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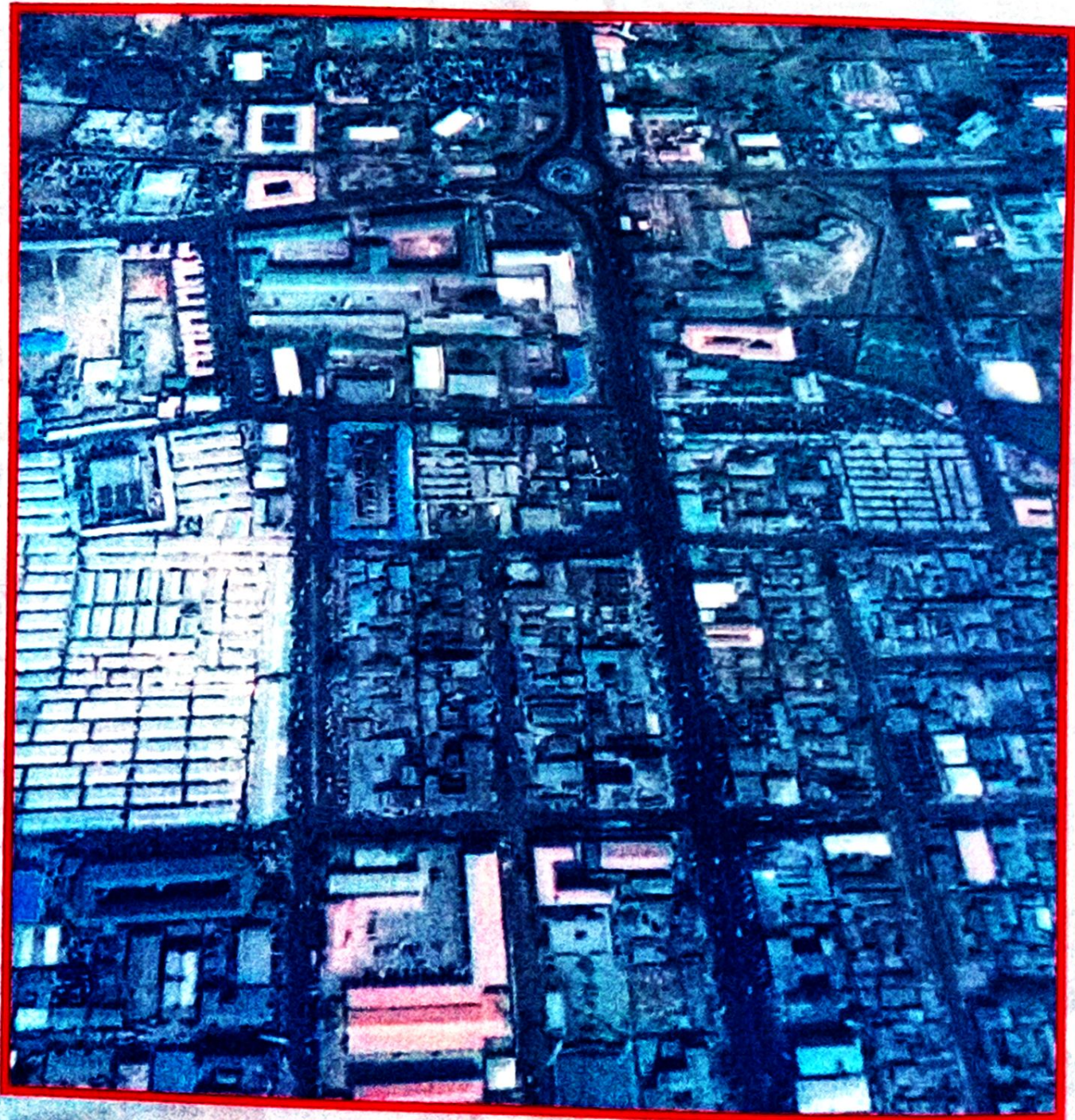


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## ASSESSMENT OF THE RESETTLEMENT PROBLEMS OF COMMUNITIES IN GBAJIBO/MUWO WARD IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Resettlement schemes are not new or recent phenomena in Nigeria. The New Bussa (Niger State) Yelwa Yauri (Kebbi State) and Kubwa (FCT, Abuja) are some of the major resettlement schemes carried out in the late 1960s and 1980s in Nigeria. This paper investigate the problems encountered by Communities in Gbajibo/Muwo Ward, Mokwa Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria in their resettlement areas following the construction of the Jebba dam in 1984. Interview and observation methods were used to collect data. A total of One Hundred and Twenty people were interviewed; making it ten per settlement and observation of physical infrastructure and the buildings was carried out throughout the twelve settlements. Statistical analysis was carried out to generate the mean and percentages. The study findings show that the communities were resettled in sub-standard and inadequate housing structures without dependable source of portable water, electricity, health facilities and other basic infrastructure. The end result is that the people are only merely relocated but never resettled. Other findings include collapse of the rural economy and associated environmental problems such as soil erosion and upstream flooding. It is therefore recommended that then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and other Government Authorities responsible for the resettlement meet their obligations and in future, communities to be affected should be involved in all stages of future resettlement schemes.*

**Keywords:** Resettlement, Community, Settlements, Dams, Environment

### Introduction

According to United Nations Organisation (UNO) (1976), human settlement is the description of the totality of the human community whether city, town or village with all the social, material, organisation, spiritual and cultural elements that sustains it. Resettlement according to Wikipedia (2013) is the movement of a large group of people from one region to another, often a form of forced migration imposed by State policy or International authority and most frequently on basis of ethnicity or religion. Often the affected population is transferred by force to a distant region, perhaps not suited to their way of life, causing them substantial harm. Woube (2005) viewed

resettlement as the processes by which individuals or a group of people leave spontaneously or unspontaneously their original settlement sites to resettle in new areas where they can begin new trends of life by adapting themselves to the biophysical, social and administrative systems of the new environment.

Movement of people can either be forced or voluntary. Disasters, such as wars, floods and earthquakes, among others, are some of the reasons that could force Man to move out of an area that he is familiar with, to resettle in an entirely new area. Government acquisition of land for development projects is another cause. All over the world resettlement programmes



abound. Nigeria is no exception to these phenomena. Most programmes involve Government decisions, which leave the affected people with very little room to manoeuvre (Jibril, 1990).

While identifying the causes of resettlement, Edward (1984) opined that one of the inevitable consequences of flooding an area is that those who previously lived there have to be resettled and that in some cases, such resettlements have involved the movement of vast numbers of people. Kassam (1980) stated that Ghana's Volta dam, for example, saw the evacuation of some 78,000 people from over 700 towns and villages. Lake Kainji in Nigeria displaced 42,000, the Aswan High dam 120,000, the Kariba dam 50,000, Turkey's Keban dam 30,000, Thailand's Ubolratana dam 30,000, whilst the Pa mong project in Vietnam uprooted 450,000 people.

Edward (1984) stated further that in the past, if anything is to go by, those resettlement schemes will bring nothing but untold human misery and that there is scarcely a scheme in existence which has avoided the twin problems of cultural disruptions and social alienation. In examining the government insensitivity towards the natives to be resettled, Gordon (1978) sighted the plight of the Akawalo Indians of Guayana who were simply summoned and told that their villages would be flooded as part of the Mazarumi Hydroelectric Project and government position was that it was too late for the decision to be reconsidered, let alone reversed and their cooperation is expected in resettling 4000 of them.

The desire of the Federal Government of Nigeria through the then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) to harness the waters downstream of the Kainji dam completed in 1969 on River Niger, and to increase power generation in the Country, led to the building of the Jebba dam in 1978 and was commissioned in 1984 about 70 kilometres downstream. In-between these two major dams are located twelve communities permanently settled for more than 200 years on the bank of the River Niger. The building of the Jebba dam resulted in the creation of expanse of water reservoir behind the dam which was to flood and consumed these communities. A resettlement scheme was therefore planned but not properly delivered. With the increase in the number of reservoir – induced resettlement activities all over the world, Scudder (1982), Oyedipe (1983) and Adegunwa (1986) asserted that the issue has attracted research interest since the past two decades. This work is part of that interest. This paper therefore examines the resettlement problems faced by the communities in the study area 28years after their arrival. The specific objective is to assess the extent of problems encountered and priority needs of the communities after their resettlement.

### **The Study Area**

The communities in Gbajibo/Muwo Ward studied are located between Latitude  $09^{\circ} 30'$  N, Longitude  $4^{\circ} 30'$  E (Pre – dam era). The resettlement sites are also within the same co-ordinates but upland about 3.5 kilometers from the shores of the Jebba reservoir. (See Figures 1 and 2).



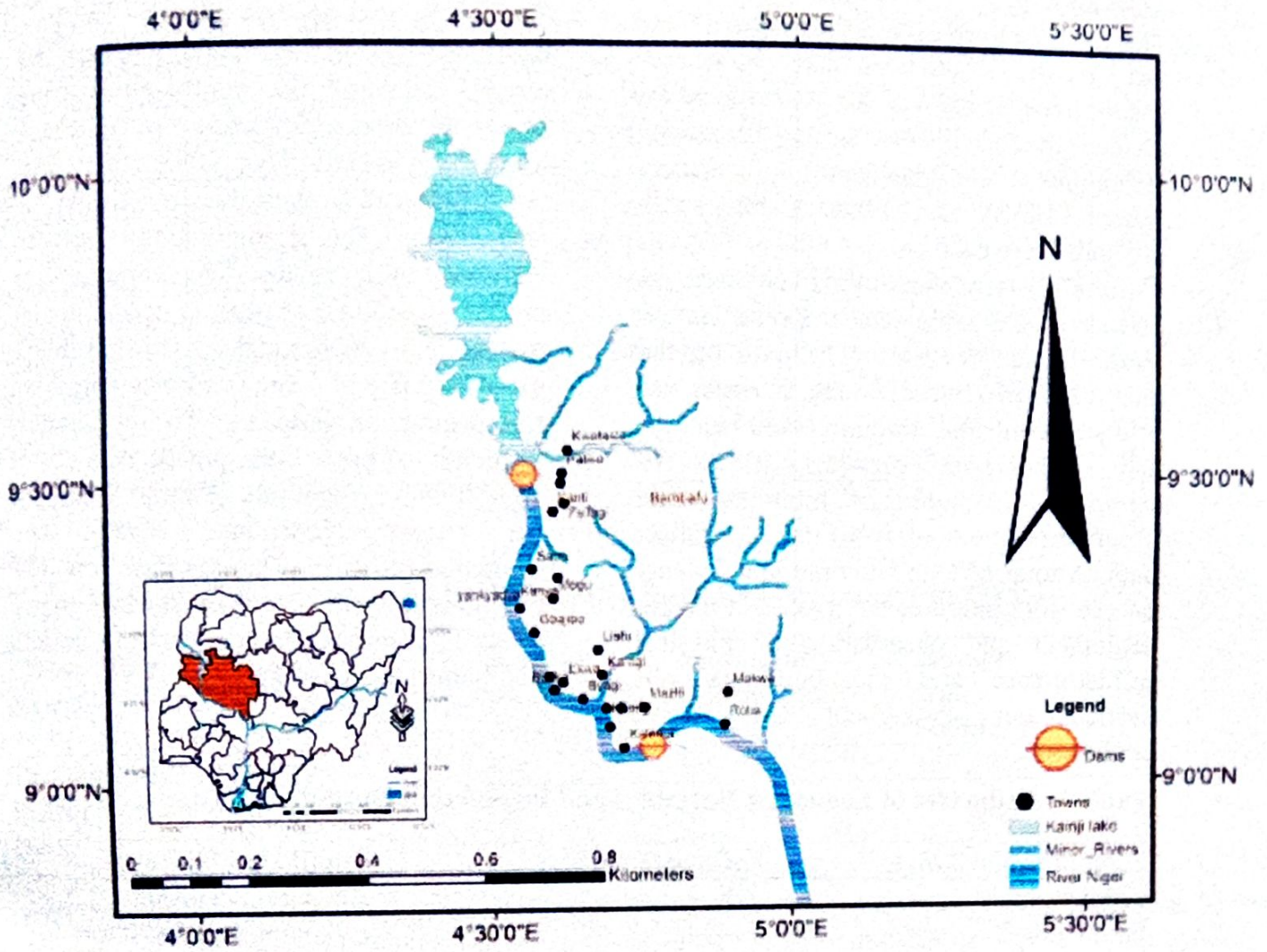


Figure 1: The Pre – dam Location of Resettled Communities

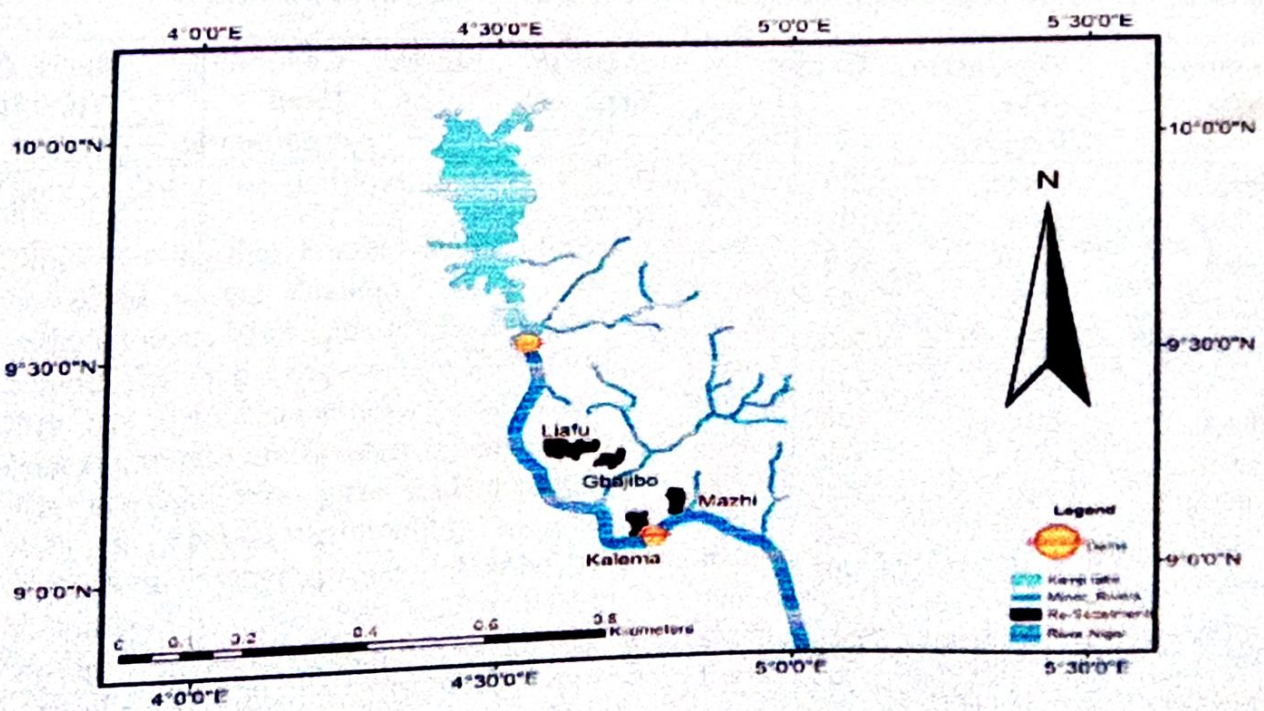


Figure 2: The Post – dam Resettlement Sites



### Methodology

The methodology used is both qualitative and quantitative, that is observation and descriptions of the various phenomena or themes treated in the study. Statistical techniques, Geographical Information System (GIS) and other Cartographic methods were used.

Generally, secondary data is used to discuss global settlement and resettlement patterns and processes. The data on the Gbajibo/Muwo resettlement Schemes are primary collected through field surveys and observations carried out in the resettled communities. Interview and observation methods were used to collect data. A total of One Hundred and Twenty people were interviewed; making it ten per settlement and observation of physical infrastructure and the buildings was carried out throughout the twelve settlements

### Results and Discussions

The results indicate two phases - The Pre-dam and Post-dam eras. The Pre-dam era covers the time the communities were originally established. The second phase covers the period from 1983 when they were relocated to their present site. At the first phase, the communities were in harmony with nature. The communities produced and had enough to consume and to engage in commercial activities. Table 1 gives estimate of some economic variables and production outputs. The population estimates of pre - dam period was about 10,910 with growth rate of about 3 percent per annum (Suleiman, 2001). The estimated number of houses then was 337 compounds, with a compound made up of 10 to 12 rooms excluding kitchens, toilets and bathrooms (See Table 2).

**Table 1: Estimates of Economic Variables and Production Outputs**

Economic Variables	Estimates	Production Outputs
Fishing ponds	328	30 tonnes per week
Farmlands	7444 ha	1,000 tonnes per annum
Economic trees	22,526	Not quantified

Source: Authors Field Work, (2001)

**Table 2: Pre- Dam Population, Housing and Infrastructural Facility Estimates**

Community Name	Population (Tax Payers)	Houses	Primary Schools	Market	Community Head Compound	Places of Worship
Gbajibo	3000	220	2	1	1	
Bukka	1850	198	1	1	1	1
Byagi	1070	150			1	1
Eggangi	720	148			1	
Yankyadya	650	148			1	
Korogi	648	139			1	
Ekwa	603	138			1	
Batagi	601	136			1	
Kumigi	598	120			1	
Mazhi	550	118			1	
Kalema	400	112			1	
Liafu	220	18			1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,910</b>	<b>1645</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

Sources: Author's Field Work (2001)



The Post-dam era began in 1983. Evidently, all the 12 communities were affected and have to be moved and resettled. The promise by the government authorities according to the interview conducted indicates that the communities would be resettled not far away from their ancestral homes and provided with good and modern houses, tarred roads, pipe born water, power supply and service centres like markets, slaughter houses and police stations.

### The Housing Situation

Table 3 depict the extent to which the promises on the resettlement scheme were not met. The total number of houses requested by these communities as at 1978 was about 12,648 units, only 665 units were built providing 1330 rooms and leaving a balance of 11,983 units not constructed. This could have yielded about 23,966 rooms. This indicates that the houses provided were grossly inadequate and made a whole family to occupy a block of building with just three or two rooms. Plate 1 shows the structure of the building in the resettlement area.

**Table 3: Distribution of Houses per Community Built By Government in 1983.**

Community Name	Number Requested	Number Promised by Government	Number of Houses Built	Houses still Habitable
Gbajibo	10,000	900	200	150
Bukka	900	800	150	100
Byagi	1000	100	40	30
Egngangi	100	50	35	30
Yankyadya	90	50	35	30
Karogi	90	40	30	25
Ekwa	80	40	35	25
Batagi	85	35	30	20
Kumigi	70	50	30	20
Mazhi	78	40	30	20
Kalema	65	50	35	12
Liafu	90	40	15	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,648</b>	<b>1205</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>470</b>

Source: Author's Field Work (2001)

Worse, still, the houses, which were conceived to be "modern" were built without toilets, bathrooms and kitchen thus reduced the people to primitive life where they have to defecate in nearby bushes and cook in the open air. Because the houses in their pre-dam sites were undercounted, when it came to building at the resettlement scheme, the Authorities responsible for the resettlement based housing provision on false estimates. Consequently, only married men were considered. They overlooked the fact that as Muslim communities; most men are

polygamous, having more than one wife at a time. Also, the aged and elderly including grown up children who hitherto had their rooms were not provided for in the new allocations.

Inadequacies of the houses notwithstanding, structurally, the buildings were poorly constructed with substandard materials. This has led to blowing up of the roofs of the buildings even by the slightest wind. More than one quarter of the buildings had their roofs removed by wind as at 1984. That is just one year after they were built. Plate 1 exemplified one of



the structures whose roof-tops were blown up by wind. Without roof tops, the rain took on the buildings and reduced them to stumps. (See Plate 2). As a result, about 252 houses were lost as at August 2001. This trend continued. Plate 3 depicts the



Plate 1: Houses Built by Government

present state of the government constructed buildings in the communities. The inhabitants now spend their meagre incomes to build traditional structures which are better and dependable (See Plate 4).



Plate 2: Remnant of a Collapsed Building

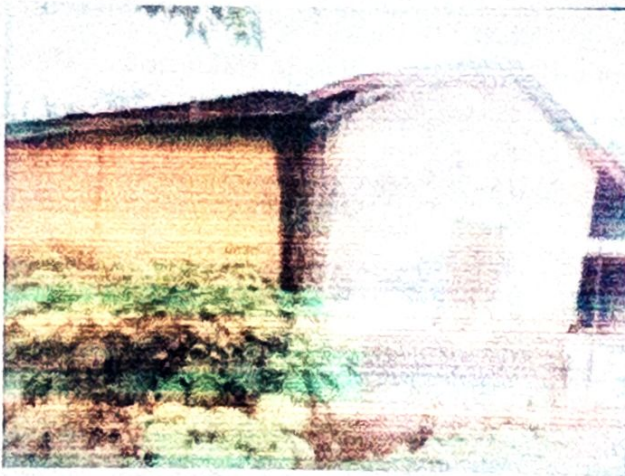


Plate 3: Present State of the Government Buildings



Plate 4: Traditional Building Structures

### Road Networks

If roads in the modern age are expected to be macadamized or laid with asphalt, then these resettled communities have no roads and were not provided with any. What they have on the ground is mere scrapping of surface earth. These are more of feeder pathways with narrow culverts and without side drainage lines to route surface run

offs. Unfortunately for these communities, 'the roads' have been ravaged by erosion with deep gullies and massive sand sediment with portions of it overgrown with grasses. This made transportation extremely difficult. The Kalema, Mazhi, and Liafu communities were not provided with even feeder roads.

The people are not linked with other neighbouring communities because of lack of motorable roads. The communities do take their products on their heads through bush footpaths or along the River Niger by canoe.



### Water Supply

Gbajibo and Bukka communities have one pump house each with overhead storage tank capacity of 10,000 litres. Pipes were also laid underground and three pump stands provided per community. These were to serve other seven communities that were collectively resettled. Plate 5 shows one of the two water towers and pump house beneath it. The pipe borne water has since ceased working. The communities



Plate 5: The Water Tank and Pump House

### Schools and Health Facilities

During the pre - dam era, Gbajibo had two Primary schools, a Secondary school and a Health centre. Bukka also had a Primary school. At their present resettlement sites, comprising seven communities only a Primary School and a cottage hospital which are centrally located to service these communities were built for them. Though these structures are still intact, they lack basic facilities. However, Kalema, Mazhi, Kumigi and Liafu communities separately

depend on only a well for their water supply (See Plates 5 and 6). Kalema, Mazhi, Liafu and Kumigi communities are not fortunate as they were resettled without water supply scheme. These communities rely on shallow wells; ponds and streams for their water supply. These sources are often contaminated. Ironically, facing the expansive Jebba reservoir, these communities have no potable water to drink.



Plate 6: The Only Water Well in the Settlements

resettled have no schools and clinic build for them. This has deepened their level of ignorance, backwardness and underdevelopment.

### Electricity supply

This is the only facility provided in the resettlement towns that is still functional and supplying needed service. Plate 7 shows one of the two giant transformers at Gbajibo and Bukka communities. Kalema, Mazhi and Kumigi are not connected to electricity supply.



Plate 7: One of the Giant Transformers in the Resettlement Areas



### Upstream Flooding

The resettled communities still lies between the two major hydropower dams - downstream of Kainji dam to the South and upstream of Jebba dam to the North (See Figure 1). With respect to upstream flooding, two of the resettled communities, Kalema and Mazhi suffered more as they are periodically flooded anytime there is excess release of water from Kainji dam or and increase in storage of water at Jebba dam. The two communities are not more than half kilometre from the Jebba reservoir.

### The Collapse of Rural Economy

The building of Jebba dam and the subsequent resettlement of the affected communities resulted in the collapse of the rural economy. They lost their farmlands, fishing ponds, economic trees to the dam reservoir (See Table 1). Not having sufficient land for farming, no fishing ponds and with few dozens of economic trees which were recently planted, the communities' able bodied men and women migrated to neighbouring communities as tenants in search of farmlands. The fishermen without water to make catches now swing between farming and other occupations like trading and carpentry.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Providence, it is said ordained all Governments to serve the changing needs of mankind at various moments in history. The inhabitants of Gbajibo/ Muwo Ward are not only the communities resettled by the government of Nigeria or its agencies. However, the quality and quantity of work that was provided are all eyesores when compared to similar resettlement schemes at New Bussa, Yelwa Yauri and Kubwa all in Nigeria. The outcome is that the people were only relocated but not resettled.

It is therefore recommended that the government authorities concerned should redeem their obligations to these communities. It is not late. Also, future resettlement schemes should incorporate communities affected in all stages of planning and execution.

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