



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

**Finima Community in Bonny LGA,
Rivers State. Nigeria.**

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Picture Showing Mangrove Cutting, Oil Company Environmental Pollution, Fishing

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List of Abbreviations

AAPW	Academic Associates PeaceWorks
ADP	Agricultural Development Program
CEC	Community Executive Council
CC	Climate Change
CDP	Community Development Plan
CDC	Community Development Committee
CSN	Community Stakeholders Network
DESOPADEC	Delta State Oil Producing Areas Commission
DPO	Divisional Police Officer
EU	European Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community for West Africa
FAIMM	Fondazione Accademia Italiana della Marina Mercantile
FNP	Finima Nature Park
GMoU	Global Memorandum of Understanding
HOMEF	Health of Mother Earth Foundation
LGA	Local Government Area
LGC	Local Government Council
NLNG	Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd

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 Geographical Location

The Finima People are of the Ibani Ethnic Nationality of Bonny Kingdom, being one of the aboriginal founding Royal Families of Bonny Kingdom.

Finima is said to be the most ancient community in Bonny Local Government, strategically located at the south-east coast by the mouth of the Bonny River, which empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

Finma being part of The Kingdom of Grand Bonny is located forty Kilometers Southwest of Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State of Nigeria. It lies within latitude $40^{\circ} 278^{\circ}$, longitude of $7^{\circ} 1000^{\circ}$ and borders the shores of Southern Atlantic Ocean into which its main river, the Bonny Estuary, finally flows.

Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Context

Finima is a very cultural community with inspiring traditional heritage. The area is suitable for marine export and trading, thus it served as slave route in the precolonial era. Today, Finima, is the host to several oil companies, Shell Petroleum Development Company, ExxonMobil, Chevron and the famous Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd, (NLNG) Export Terminal in Bonny.

There is a great influence on Finima culture by the large influx of nonnatives due to the NLNG activities and employment opportunities in the area. However, it is surprising to hear that, they have made sure, that their culture remains sacred from foreign invasion. A large proportion of Finima land, creeks, canals and rivers were closed, sand filled and used by oil companies for the NLNG project. Thus, they are suffering from very serious environmental issues coupled with loss of habitat. They were resettled from their original home town without adequate compensation and the conflict over their resettlement between NLNG and Finima Community is lingering up till now, years after the resettlement process.

Occupations of the people are mainly subsistence fishing and farming with a few of them in civil service and oil company employments in the area.

Finima Community Governance System

According to the people, Finima operates a parliamentary system of governance, The Town Council is the central point of leadership and governance in Finima. It consists of the Wari-Alapu House Chiefs and units of different Cabinets. For instance, the Leadership Structure of Brown House has the following leadership institutions:

1. Aseme-Alabo – Head Chief
2. Council of Wari-Alapu – Council of chiefs
3. Asa-Awo – Youth
4. Ere-Amapu – Women
5. Obgobiri- Asawo
6. Ogbobiri-Ereawo
7. Wari-Seniapu Advisory Council
8. Other Statutory Committees

Gender Equality

Finima is a male dominated community; however, women participation is high in the activities of the community. Women are involved in the decision making processes, which in most cases are ratified by the men. Women are not entitled to be female chiefs, thus they are not part of the council of chiefs where final decisions are taken and policies are made.

Finima Community Institutions, Governance and Functions

S/ No	Institution	Functions
1.	Aseme-Alabo – Head Chief (Acts as a king of the Finima People)	<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.	Council of Wari-Alapu – Council of chiefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Represent the community in traditional functions ● Conflict resolution ● Decision making ● Policy making

3.	Asa-Awo – Youth Ogbobiri-Ereawo Wari-Seniapu Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement instructions from higher traditional authorities • Organize youth programs. • Coordinate execution of community projects etc. • Community Security • Organize recreational and community entertainment programs etc.
4.	Ere-Amapu – Women Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize women development programs. ▪ Implement instructions and decisions from higher authorities ▪ Implement community development projects ▪ Conflict resolution
5.	Ogbobiri- Asawo Lower Grade Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize male youth development programs. ▪ Implement instructions and decisions from higher authorities ▪ Implement community development projects ▪ Conflict resolution
6.	Ogbobiri-Ereawo - Lower Grade Female Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize female youth development programs. ▪ Implement instructions and decisions from higher authorities ▪ Implement community development projects ▪ Conflict resolution
7.	Wari-Seniapu Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiate and advise on community development matters ▪ Coordinate execution and completion of community projects.
8.	Other Statutory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiate and advise on community development matters ▪ Coordinate execution and completion of community projects.
9.	Social/Cultural Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry out social activities (burial ceremonies, etc.) ▪ Promote the tradition, culture and community development ▪ Conflict resolution ▪ Provide support to the less privileged
10.	Religious Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role models, advisory roles, etc. ▪ Spiritual/divine interventions ▪ Support community development efforts

Environmental and Climatic Characteristics

Finima is a coastal community strategically located at the South-East Coast by the Mouth of the Bonny River that empties into the Atlantic Ocean. It is an Island, with a stretch of coast connecting several other communities in Bonny. The area is suitable for marine export and trading activities. Like Akassa, Finima is at the bight of the Atlantic Ocean, with high level of sea surge, erosion and flooding, particularly during the high tide. Finima was said to be located in a Thunder Belt, thus the people experience high thunder and thunder lightening. Rainfall is high, and very unpredictable.

Climatic Conditions: Finima's climate is classified as tropical. Finima has a significant amount of rainfall during the year. This is true even for the driest month. The average annual temperature of Finima is 26.3 °C | 79.4 °F. In a year, the rainfall is 3015 mm | 118.7 inch. The climate is tropical and heavy rainfall is experienced during most months in the year.

Flood and Erosion: Finima is highly vulnerable to flood and erosion due to rise in sea level and heavy rainfall. According to respondents, the barrier lands that prevent sea surge from entering the community have eroded due to frequent movement of heavy

vessels, creating additional waves other than the natural waves from the ocean. Presently, it was said that, flooding in Finima is temporary, as it does not last longer than a week. However, there are areas that retain stagnant water for a longer period.

While rise in sea level and rainfall constitute flooding, it also washes away the top soil and the barrier lands as the water drains into the sea, creeks and canals, causing erosion and further reducing the barrier lands.

Heavy Storm and Wind: Another climatic challenge the people mentioned is the issue of heavy storm and wind. The wind destroys roofs of houses, raises dust and sand, that is dangerous to the eyes and also causes boat mishaps in the sea. This was said to be a major challenge to the fisherfolks. This has caused fear and has made them to not go far into the sea for fishing.

Thunder: It was mentioned that the present location of Finima community is a thunder belt. History tells us that the people of Finima originally lived in a thunder lightning prone area, so moved to a less problematic area. However, with the establishment of the huge NLNG plant on that new site, they were moved back to their original area and thus became more impacted by climatic conditions. However, most people contended that thunder strikes seem to be increasing and are attributable to climate change. As part of an adaptation measure, there are rules and regulations guiding types of materials for construction of houses, type of umbrellas to be used during rainfall, type of light to be used during thunder and lightning storms. The NLNG had built thunder arrestors in the community, but there are complaints that the arrestors are bad and require repairs and replacement.

Rise in Temperature and Heat Wave: The mean annual temperature of Bonny Island is 27°C. Indicating that the temperature is high. The people complained about, high heat waves. According to them, the sea brings cool breeze in the evenings, to reduce the heat during the hot seasons in the past, but presently, the breeze is also hot and rather than reduce the heat level it further contributes to the heat level in the community, causing increase in heat level even at night. Their pattern of adaptation to heat at night used to be, opening of windows and doors to allow the evening breeze cool the heat. That, does not suffice anymore and its causing serious concerns and discomfort to the community.

In summary, climate change induced environmental and climatic issues have caused debilitating challenges to the people of Finima. According to them, their crops are not yielding well, fishing as a livelihood is no longer lucrative due to low catch and migration or extinction of some of the easily caught fishes, sardines, herrings etc. Apart from the fear of boat mishaps and missing their routes due to sudden weather changes in the sea, fishermen are also vulnerable to pirates who are suspected to be fishermen who have lost their livelihood and joined pirate gangs for survival. The fisher folks are faced with death in the hand of sea pirates or sudden weather changes in the form of heavy storm and rainfall. Generally, livelihoods in Finima are under serious climatic change pressure. Families are unable to meet up with the demand for food and land. Criminality as a result of loss of livelihood caused by climate change has increased and the level of insecurity in the community is increasing. Though, the community leadership, through its youth leadership, has taken measures to mitigate crime, it was stated that, if sustainable alternative livelihoods sources are not provided, the situation can degenerate.

Livelihood Systems and Analysis

The livelihood system in Finima is basically Agricultural and non-agricultural.

Fishing: The strategic location of Finima at the bight of the Atlantic Ocean, with its wide coast and continental shelf, made it attractive for fishing to thrive. Apart from the natives, a large proportion of the fisher folks from all over the Niger Delta, from Ondo to Cross Rivers State settle in Finima for fishing. Fishing is the main livelihood occupation in Finima. There is a strong fishing value chain business contributing to the local economy. Most persons, rely on casual labor in the fishing value chain. Finima also has a well-organized self-employment system in handicrafts, firewood collection, and brick making for local fish oven etc. Fishes caught include: crayfish, Dolphin, Barracuda, Red Snapper, Cat fishes, Electric Fish, Whale, Shark, Herring, Mullet, Sardine, etc. Sea food, such as oysters, crabs, periwinkles, lobsters, clams, octopus, shrimp, squid, etc. are livelihoods reserved for women. However, according to the people, these livelihood opportunities are threatened due to the depletion of marine resources in the sea. Most youth have abandoned fishing, to take up Oil Company and other related employment opportunities. It is mostly the elderly and nonnatives who depend on fishing as a livelihood in Finima presently.

Fishing, being that it is customary and theoretically a very lucrative business, it is still generally accepted as the main occupation. Thus, when there is staff retrenchment exercise and people are dropped from their oil company jobs, they return to fishing. Furthermore, low level staff do not have employment contracts with pension and gratuity at retirement or retrenchments of oil companies. Thus, for some youths who did not plan to save are faced with going back to legitimate livelihood activities, such as fishing or join criminal groups. It is important to diversify and expand the fishing sector and make it attractive to the youth.

Farming: Farming, is not considered as a major livelihood in Finima, Farming is practiced by a very low proportion of the people. Short term crops and vegetables are the major products farmed in the area for subsistence purpose. Some community respondents mentioned that the available forest, which used to be the main area for crop farming in Finima, has been appropriated by the oil companies. Thus, Finima does not have land for farming. According to them, the community leadership, in a bid to preserve some of their forest legacy had to initiate the Finima Forest Reserve Programme called the Finima Nature Park.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood System

A vast proportion of the people in Finima community, including the natives and nonnatives are employed by SPDC, ExxonMobil, Chevron and the NLNG in Bonny. This explains why agriculture has become a secondary livelihood activity in Finima. There is high dependence on oil company created jobs. The goal of most Finima youth is to work in the oil companies either as skilled or unskilled employee. Trade and transportation business is also very lucrative and booming while cost of living continues to increase on daily basis. The youth mentioned that sometimes oil company workers are laid off suddenly without planning and this has created conflicts and challenges to the local economy.

Challenges of Livelihood Systems

- Some plants and animals are at the risk of extinction
- Rise in sea level, sea surge and flood
- Increase and unpredictable rain falls, thunder and storms
- Temperature fluctuations (Heat and Cold)
- Increase in diseases and health issues
- High cost of food and materials, particularly for their livelihood
- Environmental pollution from crude oil spills that are not remediated immediately
- Increase in social vices and crimes: piracy, kidnapping, rape, stealing, internet fraud and other crimes
- Drug Abuse, cultism and conflicts associated to oil company politics

Climate Change, Vulnerability and Conflict Analysis

Climate Change Issue	Vulnerability	Associated Conflict	Adaptation
Some plants and animals are at the risk of extinction	Loss of Livelihood	Land disputes	Migration to other communities where such plants and animals still exist
Rise in sea level, sea surge and flood	Loss of Habitat	Land disputes	Sand and mud filling of flood area, abandonment of flooded areas.
	Loss of Farm lands	Land disputes	Migration to other communities where land is available for farming. Resort to alternative livelihood opportunities
		Land disputes	Sharing of available high land to farming members of families
	Loss of fishing ground	Conflict over fishing areas.	Use of longer and wider fishing nets. Change of fishing strategies and patterns which sometimes create further conflict due to the fishing technique. e.g the drum fishing technique
Pollution of surface water sources for drinking eg well water sources	No dispute reported		Use of rain water for drinking and other domestic needs

Unpredictable and heavy rain falls, thunder and storms	Erosion of top soil causing infertility of soil	No dispute reported	Appears to be a blessing in disguise as community depend on rain water for drinking and other domestic services. However, community perceives it as an act of God.
Temperature fluctuations (Heat and Cold)	Loss of crops/plants	No dispute reported	Personal adaptation mechanisms adopted, no electricity in community, use of mosquito nets at night and leaving windows open
Increase in diseases and health issues	Personality disorder.	Self-conflict	Adaptations are different ways with different people: Self-medication, use of local herbs or go to a health Centre or hospital where available
High cost of food and materials	Frustration	Self-conflict, illegal actions leading to conflict	Multiple livelihood activities, indulgence in illegal activities to earn a living, etc.

Causes of Conflicts, Severity and Frequency hegemonic

S/ N	Causes of Conflicts	Severity of Conflict	Frequency of Conflict	Remark
1.	Leadership and power tussles	High	High	Resolved by community leadership and sometimes through the legal process of courts
2.	Intra community conflict over traditional leadership right	High	High	Community leadership resolves such disputes. Criminal cases are handed over to the police
3.	Conflict over oil company social responsibility governance issues	High	High	Oil companies use security agencies to suppress conflicts
4.	Youth restiveness leading to conflicts	Low	Low	Security committee set up to manage conflict issues generally
5.	Cult related conflicts	Low	Low	Cultism has been prohibited and a security committee set up to manage monitor cult activities
6.	Boundary disputes	High	High	Community leadership resolves such disputes. Criminal cases are handed over to the police
7.	Militancy, Piracy	High	High	Residents/Travelers are constantly in fear of being attacked by pirates and kidnappers.

8.	Bunkering/Artisanal refining and associated conflicts	High	High	The community has a lot of non-natives suspected to be involved in Bunkering/Artisanal refining and sometimes conflicts erupts among them and with farmers and fishermen.
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General Observation and Lessons Learnt

Observations

- There is drug and cult prevalence in Finima. This is the general situation in Bonny LGA
- Majority of the fishermen and women are non-indigenes from Ilaje, Andoni, Akwa Ibom, etc. Finima youth does not seem to be interested in fishing or other agricultural livelihoods, due to the employment opportunities in the oil companies.
- Most businesses are owned and operated by nonnatives
- Bunkering, artisanal refining and other related jobs like transportation of bunkering/artisanal refining products have become alternative income generating to the youth. However, the perception of the people of Finima is that, those who carry out Bunkering and Artisanal refining are not indigenes of Finima. They are suspected to have come from neighboring communities.
- Militancy, Piracy and kidnapping is high within the waterways of Finima and Bonny. People are constantly in fear.

Lessons Learnt

Replacement of traditional mud buildings with modern block buildings without providing corresponding number of rooms can trigger conflict. The resettlements of households with large number of residential rooms in traditional mud houses with a two-bedroom modern block houses in Finima was said to have caused internally displaced persons because the number of rooms provided was less than the number of rooms in originally provided in the mud houses. Thus, some inhabitants lost their accommodation. Hence, became internally displaced.

Recommendation

- The Finima Nature Park is a great initiative that should be encouraged and replicated to include mangrove forest conservation.
- Finima should be supported to set up a team of environmental experts that should conduct laboratory test of its ground water, river water and also conduct scientific studies of climate change impact in the area. This is because, it is difficult to differentiate environmental impacts caused by the oil companies and issues of climate change. Such studies will reveal the level of environmental impacts caused by the oil companies.
- Training on Security Management such as installation and tracking devices on engines and boats

- Collaboration with the Finima Youth Association to carry out sensitization on climate change mitigation and adaptation approaches.
- Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution training specifically designed to integrate community governance system should be implemented.
- Community Based Livelihood Needs Assessment should be carried with the aim of implementing micro- projects
- Leadership training and community development principles
- Facilitate CSNs in all 10 coastal communities to network, collaborate and communicate on emerging security and environment issues.
- A conflict sensitive Community based livelihood restoration system should be planned and implemented.

Conclusion

The oil companies operating in Finima have a responsibility to engage the communities in and develop a holistic climate change intervention plan. The activities of oil companies, has intensified the impacts of climate change in Finima.

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