



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



Community Entry and Stakeholders Mapping Report

Prepared by

Academic Associates PeaceWorks

Godson Jim-Dorgu, Tega Edeki and Ken Omavuayenor

www.aapw.org

for

**Kono Community in Khana LGA,
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Picture Showing Palm Plantation that is not Fruiting Due to Climate Change in Kono



Picture Showing Stream water that served as source of water for domestic and drinking. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/5KhCq7GNtB1t54v88>

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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 |
| SPDC | Shell Petroleum Development Company |
| WANEP | West African Network for Peacebuilding |

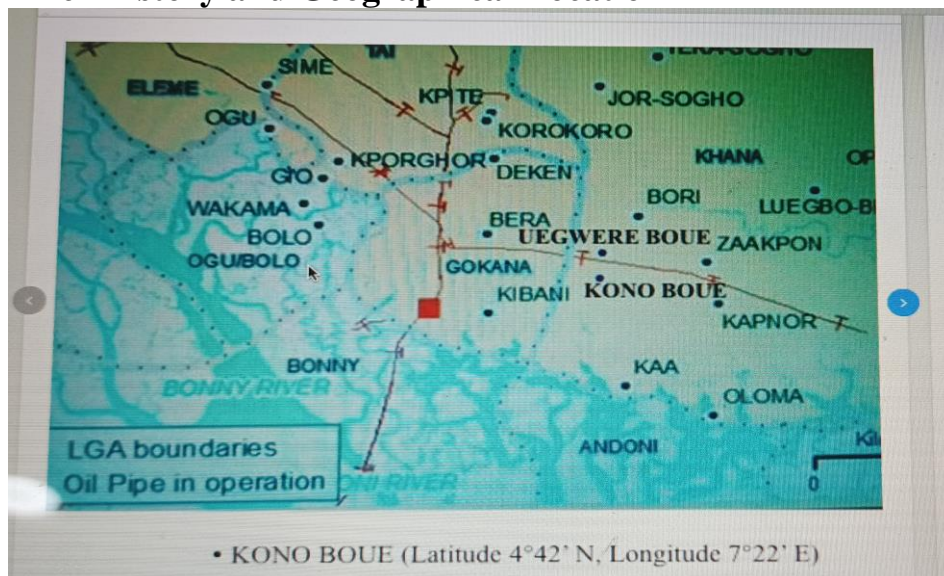
Introduction

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 Geographical Location



Map of Ogoni Showing Kono Boue. www.unep.org/Nigeria

Kono is a community in Ogoni, Rivers State of Nigeria. Historically, Kono has similar cultural and historical kinship with other Ogoni communities. They are situated around the coast of Khana Local Government Area, which is about one hour away from Port Harcourt the capital of Rivers State. As part of Khana Local Government, they speak the general Khana language in Ogoni. Kono is in an area with Tropical Monsoon climate, located on Latitude 4° 35' 51" N Longitude 7° 29' 46" E.

Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Context

Like other Ogoni communities, The people of Kono have rich ethnic and cultural activities such as the Waaro festival and Nwikorobee Festival. These festivals are celebrated for divine blessings to the land. According to them, indigenes from far and near return home for the celebration of their festivals. Visitors are also attracted to the community during such traditional activities. The people are predominantly farmers and fishermen, and are located in an area with wide expanse of arable land, rivers, creeks and canals. They are part of the general Ogoni political, environmental and economic agitation over marginalization from the extractive governance process in the area.

Kono Community has four oil wells, operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) from the 1950s to early 1990s. Production was said to have stopped in 1993 following a rise in violence, threats to staff and attacks on facilities, which led to the killing of 9 Ogonis including Ken Saro Wiwa- the foremost Ogoni activist.

Kono Governance System

The governance system of Kono is very simple and straight forward. The leadership of the community is headed by a chief, who is the overall leader, followed by the Community Development Committee (CDC) and the Kono Youth Body. The youth

body comprises both female and male citizens of the community. Other social groups such as the Kono Progressive Association also play vital role in the development of the community.

Gender Equality

As can be observed in the above governance system of Kono, the community does not have women association or groups. There is no place for women in the leadership structure of the community. Women are invited by the men during decision making processes if the need arises. Thus, Kono is a highly patriarchal community.

However, according to some of them, the women are effectively represented through the men, who are their children and husbands or family members. It is important to consider training on gender equality and gender responsiveness in community governance system.

Kono Community Institutions, Governance and Functions

| S/ No | Institution | Functions |
|----------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Head Chief | <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. | Community Development Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement instructions from higher traditional authorities • Coordinate execution of community development projects. • Organize recreational and community entertainment programs etc. |
| 3. | The Youth Body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement instructions from higher traditional authorities • Community Security • Conflict resolution among community youth members • Organize recreational and community entertainment programs in collaboration with the CDC etc. |
| 4. | Social Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry out social activities (burial ceremonies, etc) ▪ Promote the tradition, culture and community development ▪ Conflict resolution among members ▪ Provide support to the less privileged |
| 5. | Religious Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role models, advisory roles etc. ▪ Spiritual/divine interventions ▪ Support community development efforts |

Environmental and Climatic Characteristics

Kono is located in a wide expanse of agrarian land, that is coastal, and also has rivers, creeks and canals. Kono is about two hours by a fast running boat to Bonny Island. Currently, there is a road construction from Bonny to Ogoni which will pass through Khana Local Government; home local government to Kono.

The people reported that, they are part of the food production hub in Ogoni owing to the fertile agricultural land. However, food production has reduced tremendously in the community due to several uncleaned crude oil spills that occurred in the area. Presently, the yield of cassava, yam and plantain, their major crops planted is very poor. The people are worried, that, the stunted growth and poor yield of crops is not only associated to impacts of climate change but the uncleaned crude oil spills as well.

Climatic Conditions

Kono is situated in Ogoni and shares similar climatic condition with other parts of Ogoniland. They have a good climate that allows them to farm long term crops such as yam, cassava etc. The month with the highest relative humidity is September (90.03 %). The month with the lowest relative humidity is January (77.42 %). The month with the highest number of rainy days is October (28.73 days). The month with the lowest number of rainy days is January (15.40 days).

Kono has a Tropical Monsoon climate with significant rainfall most months, with a short dry season. The average annual temperature is 26.0 °C | 78.8 °F in Kono. Precipitation is about 3068 mm | 120.8 inch per year.

<https://en.climate-data.org/africa/nigeria/rivers/ogoni-381919/#weather>

While it is difficult to distinguish the impacts of climate change from impacts of environmental pollution from crude oil spill, it is important to note that, oil exploitation and exploration activities in Kono stopped about 29 years ago. Thus, it is imperative to state that the issues AAPW team observed are attributable to climate change.

Food Scarcity, Hunger and Poverty

Kono is predominantly a fishing and farming village. The people complained about severe hunger and poverty in Kono. The sources of their drinking water have been polluted, which appears to be dark brown in colour and they depend on a single mono pump borehole. They said, the crude oil polluted the underground and water table as well as the surface water. The food and water they eat and drink are said to be contaminated. Everyone agreed that Kono land is contaminated, coupled with the changing climatic condition, making it almost impossible to farm or fish within the creeks and rivers. The community is facing horrendous challenges.

Health Issues

There were noticeable and prevalent health challenges which the people complained about, ranging from skin diseases, eye infections, internal organs disorder, strange illnesses, respiratory problems, etc.

Migration

Most members of the community have migrated to Port Harcourt and other cities to search for possible livelihood. One of the respondent who visited the community from Port Harcourt, told AAPW team that he a fisherman as well as a boat driver, but, irrespective of his alternative boat driving skill, he was unable to provide the basic needs of his family; hence, he travelled to Port Harcourt and has been living on manual jobs.

Flood and Erosion

As mentioned earlier, Kono is located on a wide expanse of land. The people experience, flooding and erosion caused by heavy rain fall. In fact, the people had to resort to self-help labour to construct road and drainage system on a major community road that enables them to transport their products from the farms to market.

Rise in Temperature

The people complained that high level of heat has affected their health and has also affected the growth of crops. The rashes and other related skin diseases are perceived by the community people to be caused by the high temperature

Heavy Rain, Storm and Wind

The rain according to community dwellers is often associated with heavy storm and wind. The wind destroys the roofs of houses, crops in the farm and also brings diseases to human beings and livestock as well as native fowls in the community. The heavy rain, storm and wind have also destroyed mud houses, which the people said, used to be durable, over fifteen years without renovation. Presently, families who live in mud houses, renovate the mud walls of their houses annually after every rainy season, due to it being washed by the heavy rains directed horizontally at the walls by the wind.

Rusting of Zinc used for Roofing

The zinc used for roofing in so many houses showed high level of rust. According to them, this was not the case in the past. They are of the view that something has gone wrong in the environment, that is could be associated with climate change. However, it is pertinent to say that, acid rain, could be the cause of rusting of metals and zinc in the area.

Livelihood Systems and Analysis

The people of Kono tend to have livelihoods in line with their natural endowment: Land, Forest, Rivers, Creeks and Canals. Thus their livelihood system is essentially agricultural and non-agricultural.

Farming: Unlike other project target communities visited, Farming is the major livelihood in Kono. According to them, they are endowed with a wide expanse of fertile agrarian land, and competition among households in farming to have the highest crop stock and food production was the order of the day in the community. Unfortunately, environmental pollution coupled with climate change impact have reduced crop yield and famine has taken over their existence in Kono presently. Farming season starts in September with clearing and preparation of land and by October, planting of seedlings that have been nursed commences, targeted at the last lap of the rain. As the dry season sets in from November the plants would have developed leaves and the dews that

collects on the leaves then provide the needed water for the plants to survive and grow very well. Harvesting begins by June and July for long term crops, while, short term crops such as vegetables, potatoes, pepper etc., would have been harvested in about 90 days to generate income for household living while they wait for the harvesting of long term crops such as cassava, yam, plantain. While also waiting for the long term crops, most families, will commence fishing also as a source of livelihood.

Regrettably, climate change and environmental pollution from crude oil has made the land less productive and their major livelihood is threatened.

Hunting: Hunting is another very lucrative occupation in Kono. Families are proud to have hunters; those who do not have hunters, will send their male children to learn hunting skill from a renowned hunter. Most families combine hunting and farming. As they go for farming, they will set trap for animals and continue farming. In the evening, when they are done with farming, the traps would have caught animals for dinner and some reserved for another day or sold for income. Frequently caught animals include; grass-cutters, porcupines, rabbit, monkeys, antelopes, etc.

Some specialized hunters depend on hunting as the sole occupation and they are considered wealthy given their ability to raise income through hunting for the basic needs of the family as well as sending their children to school. However, the story about hunting has changed. There are fewer animals in the forest; it's either, the animals have migrated from the forest to other forest or environmental pollution has killed most of the animals in addition to the changing climate which may not be favourable to the animals. No Kono youth is interested in hunting anymore; the few hunters, have migrated to other communities and meat as a source of protein is currently imported.

Alternative Medicine Practitioners: Kono people, as in most Ogoni communities, are known for their prowess in the practice of herbal medicine. Most illnesses are treated with herbs harvested from the forest. They said, bullet injuries, dislocations, malaria, typhoid, epilepsy, prostate enlargement, fibroid, etc. are treatable with herbs by the native medicine practitioners. Sadly, most of the herbs are in extinction and do not grow anymore within the environment due to climate change or environmental pollution from crude oil.

Fishing: Fishing is generally part of the key occupation in Kono. The issue with climate change according to them started with fishing. Fishermen were no longer catching fish for a very long time now within Kono rivers. They had to travel far to coastal areas of Bonny for fishing. Unfortunately, sea piracy in the Bonny area has made it even more difficult for them to travel far into the sea for fishing. Fishes caught include: Crayfish, barracuda, red sniper, cat fish, herring, mullet, etc.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood System

When the SPDC was operating, the people were employed on short term basis for both skilled and unskilled jobs. Security wardens, cleaners, gardeners, drivers, welders, electricians, plumbers, catering etc. are some of the employment opportunities that were available. However, these jobs ceased when SPDC left the area. The people are also involved other private businesses such as trading, construction works and transportation with bicycles, motorcycles, vehicles etc. Non-Agricultural livelihood was not considered an important source of income generation. Most people preferred agriculture

and so, the challenge of climate change to them is a critical issue that affects the very fabric of their existence. They did not believe that there could be interventions to reduce climate change challenges; hence, they were very excited to discuss the challenges and possible solutions. They were very eager to make commitment in terms of what they can contribute towards providing solutions to the climate change issues.

Challenges of Livelihood Systems.

The challenges are similar in most of the communities. Some of the key challenges are:

- The soil in Kono is no longer agriculturally productive due to pollution and climate change
- Disappearance of some plants and animals in the forest
- Unpredictable heavy rain fall pattern, storm and wind in the community have created confusion among the farmers
- Rise in temperature and its attendant impact on lives stock and crops is high
- Crude oil pollution and contamination of the underground water table and surface water
- Lack of portable drinking water, which has increased the spread of water borne diseases in the community and sometimes cause epidemics.
- Increase in social vices and crimes: piracy, kidnapping, rape, stealing, internet fraud and other crimes
- High cost of food and materials

Climate Change, Vulnerability and Conflict Analysis

| Climate Change Issue | Vulnerability | Associated Conflict | Adaptation |
|--|---|----------------------------|---|
| The soil in Kono is no longer agriculturally productive due to pollution and climate change | Loss of Livelihood | Loss of Livelihood | Migration to other communities in search of good soil for farming |
| | | | Resort to other livelihood opportunities in the community |
| 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 |
| Unpredictable heavy rain fall pattern, storm and wind in the community has created confusion among the farmers | Erosion of top soil causing infertility of soil | No dispute reported | Appears to be a blessing in disguise as community depends on rain water for drinking and other domestic services. |
| | Destruction of Mud Houses | Loss of habitat | Annual renovation of houses after rainy season |
| | Destruction of farms (crops) | Loss of livelihood | Change in type of crops farmed to crops perceived to be wind resistant. |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Rise in temperature and its attendant impact on lives stock and crops is high | 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 |
| Crude oil pollution and contamination of the underground water table and surface water | Loss of Good for water drinking | Self-conflict | Adaptations are different ways with different people: Some migrated to other communities, other stayed back and contributed resources to construct a mono borehole pump |
| Epidemic and spread of diseases in the community. | 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 | Low | Low | Resolved by community leadership and sometimes through the legal process of courts |
| 2. | Intra community conflict over traditional leadership right | Low | Low | Community leadership resolves such disputes. Criminal cases are handed over to the police |
| 3. | Conflict over oil company social responsibility governance issues | Low | Low | 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 | Low | Low | Community leadership resolves such disputes. Criminal cases are handed over to the police |

| | | | | |
|----|---|----------|----------|---|
| 7. | Militancy, Piracy | Moderate | Moderate | Residents/Travelers are constantly in fear of being attacked by pirates and kidnapers. |
| 8. | Bunkering/Artisanal refining and associated conflicts | moderate | Moderate | 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. |

General Observation and Lessons Learnt

Observations

- The youth are interested in revamping agriculture in the community. They are still farming and hoping for miracle.
- The community does not have electricity for over ten years.
- The community have a good leadership understanding and networking among themselves.
- The aged people prefer to live in mud houses.
- Livestock rearing is a household business. Most households have birds and goats for rearing and sales
- The use of inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides by farmers is very high. This could also affect farm produce.

Lessons Learnt

- The community leadership is transparent and so receives agreed financial contributions from citizens for self-help projects.
- The community dwellers are mostly natives. Except for women from other communities, who are married to natives, there are no strangers living in the community.
- The people have a strong traditional religion with laws that are strictly adhered to. Some of the trees are symbols of traditions and strangers are not allowed to seat under such trees.
- Poverty is high in the community. They are excited, happy and willing to participate in processes that will bring about development in their community.

Recommendations for Intervention

- Modern farming techniques with the use of bio-fertilizers, simple farm tilling machines and other equipments should be encouraged for farming in the area. The use of inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides by farmers is very high. This could also affect farm produce.
- Training on conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and incorporation of such strategies into the community governance system is important
- Kono is endowed with a wide expanse of forest. Thus, establishing a community environmental conservation and management system is important

- Training and establishment of micro credit scheme for women to enhance socio-economic activities.
- Training on Networking and Collaboration of CSNs in all 10 communities and Fisherfolks across coastal fishing communities for CSNs to facilitate.
- An agricultural development program should be established in collaboration with the Local Government.
- Training of community leadership on the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act, particularly concerns over the state government setting up of the trust funds and the administration of PIA funds.
- The CSNs should be trained on advocacy to engage government agencies and in particular the coordinator of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) to support clean-up of Kono environment.

Conclusion

Kono community has a very wide expanse of land and other associated economic potentials that can be explored to mitigate the climate change impacts in the area. It is important to start a community based livelihood restoration system based on a conflict-sensitive climate change mitigation and adaption process. The community has made verbal commitment to give their support to interventions that will aid them in poverty alleviation and general development of the community.

Report Researched and Written by:



Academic Associates PeaceWorks

B35, Trans Amadi Facilities Ltd.,
129132 Trans Amadi Industrial Layout,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
Tel: +234 915 310 7741,

Email: aapeaceworks@yahoo.com;

www.aapw.org
