



Coping with Climate Change as a Cause of Conflict in Coastal Communities of West Africa



Community Entry and Stakeholders Mapping Report

Prepared by

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for

Creek Town Communities in Odukpiani LGA,
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Picture Showing Fish Traders in Creek Town Who Complained of Low Fish Catch. The quantity displayed was bought from four fishermen, less than what one fishermen would catch in the past.

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Disclaimer!

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| AAPW | Academic Associates PeaceWorks |
| CC | Climate Change |
| CSN | Community Stakeholders Network |
| EU | European Union |
| ECOWAS..... | Economic Community for West Africa |
| FAIMM | Fondazione Accademia Italiana della Marina Mercantile |
| HOMEF..... | Health of Mother Earth Foundation |
| LGA | Local Government Area |
| WANEP | West African Network for Peacebuilding |

Introduction

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) is implementing a project with three partners, referred herein as consortium members, namely Fondazione Accademia Italiana della Marina Mercantile (FAIMM), Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), and West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with support from the European Union (EU). The title of the project is “Coping with Climate Change as a Cause of Conflict in Coastal Communities of West Africa (C7-WA). The aim of the project is to strengthen West African Coastal Communities’ resilience to cope with climate change and conflict by developing innovative tools related to conflict sensitive climate change (CC) adaptation and prevention of environmental crimes that exacerbate climate change impact on communities as well as monitoring of the impact of climate change as a driver of conflict.

To achieve this, the project intends to develop tools, based on innovative research and global best practices, which will be tested through the establishment of a Community Stakeholders Network, constituted with highly influential community stakeholders’ by AAPW. The CSNs will then be trained to deliver nature based innovative solutions to the CC challenges in the region, through a large-scale capacity building program, targeting communities and local actors. Information about climate change and conflict will be used to update the ECOWAS regional framework for Conflict prevention and early warning.

While, the CSNs will be trained to advocate and mobilize resources to address the CC challenges, the project will also finance climate change mitigation or adaptation interventions of the project targeted communities in the Niger Delta through a small-scale grant scheme.

Brief History and Location

Creek Town, as the name implies, is located near the Calabar River and has a robust history of European missionary activities. According to the people, Creek Town became famous during the reign of King Eyo Eyo Nsa, popularly known as King Eyo Honnesty II, from 1835 to 1858 when he died. The King’s influence and relationship with the missionaries propagated Christianity in the area. The King also influenced the fearful traditional Ekpe Masquerade to admonish people who refused to accept the Christian religion and the church. The masquerade will on Sundays, go after persons who are not in church. It was also mentioned that the founders of Esuk Mba migrated from Creek Town. Creek Town was known to be the place that the birth of twins had evil consequences to the family and community, due to the belief that the sins committed by the parents led to the birth of twins. Thus, if the twins were allowed to live, evil consequences would befall the area; therefore, the twins would be sacrificed to the gods by abandoning them to die in the forest. The famous Marry Slessor stopped this culture in January 1855 when Duke Ephraim, the Duke of Old Calabar, signed a voluntary agreement to stop the killing of twins with the British Consul Hutchinson.

Creek Town is located in Odukpani Local Government Area in Cross River State. It is an island comprised of four clans: Ada Uko, Oturn, Mbarakon and Efut Abua. Creek

town is close to Ikot Ekawan and Akai Ikot Orok at the northern part of Odukpani, while Henshaw Town and Ikot Offiong are in the South. Its geographical coordinates are 4° 59' 0" North, 8° 17' 0" East.

Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Context

The people of Creek Town are predominantly the Efiks. They have a very rich culture and population density made up of indigenous and nonindigenous persons from all over Nigeria. The communities have activities rooted in a strong social-cultural procedure, particularly during community leadership installations and Kingship Coronation. Their dressings and dances during festivals, marriages, burials etc. are unique in Cross River State. One can describe the Efik traditional dressing as among the most colourful in Cross River State. The traditional governance system is guided by their rich culture and tradition. According to the people, the culture of Creek Town is the main source of peaceful coexistence amongst them. The Ekpe Masquerade, for instance, is a deity that protects the communities from external aggression, as well as a source for blessing and power. Similar to the Ekpe, are the Ekpo, Nna and Abonn deities and cultural celebrations in Creek Town.

Boat regatta, wrestling contest and new yam festival are among other social-cultural activities in Creek Town. Thus, Creek Town plays an important role in the famous Calabar Carnival.

Creek Town is located near the Calabar River, making it a good location for fishing activities. It is surrounded by water bodies with a bay that divides it into two parts. Though there is no oil company operating in the area, its strategic location makes it convenient route for transportation of goods and services to different locations in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States respectively. It is easy to understand why bunkering products are transported to the eastern flank of Nigeria through Creek Town. Security agencies, particularly the Joint Task Force are presently stationed at the water front in Ada Uko Clan, Creek Town.

Politically, the people of Creek Town are very active. They have political wards called Creek Town I and II out of thirteen wards in Odukpani LGA. This implies that they have two councilors representing them in the LGA.

Creek Town Governance System

Creek Town has four clans as mentioned earlier; thus it operates the clan system of governance; where one of the clan heads is elected as the paramount ruler. He doubles as both the overall paramount ruler as well as a clan head in his clan. They have the Creek Town traditional rulers' council with the paramount ruler as the administrative head with the clan heads. The next in the hierarchy are the village heads. The council elects or appoints its secretary, and such a chief works closely with the paramount ruler and has strong influence. The Youth Association, headed by the youth leader also plays a very vital role in the governance system, as do Women Associations and social groups.

Gender Equality

Creek Town is a male dominated society. Thus, it is patriarchal in practice. However, as part of the Efik culture, the first female child of the family is very powerful traditionally to the Efik to which Creek Town belong. She controls the family business or property. She commands authority such that, family members, including the men, will have to seek her consent and decision on family issues. Fathers, usually name their first daughters after their mother's name; (adiaha) denoting "my mother". Women can also become chiefs but can't participate in certain traditional activities. Discrimination against women is low. Broadly speaking, Creek Town has a more inclusive women participation than most communities in the Niger Delta. A respondent in the community said; "The women are our mothers, and they have requisite authority to speak to their children who are in the community leadership for their interest and decisions to be implemented. However, our traditions forbid women participation in certain cultural activities.

Table: Showing Governance System and Functions

| S/ No | Institution | Functions |
|---|--|---|
| Governance System and Functions at Kingdom and Community Level | | |
| 1. | The Paramount Ruler | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custodian of law, custom and tradition ▪ Strengthen community peace and stability. ▪ mediation of disputes and facilitates resolutions ▪ Promote development by engaging with development partners |
| 2. | Clan Council of Chiefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist the King in his functions as directed by the King ▪ Represent the community in traditional functions ▪ Conflict resolution ▪ Decision making |
| 3. | The Village Head and Community Council of Chiefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Represents the Chiefs in traditional functions if directed ▪ Represent the community in traditional functions ▪ Conflict resolution ▪ Decision making |
| 4. | Family Heads and Elders at the Family Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take decisions at the family level to support the village head ▪ Information dissemination point to family members ▪ Represent the family in traditional functions ▪ Conflict resolution at the family level ▪ Decision making |
| 5. | Youth Associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement instructions from higher traditional authorities ▪ Organize youth programs. ▪ Organize provide community labour, execution of community projects etc. ▪ In charge of community Security Provide community ▪ Organize recreational and community entertainment programs etc. |
| 6. | Age Grades | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiate community developmental projects and activities. |

| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate with donor agencies for the smooth execution and completion of community projects. • Find employment opportunities for youths. |
| 7. | Women Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize women development programs. ▪ Implement instructions and decisions from higher authorities ▪ Fund and implement community development projects ▪ Conflict resolution |
| 8. | Social/Cultural Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize social functions (burial ceremonies, special coronations) ▪ Promote the tradition and culture of the people ▪ Settle disputes when the need arises ▪ Provide support and funds to educational and economic activities ▪ Involve in community development efforts (donation of small facilities like chairs, tables, canopies) |
| 9. | Religious Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prayers for peace and stability ▪ Role models ▪ Advisory roles ▪ Spiritual/divine healings ▪ Support community development efforts |

Environmental and Climatic Characteristics

Creek Town is endowed with rivers, mangrove forest and tropical rain forest. The abundant forest vegetation, the distinctive tree species in the Tropical Rain Forest give it a very high ecological importance, locally and internationally. This wide expanse of Forest, contributes to the Cross Rivers State Forest Reserve, because it has one of the largest areas of unlogged Tropical Rain Forests in Nigeria.

As confirmed by the farmers and fisher folks who are particularly informed about the climatic conditions in the area, the rains usually start in February, get very high between the months of April to June, and start reducing slowly from July and tilts to a stop in November, welcoming the harmattan as they start preparation of land and tilling for farming. However, they alluded that the weather condition in Creek Town has become very unpredictable. Thus whatever seasonal calendar they used to work with is no longer feasible, neither are they able to have predictable seasonal calendar for farming and fishing anymore. Fishing in deep sea has become very risky due to unpredictable weather condition.

Climatic Conditions

Gully Erosion: A major challenge expressed by the people is the increasing gullies caused by erosion in the area. Most parts of the road leading to Creek Town are destroyed by erosion and gullies. As part of community effort to stop the formation of gullies, the youth groups adopted construction of local wooden barriers to stop the formation of gullies created by erosion but this has not been successful as such measures are not strong enough to prevent the force and current of gushing rain water on the earth's surface.

Heavy Rain Fall and Flood: It is evident that rain fall has become very heavy, unlike in the past when we experience heavy rain fall at the beginning and towards the end of the rainy season. Presently, there is the occurrence heavy rainfall anytime of the year, causing serious erosion and flooding. A respondent said ``Our farm lands have become water logged, crops no longer grow due to the high level of water in the soil. It requires farmers to go in search of land that is relatively higher for farming in a bid to control the water. Very worrisome is the fact that, the rain is associated with heavy storm which destroys our crops.” This is the view of a respondent when asked about the impacts of climate change in Creek Town.

Heat Wave: Creek Town is located within a Tropical Rain forest zone, which has the feature of more rainfalls and wind. However, community people denote that cold experienced during rainy season in the past has reduced. It was contended that the heat level is relatively high round the year. Even higher and excruciating heat wave is experienced during the dry season, leaving most people with wide-spread body rashes.

Heavy and Unpredictable Wind Direction: The fishermen complained about the unpredictability of wind direction. According to them, the wind is very heavy and very difficult to ascertain its direction. According to the people, wind direction changes often in very short intervals unlike how it was in the past, when, fisher folks could predict the movement of wind for months and plan their fishing.

Rise in Sea Level: It was reported that the sea level is always high making it difficult for fisher folks to have good catch. A respondent said; “in the past when the river water ebbs, you will see the mud submerged with water dry up into the river. Such times are good for fishing as the fish in the mangrove would have come into the open river where nets and fish traps are set. Unfortunately, these days, the water level does not reduce completely from the mangrove, thus allowing most fish to remain within areas that are difficult for setting fish nets. This has made it difficult to catch fish. Some areas in the river have also become deeper and require sizeable nets- an additional cost to the fishermen. While they plan to adapt, the sea level continues to rise, making it difficult to have an appropriate fishing net for a reasonable long period of time

Livelihood Systems and Analysis

Agricultural Livelihoods Livelihood System

The occupations of people living in Creek Town are mostly fishing, farming and hunting. Although, few persons are engaged in white collar jobs.

Fishing: Almost every adult member of a household in Creek Town is involved in Fishing. It is the main traditional occupation of the people. Both the women and the men take part in fishing activity as a means of livelihood. The women fish mostly within the creeks and rivers of the area, while the men mostly go deep into the sea for fishing. The fishing value chain is a big industry that employs many persons. For instance, it includes firewood cutting and selling, fish preservation and processing, fish trading, weaving of fish storage equipment’s like baskets, transportation of fish to cities etc. Unfortunately, climate change has disrupted the value chain of fish industry in the area.

Fish catch is low, there is scramble for fish amongst the traders, due to the low catch; there is no reserve for processing and storage, thus firewood cutting business is no longer feasible; transporters, who usually visit Creek Town during market days no longer do; as a result, most of the people who were involved in the fish value chain business for income generation cannot earn a living any longer.

It was also reported that an emerging menace affecting the fishing livelihood is the upsurge of piracy in the area. The nefarious activities of sea robbers, pirates, kidnappers and criminal activities in the waters of Creek Town are major factors that have affected fishing in the area. There is another issue, community people complained about incessant sea weeds that destroy fishing nets. Some have the view that international fishing trawlers within the Nigerian sea are using fishing systems that destroy the sea weeds,



which are now flowing to the shallow areas where local fisher folks fish.

Farming: Farming is another major source of income in Creek Town. The people were not certain which of the two livelihoods is practiced more in Creek Town. Both livelihood activities according to them are practiced vigorously. However, there were complaints that, farming is no longer lucrative due to poor yield, crops are destroyed by heavy rainfall and storm, particularly farming of maize, which is considered by them, as a “family sustenance crop” meaning that, families farm perennial crops, plant maize to generate initial income within 90 days of planting, while they wait for crops that take longer than six months to harvest. They plant maize in their cassava and yam farms round the year. According to them, after preparing the yam ridges and planting yams, the farmers will also plant maize beside the ridges, and harvest in 90 days. The leaves of the maize will be allowed to decay in the farm after harvesting to give nutrients to the soil. They also prevent weeds from growing. Unfortunately, according to them, maize no longer yields good harvest. This implies that farmers who depend on maize farming for livelihood will be forced to find alternative livelihoods, which might be associated with crime.

Hunting: Respondents said, that hunting was a profitable livelihood activity. Hunters, were also traditionally respected in the community. They supply bush meat for local consumption and sometimes they are rated as heroes going by the kind of animals they kill. It is a risky livelihood but it also earns those involved in it, respect and fame in addition to the income they generate. However, the story about hunting has changed as few people want to indulge in it presently, due to either extinction or migration of animals in the forest.

Timber Logging: Creek Town area falls within the forest reserve of Cross River State, yet, illegal timber logging has reduced economic trees in the Tropical Rain Forest. It is a menace that can cause serious environmental impacts on communities in the area.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood System

Trading, transportation, artisanal activities, such as carpentry, bicycle and motorcycle repairers, auto mechanics, plumbers, electricians etc., white collar jobs in the civil service, are basically the non-agricultural livelihood undertakings in the area.

Challenges of Livelihood Systems

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, there are other factors that also militate against the livelihood system in Creek Town:

- High cost of transport; the road to Creek Town is bad and vehicles can barely use the road, resulting in high cost of transportation.
- Process and criteria to access to credit and financial facilities in financial institutions are made difficult.
- Communities lack adaptive skills and coping strategies to mitigate climate change impacts.
- Communities undertake some climate change adaptive activities, that in turn have negative consequences on the environment.
- Absence of government policies and programmes on climate change and alternative livelihood restoration system.
- The increasing migration of the workforce, especially the youths, has rendered most communities vulnerable in terms of active labour.
- The general insecurity in the area, has also militated against community adaptation and mitigation efforts in building climate change resilience.
- Abject poverty of community dwellers has become very endemic and has impeded climate change adaptation and mitigation in Creek Town.

Climate Change, Vulnerability and Conflict Analysis

| Climate Change Issue | Vulnerability | Associated Conflict | Adaptation |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Gully erosion | Loss of Habitat | Land disputes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of drainages |
| Heavy rain fall and flood | Loss of fishing ground | No conflict issue identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep sea fishing |
| | Loss of Farm lands | Land Disputes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative livelihood sources of income • Construction of water channels to divert stagnant water in farm area • Embarking on short term crop farming |
| Increase in heat wave | Loss of crops/plants | No conflict issue identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of air conditioners |
| Heavy and unpredictable wind direction | Boat mishaps | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative livelihood sources of income • Construction of water channels to divert stagnant water in farm area |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Fisher folks Loose direction | No conflict issue identified | • Use of simple navigational equipments by fisher folks |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|

Causes of Conflicts, Severity and Frequency

| S/N | Causes of Conflicts | Severity of Conflict | Frequency of Conflict | Remark |
|-----|---|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | Leadership tussle leading to intra communal crisis | Low | Low | Communities have effective means of resolving disputes |
| 2. | Domestic conflicts between and within families | Low | Low | Communities have effective means of resolving disputes |
| 4. | Youth restiveness leading to conflicts | Low | Low | There are no oil companies and accompanying incentives for youth leadership in Creek Town, which often generate youth conflicts in other communities |
| 5. | Cult related conflicts | Low | Low | Community has cultural practices that discourage cultism |
| 6. | Inter personal conflicts | Low | Low | |
| 7. | Conflict between indigenous and nonindigenous fishermen and women | Low | Low | People live in harmony with nonindigenes. |

General Observation and Lessons Learnt

Creek Town is a generally a peaceful area. The people are friendly with the nonindigenous population.

Observations

- There is high level of migration to Calabar and Uyo
- There is the challenge of benefit captors, who live in Calabar and take control of opportunities accruing to Creek Town.
- Those who live in the community are mostly retired civil servants and the uneducated who do not have opportunities in the city
- The youth are very security conscious. They have a good communication strategy that strangers will find difficult to discern.
- The people are weary of legacy issues from NGOs and government agencies.
- There is high expectation from NGOs. They are of the view that NGOs can find solutions to all their problems and can provide jobs and financial support for them to start alternative livelihood activities

Lessons Learnt

- Climate change impacts in Creek Town further clarify the fact that crude oil spill is not the only cause of soil infertility

Recommendations for Intervention

- Agricultural Institutes and Research Centers, such as Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria, etc. should be engaged for current information on climate change and agriculture
- A study of seasonal calendar of weather condition should be conducted with the aim of developing a farming curriculum for different crops for communities
- Communities should be trained on Bio-Fertilizer Production and Application
- Bio-Resource Centers established by the Federal Government of Nigeria across the six geo-political zones should be engaged for better understanding of climate change impact agriculture
- Educate communities on alternate income generation activities that seek to assuage climate change impacts
- Train communities on strategies that achieve climate mitigation and adaptation simultaneously
- Train communities on alternative livelihoods and provide micro credit scheme to enhance socio-economic activities.

Conclusion

Creek Town has a massive land that was good for agriculture. Studies can be conducted to understand the factors that have affected agricultural yield in the area. This will help in mitigation strategies to enhance agricultural development and provide employment opportunities. There is no oil company in the area; thus, the associated issue of oil spills, environmental pollution and degradation are totally absent. The environment does not require remediation. However, crops are said to now have stunted growth and poor yield. It is discernable that, climate change impacts, coupled with human activities in response to adaptation and mitigation, may have contributed to the soil infertility in the area.

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