest product for their livelihood. The residents are mostly polygamist with an average household of eleven (11)



**Figure 1: KLNP Showing its Location in Relation to the Surrounding Villages**

### METHODOLOGY

Two principal data source were used which include existing data from libraries and archives and empirical data gathered from the field which include; Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Semi structured questionnaire and general questionnaire administration. In the focus group discussion relatively, homogeneous number of people about 20 individuals with similar background and experience participated in the FGD. This is imperative as it established their views. Participant were separated in to; youth, females and male adult group while semi structured interview involved major stakeholders such as opinion leaders, women head of user group's e.t.c. A general questionnaire was administered to 30 respondents in each locality, respondents were systematically sampled.

The data generated in the study were subjected to statistical analysis to determine and assess level of behavioral change with regard to the environment in the two communities (i.e Kuble and Sansani). The approach followed in this study and the nature of the problem have determined to a large extent, the level of statistical analysis pursued. The level has been limited to tabulation Percentage, chart presentation of the result for easy comparison.

### PRESENTATION OF RESULT

Analyses revealed that residents of Sansani are more aware of environmental degradation than those at Kuble from the FGD carried out. This could simply be attributed to the presence of non-governmental organization in the former as shown in table 1. The NGO carried out more sensitization than government and other agencies in both communities. This corroborates with myriad of base line survey of most rural communities that these NGO's are more active and render service to the communities.

Sensitization according to the communities' response is at planning stage at Kuble community while many environmental related project sensitizations have reached advanced stage at Sansani. This is believed to be one of the reasons that created a flexible scenario in the latter even in the course of data generation, as well as making them susceptible to change of behavioral with regard to the environment.

**Table 1. Environmental sensitization campaigns carried out in the community.**

AGENCY RESPONSIBLE	KUBLE	SANSANI	PERCENTAGE %
State Government	02	12	14
L.G.A	01	04	5
National Park Service	07	03	10
NGO/Donors	19	33	52
Others	07	12	19
Total	50	50	100%

Source (field work 2009)

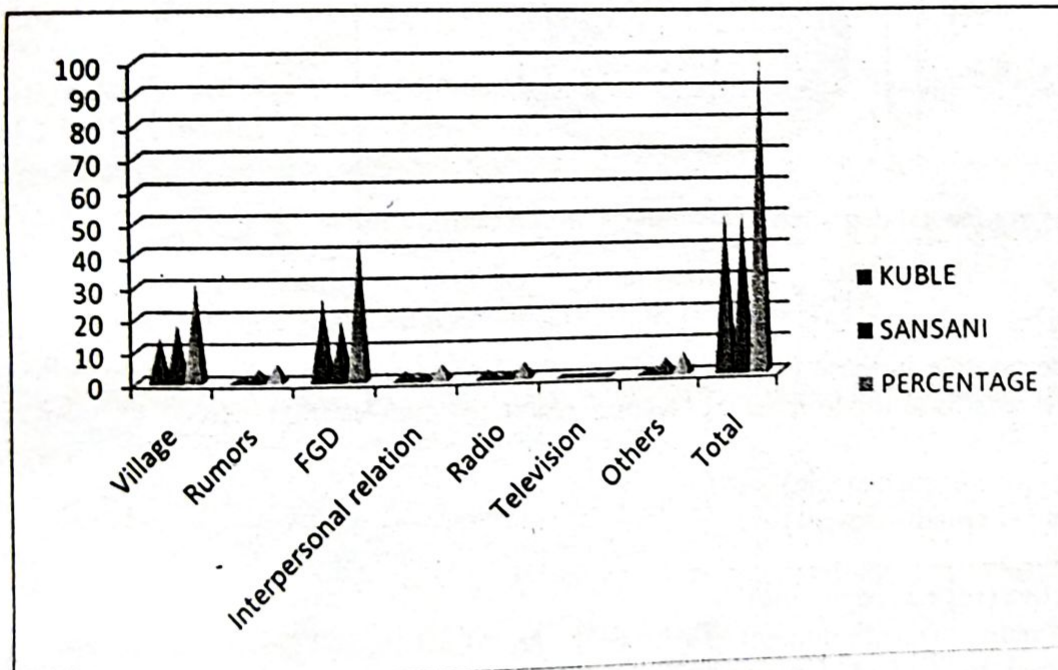


Fig. 1. Channels of sensitization in the communities

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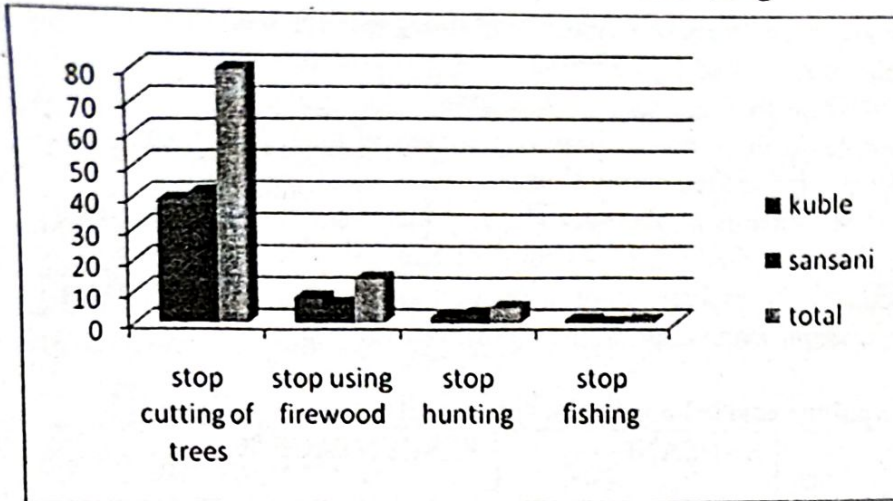


Fig 2. Perception of change in the two communities.

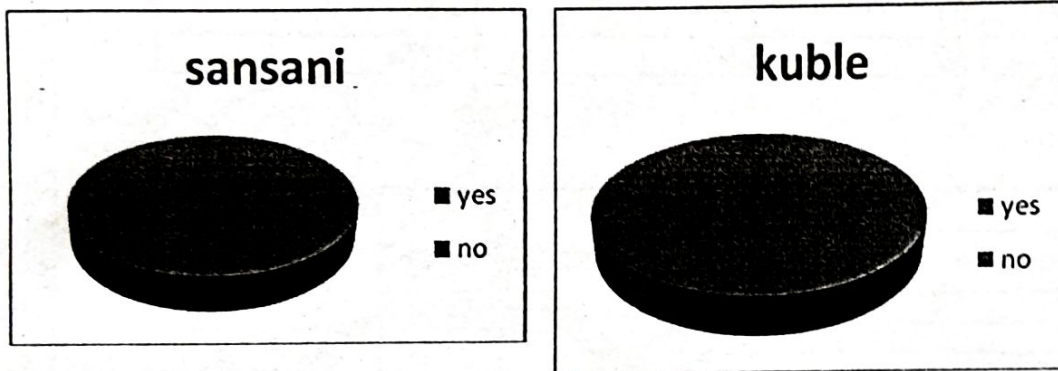


Fig 3a and 3b percentage of environmental degradation awareness in the communities

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Due to differential level of sensitization in these two communities, level of lessons gained differs as well. Some of the lessons gained with regards to Environmental / Natural resources conservation include:

- Desist from cutting of tree
- Change farming practice (from crude to sustainable).
- Reduced using firewood (finding alternative source)
- Reduced hunting
- Reduction in crude fishing practice (such as poisoning).

The result revealed that level of individual commitment to achieve the above mentioned practice has reached "a result yielding stage" at Sansani, unlike Kuble, mainly due to the level of sensitization in the community. As a result of this, the people at Sansani bothered to ask more question during the focus group discussion (FGD) as an indicator of improved awareness.

In both communities however, some factors were responsible for the new change in behavior toward the environment. About 68% of Sansani resident agreed to the change in former practice while only 56% agreed to any change in practice. Some of the factors that influence individual changes in behavior according to the findings are self conviction, benefit to be derived, serious environmental problem, better future prospects and fear of penalty.

Resident of Sansani resort to change simply as a result of self conviction – a clear impact of the sensitization campaign carried out in the community. However, both communities express their needs to sustain the new behavior with more emphasis on the following:  
Financial support, technical support, interactive livelihood, and more sensitization

### CONCLUSION

Given that environmental degradation threatens the well-being of all inhabitants of our planet, environmental preservation may be one of the most important social issues of our time thus, study has revealed behavioral interventions that attempted to increase pro-environment behaviors and decrease environment-destructive

and/or wasteful behavior. Behavioral technology can help significantly to protect our environment for future generations.

The study has demonstrated how Community can change to new behavior with continued sensitization activities and interaction at community level. It is clear that such activities when essentially undertaken will enhance positive environmentally sustainable practices. In Sansani, where fear of penalty was a major reason to stop park encroachment, this reveals lack of appropriate approach and messages for communities.

When put on the balance, therefore, the presence of sensitization exercises in the communities has generated desirable output in changing the people's perception on the environment.

The following recommendation are appropriate;

The established low sustained behavior could be as a result of inconsistent sensitization containing wrong approaches which should be addressed by regular and appropriate sensitization campaign.

However, enormous change in behavior will more likely be sustained with motivation from people orientation programs such as Micro credits and Socio economic support as featured in the responses.

This study has confirmed that, when a communicator send a message, the audience first think of what the message has for him and how it will benefit him or her.

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