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Full Length Research Paper

Isolation and community resettlement planning: Loko flood disaster victims scheme example in Song Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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The ultimate gauge of success in community building in resettlement projects is the degree to which planners of the projects have provided for the participation of the resettlers in the decision-making process. The Loko flood disaster victims' scheme which represents a spontaneous model of resettlements scheme involving individual initiative, to a large extent intensified without any effort being intensified to boost the competence of the victims in this respect. This in part, accounts for the seeming large failure of the scheme as established by this study. The paper examines the processes adopted in the execution of the scheme as well as evaluating the victims' perception of same, 27 years after the implementation of the scheme. A simple random sampling technique was applied to interview 280 household heads in the study area. The data generated were subjected to simple statistical techniques such as the average, percentage, tabulations. The result of the study has revealed that there was no adequate involvement of the evacuees in the planning and implementation of the resettlement scheme as justified by 89.29% of the respondents. This implies that only 10.71% of the respondents were involved in one form of decision making or the other.

Key words: Floods, victims, resettlement, disaster, participation, planning-experience.

INTRODUCTION

Resettlement concerns, worldwide, have given rise to a number of controversies and excuses right from the planning stage to the actual implementation of the affected scheme (Olawepo, 2000).

In Nigeria, resettlement planning is usually from the above for the rural communities with little or no participation of the threatened population. Rather, people are being forced to relocate, following the provision of alternative sites, poorly motivated houses, or none, for the resettlers or payment of cash compensation alone.

One typical example of such schemes is that of the Maroko people who were being forced to relocate from the present Bonny camp area in Victoria Island, Lagos to the demolished Maroko slum by the Lagos state Government in 1990. For 30 years, the people lived in the slum but by Monday, the 16th July of the above year, the 50,000 inhabitants of the Maroko community lost their possessions and traditional homes via demolition exercise as deliberate effort to save them from a flood disaster (Saidu, 2015).

Several factors have been advanced for the failure of reservoir related resettlements in the past to include absence of participation of the affected victims in the planning of the schemes that could eventually affect their lives. It is usually argued that effective emergency planning should be built around people's known behaviours, or re-action patterns before and after resettlement.

A study on rural appraisal approach to resettlement planning in the resettled villages of the Jebba Lake Basin in Nigeria provides an opportunity to examine some of the ideas of involvement of the threatened population in resettlement planning. As in Abdulkadir (2000), resettlement scheme requires active involvement of the beneficiaries in decision making as well as sufficient planning and time based on quality and adequate data

before the scheme. Social scientists such as sociologist, economists, civil engineers, research and training bodies, decision making and policy, or governments, health experts, individuals and groups desiring to participate in community development, thus, have to be involved in the planning and implementation of the resettlement schemes.

The main objective of any development planning is to provide input to the planning and implementation of resettlement scheme. Furthermore, it makes available detailed handling guidelines of resettlement schemes covering maintenance of the resettlements. The object of this study is thus, to examine the process adopted in the implementation of the scheme, as well as appraising the evacuees' perception of the resettlement scheme 27 years after the commencement of the scheme.

The study area

The study area comprises both the inundated area located South-West along the River Loko course at the Yola-Mubi-Dumne Road axis, and the resettlement area to the North-East of the inundated area. It lies between latitudes 9^0 35' and 9^0 46' North of the equator and longitudes 12^0 20' and 13^0 30' East of the Greenwich meridian (See Figure 1). The flooded area is 3 ½ km away from the resettlement site, which lies to the North-East of it (Saidu, 2009). The vegetation, as in Akosum et al. (1999), is the Northern Guinea Savanna type with average yearly rainfall of 909 and 1100 mm with the rainy season lasting for about four (4) to five (5) months. The yearly maximum temperature can be as much as 40°C, particularly, in the month of April, with the minimum temperature as low as 18°C between December and January. The seasonal difference in the relative humidity between the month of January and March, is very low (20 – 30%) with an increase from April to September assume the peak of 80%.

The major occupation of the inhabitants in the area is farming/trading. They engage in vegetable irrigation as well as rain fed farming. The area is inhabited by a mixed ethnic population group of the Hausa settlers, being the major tribe; the Bata, being the indigenous group; the Yungur, the Mboi, and the Fulanis in the minority (Adebayo, 1999).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for this study were obtained from both primary and the secondary sources. The basic data, being essentially quantitative were acquired from field observations, focused group discussions with the victims, the affected community leaders, such as ward heads being the custodians of the people. This was complemented with the administration of a structured questionnaire to 280 randomly, chosen household-heads, drawn from both the disaster and the scheme areas.

Specifically, 2013 household-heads were randomly selected from three (3) wards, out of the six (6) wards of the disaster area; namely, Loko central, Loko yamma, loko arewa, Jauro Umaru, Jauro Hali, and Sarkin Hausawa wards. A household-heads was randomly, chosen from every third house, systematically, and administered a questionnaire beginning, with random sampling in each ward. Sixty seven (67) respondents were as well, randomly, selected for the administration of the questionnaire, each, from the victims in the resettlement area. On the other hand, the secondary data were extracted from published and unpublished documents.

This study was conducted between the months of September and November, 2015, by the researcher who was assisted by seven (7) field assistants, being the indigenes of the study area. Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean, percentage, frequencies, and tabulations were adopted in analysing the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resettlement and development perception

In the course of this study, it was discovered that the resettlers were asked of the initial source of communication, channel on the resettlement exercise. Table 1 shows that insignificant proportion of the respondents had official information by chance through their normal interactions before being aware of the impending development exercise. 7.5% of the respondents got the communication from friends and neighbours, while about 28.93% accessed their information from government representatives as in Table 1. On the other hand, 8.21% of the respondents obtained the information from friends from another village; 32.24% obtained the information from the radio and television, while 13.21% heard the information from their ward-heads, the resettlers were, however, caught unawares and they had no time to prepare their mind concerning the resettlement exercise. This finding tallies with the one of the Tonga (Saidu, 2015), representing a critical constraint to the scheme under study.

Participation of the resettlers in the decision making process

It must be stressed that the resettlement exercise for these threatened population was a forced type of scheme following the inundation of the old site. This probably serves to explain why the planners of the resettlement scheme failed to take into account active participation of

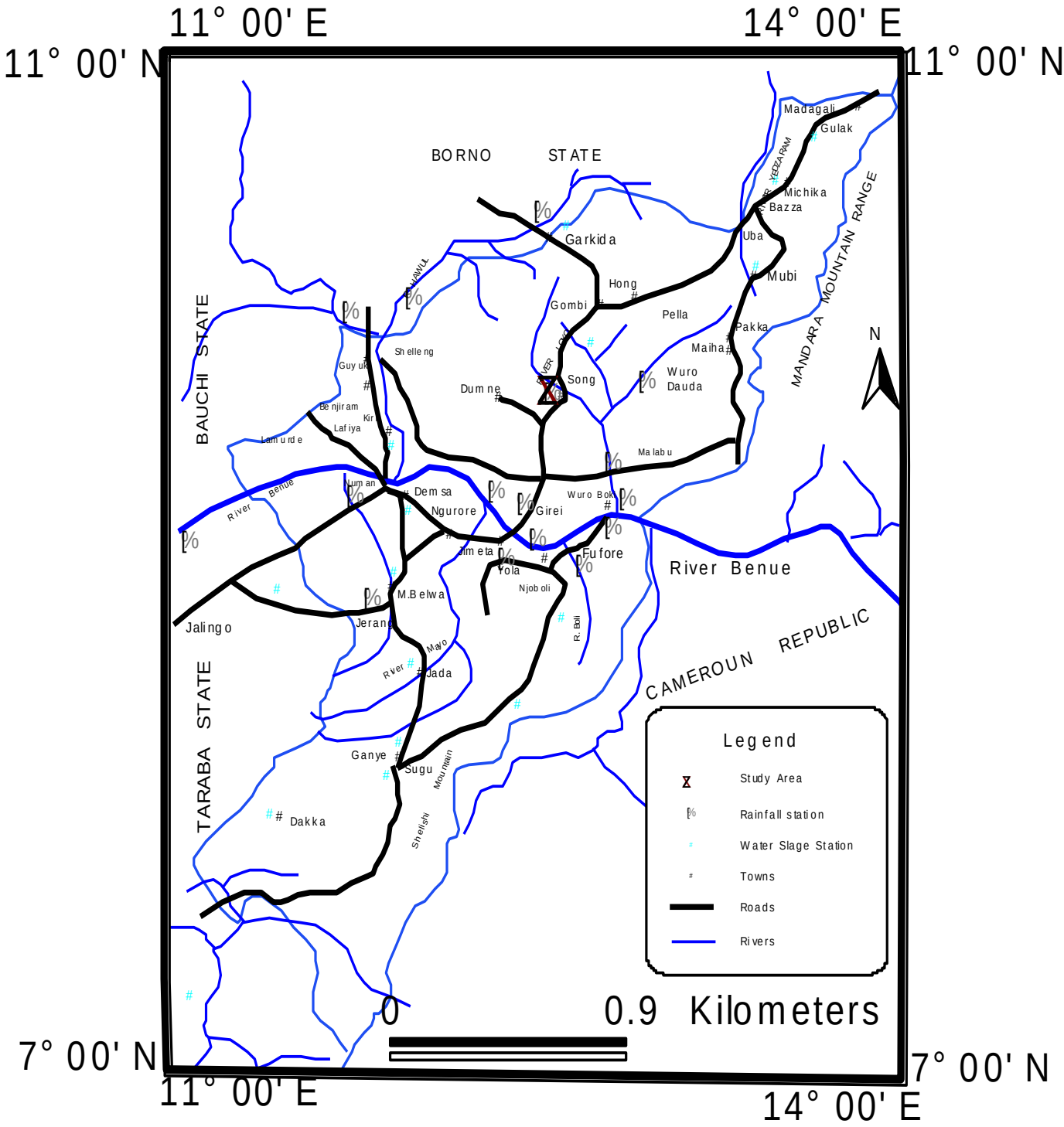

Figure 1. Adamawa state showing the study area.
Source: Adopted from the Records of the UBRBDA, Yola, 2015.

the resettlers in the decision-making process through the village heads and the committees meant to provide the opportunity of the re-settlers to voice their opinions without necessarily influencing decisions. This is accounted for by the insignificant proportion of the 10.72% of both the respondents in the disaster and the scheme areas (Table 2). Consequently, the absence of the resettlers' involvement in the decision making process constituted formidable communication barrier between the resettlers and the scheme administrators.

Table 1. Resettlement information.

Source	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Friends and Neighbours	49	17.5
Government Representatives	81	28.93
Friends from other villages	23	8.21
Radio/Television	90	32.14
Ward-heads	37	13.21
Total	280	100

Source: Field work, 2015.

Table 2. Participation of the resettlers in the decision-making process.

Flood disaster area		Resettlement area		
Response	No	No	Total	Percentage
Yes	18	12	30	10.72
No	195	55	250	89.29
Total	213	67	280	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

Table 3. Pre-resettlement decision – making among the resettlers.

Decision	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Information Dissemination before Resettlement	05	2.92
Land searching	08	4.68
Site location	00	00
Infrastructural Needs	158	88.3
Housing options	00	00
Cash compensations	00	00
TOTAL	171	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

Pre-settlement decision making among the resettlers

Pre-resettlement decision making among the resettlers from the planning stage was also not taken into account by the planners due to inadequate time and knowledge. This is in view of the fact that, only 2.92%, of the respondents participated before pre-resettlement information dissemination, only 4.68% of them were involved in site location selection as well as infrastructural needs.

The planners, however, overlooked the housing options, or cash compensations even for the property lost vital to the resettlers' (Table 3). Impliedly, it is obvious that the actual resettlement planning and implementation were undertaken by the scheme planners themselves.

Before and after-resettlement development

The study reveals that respondents in the scheme area have indicated that, post – resettlement scheme since 1989, has occurred, though not much, covering infrastructure, such as earth roads, better planned village with laid out streets, a primary school for education, boreholes, provision of street electricity, health centres, earth drains, blocks of locked-up shops, freedom from the threat of flooding etc. These facilities were viewed as signs of development on account of the fact that they are considered modernization and as bettering the resettlers standard of living in the resettlement area (Saidu, 2009)

No provision for housing

The resettlement planning did not involve any welfare provisions and, thus, the resettlers (100%) were neglected to the extent of building their own houses, as well as, clearing out part of the land. Essentially, the scheme was found to be of high degree of self – help by the people themselves with limited government assistance and without any considerable economic change. This was the case with the Kainji scheme experience (Oyedipe, 1985).

Lack of compensation payment

The scheme did not take into account any form of compensation for the loss of the evacuees' property to

the flood. This was attested to by all the respondents (100%) in the study area.

Absence of Evaluation Studies

The high failure rate of the resettlement scheme is linked to the dearth of evaluative research for continuing appraisal and evaluation of plans and methods of implementation so as to provide scientific basis for future plans and for improving the original design of the scheme as was the case with planning and management of large scale irrigation scheme in Northern Nigeria (Abdulkadir, 2000). Interactions with the project administrators revealed so.

Administrative inexperience

Administrative inexperience was found to be a technical impediment as it serve to provide no learning from past and other experiences as was the case with some of the Egyptian and from the Ghanaians schemes (Scudder, 1971) to plan more efficiently and to prevent the duplication of mistakes. This revelation came to light following the interview of the researcher with the scheme administrators.

Conclusion

The study has made some efforts to unveil the involvement, or otherwise of the resettlers in the scheme planning, focusing, particularly, on the Loko project. The planning for the scheme was essentially, done in isolation of the beneficiaries, thereby generating a number of difficulties that have bedevilled the required success of the 27 years old scheme.

The critical issue in this regard, is inadequate planning, owing to lack of sufficient and reliable data. Study to generate the necessary data is often a slow process and requires experts as well as tools to undertake it. Contrary to the popular approach, those that take decisions, are basically, politicians who insist that the scheme should be implemented in spite of limited, or lack of data, and analysis, expecting it to perform miraculously adequate, when they have crippled it at the planning stage. The entire scheme as uncovered has been on the basis of trial and error strategy. However, this can be overcome through an ability to benefit from the experience gained with previous schemes, both via exchange of information, and engagement of those with vital experience. The experience must relate to the conduct of rapid ecological and social surveys, the actual resettlement process, and the planning and implementation of the population development following resettlement. Similarly, planning must take into cognisance the views of the people for whom the plans are meant. It also ought to be based on an accurate evaluation of the nature of both the local, natural, and human resources.

Research by relevant bodies such as the Nigerian institute of social, and Economic Research must be supported to make longitudinal studies of the population before, during, and after the resettlement exercise. The studies are bound to yield dividends by upgrading the ability of the planners to maximise the actual opportunities offered by population relocation. The opportunities which till this day, have only been exploited just in part.

Housing and social services provision as well as compensating them for the loss of their property ought to have been integrated into the scheme plan.

The study points to the obvious issue of not involving the beneficiaries in the overall human development in the planning and implementation of the resettlement scheme as a whole, hence, the failure of the project, a product of inadequate time, prior to the commencement of it, as well as insufficient knowledge, and experience of the administrators.

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