

# Perception towards Forest Resources Utilization among Enclaves in Onigambari Forest Reserve, Oyo State

Haastrup N.O, Ayodele A.A, Fadoyin, A.S, Sangotoyinbo, O.A, Olatunji, O.A and Agboje, I  
*Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, P.M.B 5054, Jericho, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria*

**Abstract:** The study investigated Perception toward Forest Resources Utilization among Enclaves in Onigambari Forest Reserve, Oyo State. Purposive sampling was used to select six villages around the reserve, representing 10% sampling intensity in the study area. A total of 356 questionnaires were administered. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the benefits of the forest to the community, 53%, 51%, 54% and 39% of Onigambari communities visited agreed to the fact that trees and other things from the forest are useful to human. A good number of interviewed people agreed that logging should be done twice a year. They believed that in doing this there will be sustainability of forest trees and balance in the logging process so as to allow for conservation (52%). 60% of the people quite agreed to the fact that conservation is needed for sustainability of the forest produce. 47% agreed that conserving the forest makes available lots of things needed for medicinal purpose; also 55% agreed that there is need for sensitization on the need for conserving the forest; 57% of the people that were administered the questionnaire do believe that the actions or inactions towards the forest can affect the forest negatively or positively, therefore, the need to do right by the forest is very crucial and important

**Keywords:** perception, enclaves, forest reserve.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tropical forests are one of the most species diverse terrestrial ecosystems, and generate a variety of natural resources to help sustain the livelihood of local communities (Nirmal *et al.*, 2011). One of the well-known characteristics of tropical rainforests is the large number of species that inhabit them.

A considerable part of Nigerian forest is also being destroyed through indiscriminate and reckless logging of timber extraction of non-timber, forest products and log transportation. Forests are disappearing at alarming rates owing to deforestation for extraction of timber and other forest produce (Murphy and Lugo, 1986; Raghubanshi and Tripathi, 2009) or total conversion to other uses.

Nations have come to realize that forests offer much more than just timber. Forests provide recreational opportunities and contribute to our health and wellbeing. Not only do they regulate local temperatures and protect drinking water supplies, they also act as carbon sinks and mitigate climate change. Forests also play important economic, social, and cultural roles in the lives of people, especially those of

indigenous communities. There is therefore the desire globally to conserve the forest by adopting global best practices in managing forest resources.

Biodiversity loss in tropical forests has led to the creation of protected areas in many developing countries (Masoze and Alavalapata, 2006). Protected areas (PAs) are cornerstones for biodiversity conservation (Allendorf, 2007; Walpole and Goodwin, 2001) and are a major means of reducing deforestation (Andam *et al.*, 2008). Protected areas management often includes strict regulations that exclude local people from areas where they may have previously used to gather resources such as fuel wood, materials for shelter, farming, fodder and non-timber forest products (Alkan, *et al.*, 2009; Shrestha and Alavalapati, 2006).

Management of protected areas may conflict with the economic interest of local people (Khan and Bhagwat, 2010; Shrestha and Alavalapati 2006) and without local support, the long term existence of protected areas will not be assured (Wells and McShane, 2004). Local people are unlikely to support protected areas if they have negative perceptions and attitudes toward them (Alkan *et al.*, 2009).

Forest resources conservation involves the management of resources that are found in the forest in such a way that they yield the highest sustainable benefit for the present human generation while still maintaining their potentials to meet the need of future generations. Forest resources that are managed are the tangible and the intangible resources while the tangible ones are the timber and non-timber physical components of the forest, the intangible are the maintenance of the ecosystem productivity and benefits emanating from services relating to amelioration and beautification of the environment. Conservation is thus emphasized for the protection of the ecosystem with judicious utilization of the resources.

The prevailing status of Nigeria's forest reserves demands serious consideration. This is because the forest reserves are under the siege of deforestation by the activities of both the government and people who have depended on the forest for revenue generation. These activities which include mainly timber exploitation are carried out without reference to the wishes of the generality of the local people for whom, the reserves were supposed to be held in trust. Also, Government action and that of the illegal local exploiters in breaching the

integrity of the local people has led to the encroachment by the people living around the reserves.

In developing countries like Nigeria, and most West African countries, tropical forest resources are integral component of the livelihood of the majority of the rural households and a lower proportion of urban households (Inoni, 2009). Despite being integral component of the livelihood of the households, in many rural households, the use of forest resources is not a primary source (Sunderlin *et al.*, 2005). Inoni (2009) noted that apart from meeting the socio-economic needs of the rural households for food and shelter, tropical forests are also major source of both industrial wood products and fuel wood.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the perception of the local community towards forest resources management in a forest reserve area.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Study area

The study was conducted in Onigambari Forest Reserve, Oyo State, and South Western Nigeria. Onigambari Forest Reserve lies on latitude  $7^{\circ} 8' N$  and  $7^{\circ} 3' N$  longitude  $3^{\circ} 49' E$  and  $3^{\circ} 22' E$ . The plot lies within 17 km South-east of Ibadan on the Idi-Ayunre-Ijebu-Ode road, Oyo State. It was laid about 2 km away from the nearest road well obscured by some forest fallows in the neighborhood. Some of the forestry practice includes; Planting of trees for both timber and fuel wood production; Collection and sales of non-wood products such as leaves and bark for herbs, rattan (cane), etc. The noticeable surrounding areas are Idi Ayunre, Adebayo, Ibusogboro and Mamu. These areas are along the same equatorial belt with the study area. Onigambari area was bounded up with the following villages; Aba-Igbagbo, Gbale-asun, Ajibodu, Lagunju, Akintola, Okeseyi, Akinogbun, Amosun, Olondeige, Olaya, Onipede.

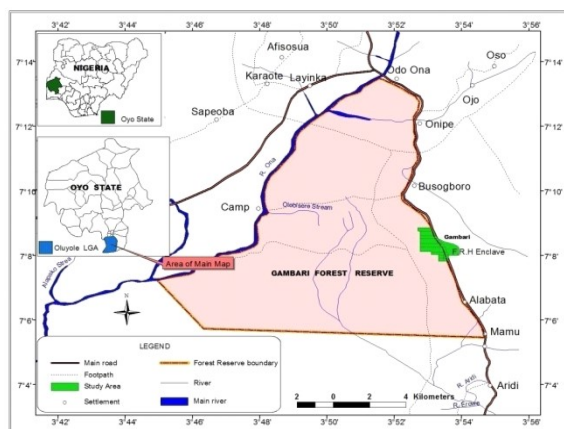


Fig.1

### Sampling Technique

About sixty percent of communities surrounding Ongambari (6 communities) were purposively selected based on their closeness to the reserve area. A total of 356 respondents were

selected. Systematic sampling of household heads was adopted due to the linear settlement fashion of households in the communities. The village heads of each community visited was the first point of call before visiting households in the community until the total number of respondents per community was exhausted. The questionnaires were used to understand the perception of community members on their perception of forest resources of Onigambari Forest Reserve. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community perceptions on benefits of the forest resources to the community among enclaves in Onigambari Forest Reserve, Oyo were presented in Table 1. Due to their better perception of forest management, as they considered the forest as theirs and were willing to take charge in the conservative effort of preserving it, 61% of the communities visited strongly agreed that forest is a natural gift to mankind and there is need to take good care of them. This is in agreement with Cote *et al.*, (2003) that recognized forest as rich reservoir of many valuable biological resources, not just timber, signifying that we could derive lots of things from the forest aside the trees which are most dominant. 53%, 51%, 54% and 39% of Onigambari communities visited agreed to the fact that trees and other things from the forest are useful to human, there is need for us to cut down trees so as to build houses and also trees can be cut down in order to construct roads respectively Table 1. Furthermore, the community agreed that the trees found in the forest and the ones planted around the houses can prevent soil erosion (43%) and also serves as wind break (52%). This was confirmed by UM (2012) as it defined windbreaks as plantings of single or multiple rows of trees or shrubs solely for the purpose of mitigating the harsh weather condition in the environment. In recognition of the importance of trees around them, the people of Onigambari disagree with felling of trees all the time without immediate replacement (42%). Considerable part of Nigerian forest is being destroyed through indiscriminate and reckless logging of timber extraction of non-timber forest products. Forests are disappearing at alarming rates owing to deforestation for extraction of timber and other forest produce (Raghubanshi and Tripathi, 2009). Therefore, it has become expedient that we avoid logging activities so as not to lose all that nature has given us. The communities visited in Onigambari agreed that there should be balance in the logging process so as to allow for conservation (52%) Table 2. In total, 26% of the interviewed people perceived that logging should be done twice a year. They believed that in doing this; there will be sustainability of forest trees and balance in the logging process so as to allow for conservation (52%). Onigambari community, do not really have stringent local laws against violators of conservation laws compared to some other communities, but there are informal laws against those that abuse the use of the forest. From the respondent, 48% believed that when government enact laws and there is a corresponding action on those laws against those who violate the laws, the forest and it resources will be well conserved for

future use (Table 2). This might be due to their better perception of forest management, as they considered the forest as theirs and were willing to conserve and manage it. In general, the community interviewed agreed that illegal logging causes deforestation and the surrounding houses can easily be destroyed with constant logging of the trees around them. In conclusion majority of the respondent agreed that there is the need to stop illegal logging and indiscriminate felling of trees (Table 2).

Local Communities depend on forest products for their livelihood and, therefore, have an interest in protecting it, Lotte I. *et al.* (2002). It is true that many people living in tropical forest areas are highly dependent on forest resources. However, in many countries, infrastructure development and access to urban labor markets have made rural people much less dependent on forest products than they were in the past. Local people like the forest and, therefore, want to protect it. In fact, cultural perceptions of the forest vary from group to group and country to country. Indeed, in social groups there often exist different ways of thinking about and acting towards forests, which to outside observers might seem unintelligible or paradoxical. For example, while people may 'like' and treasure the forest in the sense that it provides them with fuel wood, food, medicine, and timber, the forest might at the same time be associated with negative meanings. Therefore, for the local people in Onigambari Local Government Area of Oyo State, love to protect and conserve the resources available within. This was demonstrated from the random samples taken from the local people and it is presented in Fig. 2. From the chat below, 60% of the people quite agreed to the fact that conservation is needed for sustainability of the forest produce. 47% agreed that conserving the forest makes available lots of things needed for medicinal purpose; also 55% agreed that there is need for sensitization on the need for conserving the forest; 57% of the people that were administered the questionnaire do believe that the actions or inactions towards the forest can affect the forest negatively or positively, therefore, the need to do right by the forest is very crucial and important. And in order to achieve this there a call for individual commitment in protecting and conserving the forest. From Onigambari respondents, it was discovered that 47% agreed that the conservation process must begin with them as individual before spreading the news around and making sure everybody have that conservation empathy towards the forest. Furthermore, in order to conserve and sustain what is available in the forest, 55% of the people interviewed agreed that there is a need to plant more trees as some are been cut down for the purpose of building, construction and also farming. Replacing the logged trees will allow for sustainability of the species of trees and balance of the forest ecosystem.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that local communities around Onigambari had good perception of the forests which can

facilitate community support to forest management programmers and conservation of forest resources in the area. The greatest challenge to sustainable forest management (SFM) in Nigeria today is the increasing rate of illegal logging, encroachment and poor management of the forest resources. This is more rampant in the tropical rainforest ecosystem of Nigeria because of its richness in desirable tropical hardwood timber species and fertile land. Government policies, institutional support in forest management and enlightenment have not succeeded in curbing these problems. This is a great concern to all stakeholders and researchers in forestry.

Without government support in forms of law enforcement and co-operation between different government agencies such improvements in local forest management are unlikely to be sustained. Therefore, attention must be paid to the crucial role of government action for the outcome of participatory conservation processes.

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Table 1: Benefits of the forest to the community

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly DisAgree	DisAgree	Not sure
The forest is a natural gift	61%	39%	0%	0%	0%
There are lots of benefits we can derive from the forest	53%	44%	0%	3%	0%
Trees and other things from the forest are useful to human	51%	46%	0%	3%	0%
There is need for us to cut down trees so as to build houses	35%	54%	7%	4%	0%
Trees can also be cut down in order to construct roads	30%	39%	8%	20%	3%
In our quest to construct factories, s space is needed in the forest, so, there is need for cutting down trees without replacement	11%	20%	24%	42%	3%
Trees in the forest should always be harvested for fuel wood	21%	48%	12%	19%	0%
Trees in the forest and around us serves as wind break	35%	52%	3%	8%	3%
Trees prevent soil erosion	31%	43%	6%	19%	1%
As different tree species in their big state can be good for furniture making, so there is a need to always fell such trees	10%	55%	8%	26%	1%
There is need for us to plant trees around houses	31%	44%	10%	14%	1%

Table 2: Logging activities in the community

Logging must be allowed at least twice a year	19%	26%	17%	36%	2%
There should be balance in the logging process so as to allow for conservation	33%	52%	8%	6%	2%
Government should enact laws that will protect the forest from human activities like illegal logging	31%	48%	6%	12%	3%
Illegal logging causes deforestation	32%	54%	4%	7%	3%
Excess logging of trees in the forest opens up the surrounding houses to flooding	19%	56%	6%	13%	5%
Excess logging of forest trees exposes the surrounding farm land to erosion	20%	53%	6%	12%	9%
There is need to stop illegal logging at all cost	18%	62%	3%	13%	4%

Figure 2: Conservation effort in the study area

