

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF NIGER STATE FISHERIES LEGISLATION ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION RESOURCES IN EDOZHIGI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (L.G.A.) OF NIGER STATE.

BY

*GANA, F. S. AND **YARO, I.

**Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Technology and **Fisheries Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna.*

ABSTRACT

A preliminary survey was conducted among the fishermen in five selected villages in Edozhigi L.G.A. of Niger State. One hundred and fifty fishermen were randomly selected and interviewed to find out the impact of Niger State fisheries legislation on fisheries conservation resources in the area. The analysis of data collected using descriptive statistics indicated that undersized mesh of gill nets, beach seines and traps are being used unabated. Also, fenced barriers across the entrance of flood plain ponds and Ex-bow Lakes from the main stream are in the area. The fisheries rules and regulations implementers are rarely seen or not seen at all in the area. The decreasing nature of fish catches was detected. It is observed that government policy on fish conservation is neglected due to inadequate or lack of funding for meaningful extension and implementation of the fisheries rules and regulations.

Key words: *Niger State Fisheries legislation, sustainable fish production.*

INTRODUCTION

Fisheries rules and regulations form an integral instrument of fisheries management for the optimum and sustainable exploitation of the fish resources to improve the well being of the fishermen. Based on this principle, Niger State fisheries rules and regulations was promulgated in 1985 to safeguard the management of its abundant fisheries resources ranging from rivers, streams, floodplains, dams and to reservoirs.

The justification for this study is the fact that the state fisheries legislation is still in force. However, the problem remains that since its inception, evaluation of its impact on the conservation of fisheries resources in Niger State has never been done. In theory, the legislation is in full force, but it however evinced serious defects in implementation, which threatens the sustainability of fisheries conservation for a meaningful sustainable fish production. The objective therefore, is to conduct a preliminary survey in some of the villages covering the Kaduna River floodplains in Edozhigi L.G.A. of Niger State, with the view of evaluating its success or failure and then alert the government of the day on the way forward.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Survey Area

A preliminary survey was conducted among the fishermen in five randomly selected villages of Kaduna River floodplains in Edozhigi L.G.A. of Niger State. The villages were Wuya Suma, Edozhigi, Esan, Gbadafu and Wuya Kanti.

Sampling Technique

Five villages were randomly selected for the field survey. In each village, thirty fishermen were selected totaling one hundred and fifty (150). Each respondent was interviewed independently during a single visit and his responses recorded in the prepared questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

Structured questionnaires scheduled were used to collect information from the respondents. The task was achieved with the assistance of the Village Extension Agents (VEAs) as enumerators. Among the information collected were the bio-data of the respondents, educational qualification, number of children, religious inclination and occupation etc. The presence of Village Extension Agents in the survey area and their services to the villagers were also looked into. Available social facilities in the area were noted.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics involving simple tools such as means, frequency and percentages were employed to compare individuals or group of individuals in the sampling units. The tables produced were interpreted accordingly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational Status of the Respondents

Education is the key to ignorance and the main basic factor for any development be it rural or urban area. Some years back, sending children to schools especially in the rural areas often met with numerous problems like lack of schools in the communities, inability to fund the children school fees and levies, and of the shortage of labour to work on their parents farms etc. However, it was mandatory for the parents to send their children to Quranic schools since majority were Muslims. Probably that is why Quranic education gulped highest percentage of 41.3% of the respondents (Table 1).

Table 1: Educational Status of the Respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	22	14.7
Adult education	29	19.3
Quranic education	62	41.3
Primary education	21	14.0
Secondary education	13	8.7
Others e.g. Tertiary education	3	2.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

It is envisaged that if schools were built in such communities, education make free as earlier planned by the Federal Government of Nigeria, and farming machinery and fishing equipments provided at subsidized rates by the government for the farmers and fishermen, the status of their education would have been much better especially at higher level. An educational status is the literacy level of a person. The result however, showed that the respondents had one form of education or the other in the study area, which was 85.3% put together. Only 14.7% never had any formal education (Table 1). On the whole, those who might readily yield to compliance to fisheries rules and regulations because of their educational backgrounds were about 85.3% of all the respondents. The remaining 14.7% of the respondents might be reluctant to obey the fisheries rules and regulations because they had no formal education. But, this has not been the case for both as would be highlighted below.

Conservation Measures of the Respondents

Some time immemorial, fishermen had their own way of conserving fish through closed season for fishing in certain areas and also had ownership of portion of water etc. However, with the advancement of high technology and development, the existing echo systems are been depleted of fish stock. Now the fishermen whether educated or uneducated are ready to catch whatever comes their way. Government now had to step in order to help conserve the fish stock at a sustainable yield. The result in Table 2 shows that 78% and 22% of the respondents adopted closed season and ownership of portion of water respectively in the study area.

Table 2: Conservation Measures Known to the Respondents

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Closed season	117	78
Ownership of portion of water	33	22
Permission to fish from head of fishermen.		
Equipment control	0	0
Government control	0	0
	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2004

Both permission to fish from head of fishermen, equipment control and government control each had 0%, which means government control which had since been in place had not been effective. Niger State fisheries edict was promulgated in 1985.

Awareness of Fisheries Edict

The question is, are the people (fishermen) fully aware of this edict? Table 3 shows the extent of awareness of the existence of fisheries rules and regulations by the respondents.

Table 3: Awareness of the Existence of Fisheries Edict by the Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	12.6
No	127	84.7
Undecided	4	2.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

Majority (84.7%) of the respondents (Table 3) indicated that they were not aware of the promulgation of the fisheries edict. However, 12.6% of the respondents indicated that they were aware, and 2.7% were undecided. Meaning, government had campaigned or educated the people concern enough in order to create awareness properly on this issue. This could be done through organizing workshops, seminar, radio and television discussions, magazines and newspapers etc.

Adherence to fisheries rules and regulations

Table 4 shows the extent of adherence to fisheries rules and regulations by the respondents. Majority (71.3%) of the respondents in the study area showed their ignorance on

the adherence while 28.7% indicated that the rules and regulations were not adhered to (Table 4).

Table 4: Adherence to fisheries rules and regulations by the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	43	28.7
Undecided	107	71.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

Reasons for not adhering to Fisheries Rules and Regulations

The respondents in the study area however, gave reasons for not adhering to fisheries rules and regulations (Table 5). Two reasons were advanced. Thus, 52.7% and 47.3% of the respondents attributed non-adherence due to lack of information as well as desire to succeed in life by all means. This is one of the indices of poverty to which government should take note of, and do something about it in order to alleviate their poverty.

Table 5: Reasons for not Adhering to Fisheries Rules and Regulations

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of information	79	52.7
Lack of understanding	0	0
Desire to succeed	71	47.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

For ways of passing information by the government, this has been discussed briefly above.

Frequency of visit of fisheries surveillance workers and fisheries surveillance worker are the link between the government and the fishermen and vice-versa. Enquiry during the field survey about the fisheries surveillance workers and their impacts in the study area revealed that 63.3% (Table 6) of the respondents admitted the occasional presence of the worker in the study area.

Table 6: Frequency of Visit of Extension Agents by the Respondents

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Always	1	0.7
Occasionally	95	63.3
Not at all	45	30.0
Undecided	9	6.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

30.0% however said they were not present and 6.0% were undecided. Among the services rendered by the fisheries surveillance workers were monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries activities.

Table 7: Frequency of Visits of Fisheries surveillance workers by the Respondents

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Always	1	0.7
Occasionally	95	63.3
Not at all	45	30.0
Undecided	9	6.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004

The duties of fisheries surveillance workers could be distinguished in three categories. Thus, monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), which is more simply stated as the implementation of a plan or strategy of e.g. government towards conservation or management of fisheries resources. The definition of MCS are defined as follows in accordance to MCS Conference of Experts in 1981 in Rome and are broadly defined (Flewwelling, 1994) as:

- a) **Monitoring** – The continuous requirement for the characteristics and resource yields.
- b) **Control** – The regulatory conditions under which the exploitation of the resource may be conducted.
- c) **Surveillance** - The degree and types of observations required to maintain compliance with the regulatory controls imposed on fishing activities.

Haight (1994) pointed out that inadequate services to the farmers and other beneficiaries are done of the shortcomings of extension services. Therefore, fisheries surveillance activities need to be strengthened and improved upon in Niger State if it wants to safeguard the food fish security of the state and Nigeria at large. Fisheries surveillance workers in Niger State are faced with many problems.

Lack or inadequate transport facilities both land and water, irregular supply of fuel, understaffing, lack of recognition of fisheries as a full-fledge department, lack of payment of staff allowances, issue of private waters, lack of good access roads especially along the riverine areas, inadequate supply of funds, inadequate supply of fishing inputs to fishermen etc. (Yaro and Qader, 1989)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study area is abundantly blessed with land water resources necessary for responsible fishing. Unfortunately, government on its own part had not properly educated the fisherfolks on the benefits of adhering to fisheries rules and regulations. The department and its staff (fisheries surveillance workers etc.), are not well catered for in terms of providing them with necessary facilities and conducive atmosphere. They cannot therefore perform their duties effectively. Quencequently, food fish security through natural source is therefore hanging in the balance as fish stock in our rivers, lakes etc. are getting depleted everyday due to non-adherence to fisheries legislation. Thus, the positive impact of this has not been felt.

It is strongly recommended that Niger State should look back and come to the rescue of fisheries sub-sector.

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