

**THE GAINS AND PAINS OF EXTERNALLY-FUNDED  
FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS  
IN NIGERIA: THE KAINJI LAKE EXAMPLE.**

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### **Abstract**

Kainji Lake a man-made in Nigeria with a surface area of 1,270sq kilometers, was constructed for hydro-electricity generation but with a very high potentials for fisheries production. The influx of fishers from all over Nigeria coupled with the haphazard manner the fisheries of the lake were being exploited resulted in the lake being over fished (Ita, 1983). Between 1993 and 2001 the German Government through its bilateral cooperation agreement with Nigeria, funded the fisheries development programme for Kainji Lake. The intervention was not without its gains to the country. Prominent among these gains were the implementation of the first inland community-based fisheries management, reliable fishery statistics for the lake, annual fishers licensing resulting in the generation of about N4 million revenue within four years of its implementation. The project officially terminated in 2001 and was replaced by a body known as the Kainji Lake Fisheries Management Unit to continue with its operations. Five years after the expiration of the technical assistance, the story has changed. This has created some pains in the minds of those who contributed to the success story recorded while the project lasted. This lack of sustainability may discourage future assistance. This paper calls for genuine commitment by our governments in fisheries if to make significant contribution to our national food security.

### **Introduction**

The developed countries under their bilateral cooperation with friendly developing nations often assist them through a variety of ways. Prominent among them are: the provision of fund, materials, equipment or other form of technical aid, to execute specific projects addressing specific problems considered very vital to the economy of such countries. Such intervention is often expected to impact positively on the life of the citizens of the benefitting nations. One of such assistance that was provided to the government of Nigeria in the fisheries sub-sector of the economy by the German Government was for the development of Kainji Lake fisheries. The project with a life span of nine years started in 1993 and terminated in 2001. Four years after the expiration of the project, it was considered necessary to undertake a short post project evaluation.

### **History of Kainji Lake and its Fisheries**

Kainji Lake, the first and large man - made lake in Nigeria with a surface area of 127km<sup>2</sup> was dammed in 1968 for the purpose of hydroelectric generation.





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Few years after impoundment, fish yield from the lake dropped significantly (Ita 1982), with the annual fish yield dropping to 5000 metric tons and stabilized at that level. All management recommendations aimed at restoring the lake fisheries to its original position were ignored by the affected states government. Consequently, the annual fish production was believed to have stabilized at 5,000 metric tons. This was the situation in the lake when the German Government intervened in 1993. The overall goal of the intervention was the sustained improvement in the socio-economic well-being of the fishing communities around Kainji Lake.

The project was divided into three phases: orientation phase (1993-1996), implementation phase (1997-1999), and handing over phase (1999-2001). The orientation phase was devoted to research activities that were aimed at generating very reliable base-line fisheries and socio-economic data for an effective implementation phase.

### **The Nigerian-German Kainji Lake Fisheries Promotion Project Concept**

The original project concept was based on the perceived problem of low production from the Kainji Lake fisheries caused by over-fishing and lack of investment on the fishers side. The task comprised assessment of the resources, reduction of post-harvest losses and the strengthening of the self-help potential within the target group (fishers local fish processors and fish traders). The purpose was to increase fish production of Kainji Lake in quantity and quality on a sustainable basis. It was assumed that by achieving its purpose, the project will continue to the overall goals of improving the living standard of the fishing communities around the lake.

### **Achievements/Gains of the Project.**

#### **Standardization of the States Fisheries Edicts**

The project realized that an enabling legal environment was critical in efforts to promote sustainable fisheries management at local level. It observed that the Kebbi and Niger States (the two States that have the right to manage the lake) Fisheries Edicts were deficient in contents and could not be used to implement modern fisheries management practices. Consequently, amendments were effected; major inputs that could lead to their being standardized to facilitate the implementation of Community - Based Fisheries Management Practices and other stakeholders' participation were included. The project also facilitated the signing of the edicts into law by the Military Administrators of the two States. The Niger and Kebbi States Fisheries Edicts were gazetted in May and June 1997 respectively to pave way for their implementation.

#### **Community-Based Fisheries Management for Kainji Lake**

For the first time in the history of Nigeria, a forum was provided for fishers through their representatives to participate in decision-making on how best to manage the resources on which their livelihoods depend. This was done through the establishment of a body known as Kainji Lake Fisheries Management and Conservation Unit (KLFMCU). Other members of the Unit beside the fishers were States Fisheries Department, traditional Institutions and the Research Institute. Prior to the time, they were only seen as illiterates whose views were considered unimportant and were therefor compelled to take whatever was passed to them by government. Such impression was misplaced and only displayed the arrogance of government.

It is well known that the knowledge held by fishers in many areas of the world, especially in traditional societies in which such knowledge accumulates by cultural transmission, may be extremely detailed and relevant for resource management (Johannes 1981).

#### **Establishment of a computerized Fishers Licensing System**

The computerization of fishers, their fishing gears and crafts provided the basis for an effective fishers licensing as this made evasion very difficult. Every fisher and his assistance was required to pay ₦20 and ₦50 annually as licensing fees. Revenue from fisher licensing on Kainji Lake alone within the first three years was over three million naira (₦3,000,000.00), this represented between 57-85% of the fishers around Kainji Lake. This was unprecedented in the history of inland fisheries management and development in Nigeria.



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## **Awareness of Conservation Issues / Enforcement of Ban on obnoxious fishing methods**

In the past, it was common for fishers to publicly declare the fish comes directly from heaven. As a result government should not bother itself with the future / conservation. The increase in yield that followed the enforcement of the ban on 'Dalla' changed this perspective of many fishers. This has instilled in them conservation awareness. Those who violate the fisheries edict do not because they do not know the implications but because of their selfish desires.

## **Pains Arising from the Intervention**

### **Lack of Political will to continue**

The intervention of the GTZ had its gains, but when such gains are not consolidated or improved upon they could be seen as waste. The expiration of the Project and the departure of the foreign technical partners were viewed by most fishers as the end of what they represented. In the view of Pomeroy and Harkes (2000) strengthening of linkages and external agent should be an ongoing and continuous process that extends beyond the implementation phase. Experience of the past four years since the project terminated revealed that the fishers and the two States that they were involved in the project execution were unwilling to build upon the earlier achievements. There was no sufficient political will among the local resource stakeholders: the government and fishers to manage the fisheries.

The beach seine 'Dalla' fishers with the support of some local politicians around the lake failed to cooperate with KLFMCU to enforce the ban of that fishing gear. Some fishing communities compromised their positions by providing safe haven for dalla fishers. They were always on hand to secure their bail when apprehended. They also provided political backing assuring them that nothing would happen to them as long as they belong to their political camp.

### **Poor or Inadequate funding**

One of the conditions for external funding of most project including fisheries is the provision of counterpart funds by the host or benefitting government. Representatives of the donor countries often exert pressure on the host government to ensure prompt release of their counterpart fund. By so doing, their support was guaranteed and all planned project activities were often executed without delay. One sad feature of the exit of the GTZ officials was the failure of the host (State) governments to provide the much needed fund for the consolidation and continuation of the work they both started. This has curtailed most of the key activities such as Catch Assessment Survey (CAS), routine monitoring (M & E), licensing fee collections, stakeholders meeting, etc, that could help toward the sustainable management of the lake fisheries resources.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of the past three years has shown that externally funded fisheries projects require the full backing and necessary follow-up by the benefitting government at the expiration of project life to guarantee the sustainability of such fisheries Project. Any departure from this position is capable of creating disincentive for future external funding. Externally funded fisheries development projects could serve as a catalyst in reengineering the inland fisheries for improved productivity and sustainability given the generally poor funding and relegation of the sector by our governments. Every opportunity that can enhance the viability of the sector should be utilized to enable the sector contribute meaningfully to the food security of the country.

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