

ROLE OF LOCAL CONTRACTORS IN FOREST RESOURCES DEPLETION AROUND BIDA IN NIGER STATE

By

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Abstract

This paper verifies the imperative depletion of nature resources, and possible solution to future occurrence. From this paper, it is known that much of the forest resource depletion in the study area is more of mans interference rather than natural. This is more so especially by local timber contractors around Bida. The ratio of forest lost is higher than replacement. The writer suggests ways to improve or remedy the situation to stem further occurrence particularly in the study areas and in Nigeria at large.

1.0 Introduction

The highest loss of Land resources is from forest through human exploitation of the natural green cover, where selective tree cutting has been practiced, valuable palm tree are left scattered form. Many palm of the tropical virgin rainforest have been cleared for either lumbering fuel wood or shifting cultivation. This activity of man exposes the soil to erosion desertification e.t.c. When used as fuels, gases and particulates which are hazardous to human health and environment, usually Co and Co₂ and aerosols are released in to the atmosphere.

As a result the forests become derived Savanna; especially on the northern fringes of the high forest belt in Niger State. Thus, the forest becomes thinner and more deciduous in character usually associates with low humidity and precipitations. Indeed, it changes to a type of park Land which represents an encroachment of the Savanna in to the forest Zone, characterized by grasses and smaller trees which are diminutive survivals of original plants species. It is believes that some factors are responsible for one of these is poverty among some rural communities and the rising afluence among others. Other factors are the type of Land tenure and uncontrolled commercialization of natural resources.

In addition, in adequate control of population through indiscriminate burning is a great agent for destructing farming techniques. Poverty is clearly a major factor, because more than 70% of the populations of Niger State live in rural live in rural areas without accepts to Kerozine and gas.

In the same communities in Niger State, more than 68% of the cattle feed is derived from grasses and bushes growing in native range Lands. The over concentration of livestock in some particular areas of the range Lands has also led to over grazing of the pasture in those areas. In reality, people's effort to escape from poverty also damages the forest resources. For example, Timber and cash crops are then exploited

beyond sustainable levels. Also modern farming techniques replaces traditional Land conservation techniques.

In Niger State, the south Western part in particular, a major new source of population is the rapid population growth and rising in come, with an estimate of population of 3.9 million 2006, according to the census figure announced by Federal Government of Nigeria, yet nine out of Ten of these inhabitants use fuel wood as the house hold energy. As population grows, Searching for wood means walking further and further in to the forest thereby worsening the situation while the attempts to grow more food damage the Land.

2.0 Statement of Research Problem

Besides fuel wood extraction and clearing for cultivation that degrades and depletion the forest resources, Local Timber constructions are major degrading operators. The situation in the developing state like Niger State in Nigeria indicates that forest are cleared either for commercial farming, in Niger State, the adverse effects of deforestation is already measurable in form of increasing intensity, decrease in soil and air temperature, decrease in soil moisture and decrease atmospheric relative humidity Ujah (1982) The destruction of the habitants of many animals and plants has become wide spread through that activities there by endangering the existence of such species.

3.0 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to broaden the minds of readers that natural vegetation depletion is not so much natural. The objective is to identify the sources or causes of such depletion, and suggest permanent solution for future occurrence

4.0 The Study Area

The areas of study lies between lies lat 8° 30' 9" 28 and long 4° 40' and 6° 25' East lying about 140 to 150 metres above sea level. The annual rainfall is about 1000-mm 1250 mm, the relative humidity of 33-83%. The soil develops on sediments and sandstone rocks . The communities are farming communities with very many commercial trees scattered all over the area.

5.0 Methodology

The study made use of data from library as secondary, other studies notes, field administration of questionnaires and statistical analysis Data on rain fall of 1995-2001 was obtained from Air port Bida and ADP (Minna and Bida). Simple means descriptive statistics such as percentages were used. The results are presented in Tables Data from the area involved simple random. Sampling techniques to pick the respondents. Copies of the research questionnaires were distributed to local farmers and saw mill centers to generate required information.

The researcher also under-took some informal interview with some people such as the local Timber contractors and forest officers, to determine ten years damages to forest species and other silent resources Interviews were also held with few traditional landowner, of the area. The data collection was limited to forest resources as the topic is forest resources depletion, role of timber contractors.

Presentation and discussion of results farmers and the local Timber contractor, was transformed in to tables. The information includes, the number of saw mills, available, number of trees permitted to cut per year and the number of species damaged per year. Other issues investigated are methods of reforestation, other ways of damaging the forest land, government effort and public opinion.

TABLE I A FORMATION OF THE EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES AROUND NH Bida (1995-2004)
TABLE 1: FACTORS FOR FOREST DESTRUCTION

S/N	YEARS	N.T.C.	NO.S.M
1	1995	12	24
2	1996	20	30
3	1997	25	35
4	1998	30	40
5	1999	40	45
6	2000	45	50
7	2001	60	60
8	2002	70	70
9	2003	100	100
10	2004	120	150

Source: Authors field work (2007)

N.T.C. = Number of timber contractor

N.O.S.M. = Number of Timber saw mill

TABLE 2: PERMITTED AND UNPERMITTED OF TREES DAMAGE.

S/NO	YEARS	N.O.T.P	N.O.T.D	TOTAL	% 100
1	1995	2000	1000	3000	50
2	1996	250	1000	3500	29.7
3	1997	3000	1500	4500	33.3
4	1998	3500	2000	5500	77.1
5	1999	4500	1000	5500	19.0
6	2000	5000	2000	7000	4.0
7	2001	5500	500	6000	9.0
8	2002	6000	3000	9000	5.0
9	2003	7500	3500	11000	46.6
10	2004	10000	4000	14000	40.0

Source: Authors field work (2007)

- Therefore: (1) N.O.T.P. = Number of trees permitted to be cut.
 (2) N.O.T.D = Number of trees damaged
 (3) Total = Total number of trees damaged
 (4) % IN = Percentage increased from permission

This table II reveals that in 1995, about 2000 timber trees were allowed to be cut, by local Timber contractors, while they damaged additional 1000 trees making a total of 3000 trees. This gave increased of 50% over the permit. This in turn proved that forest resources decreased in this area in 1995 by 300 trees unespecially. In 1996, number of trees permitted to be cut local Timber contractors was 250 while additional 1000 trees were damaged bringing the total to 3500 and an increase of 29.07% over the permit. no replacement was made by local Timber contractors.

Similarly in 1997-300 trees were allowed to be cut, while additional 1500 was added by the contractors leading to 33.5% increase the permit, in 1998 3500 trees were permitted and an additional were felled meaning an increase 2000 were felled meaning an increase of 77.1% one the permit and a 4500 tree cut in one year without any replacement. In 1999 in the area in Niger State about 4500 trees were allowed to be cut, while an addition 1500 been trees were cut bringing the total to 5500, with an increase of 19.01 over the permit.

In year 2000, forest officers permitted local Timber contractors to cut 5000 trees and they succeeded in cutting 2000 additional trees bring the total to 7000 species. This accounted for 77.1.% increase over the number permitted. By year 2001, forest officers permitted contractors to cut 5500 and they included 500 more bring the total to 6000 trees in the year, recording incensement of 9% one the permit. By the year 2002 about 6000 trees were permitted to be cut and additional 3000 trees were added by the contractors bringing the total to 9000 with an increment of 5% over permit in 2003 the permission ticket increased to 75000 but still the local Timber contractor added 3500 resulting in a total of 11000 trees leading to an increase of 45.6% over the permit. As at 2004 about 1000 species were allowed to be cut and another 4000 trees were illegal added to it.

This allowed the total of 14000 species per that year. And gave an incensement of 40% over the permit from these result an in relation to forest resource depletion one will argue that the local Timber contractors are the prime factor of forest depletion in the south west of Niger State, perticulaly in Mokwas, Edati, Kutigi and Lemu, All around Bida Zone of Niger State. This is because no official or local participation replaced any of these trees cuts during the period.

TABLE 3: VARIATION IN RAINFALL FOR TEN YEARS AROUND BIDA IN SOUTH WEST OF NIGER STATE.

Years	Rainfall
1996	1236.7
1997	1189.2
1998	14454.5
1999	1102.6
2000	1161.8
2001	1236.5
2002	784.5
2003	1206.6
2004	1195.8

Source: field work (2007).

Conclusion

The rainfall on the study area indicates that there is enough water for plant survival consequently it is argued that man's interference with natural forest created forest resources depletion observed during the study period. If this felling is not checked, it will lead to total depletion of forest in Niger State, more special in the south western

Recommendation

There is a need for sustainable felling of trees through the planting of new ones to replace what is cut within the same duration of the same or different species. Forest managers should ensure that Local Timber contractors operate within the limits of the permits regardless of revenue generated through permission license.

It is observed that within the ten year period the number of saw mills increased from 24 to 150. Too many saw mills should be avoided to stop the competition for raw materials, which means felling more trees. There measure are necessary a next the total depletion of forests and other nature resources and checked soil erosion and there by enhance clean and acceptable environment for man and animals survival.

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