



# **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

**Esuk Mba Community in Akpabuyo LGA,  
Cross River State. Nigeria.**

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**Picture Showing Gully Erosion caused by Heavy Rainfall in Esuk Mba**

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### **Disclaimer!**

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## List of Abbreviations

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 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**

Esuk Mba according to the paramount ruler was founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Etiyin Ofiong, Okeoho and Efiomedem; The Great Duke of Calabar. The history of Esuk Mba is shrouded in the trade by barter that takes places in the community from the colonial era to date. It is a famous community in the history of Cross River State. Esuk Mba has a close affinity with Creek Town in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State. The founders migrated from Creek Town through the sea to the area now called Esuk Mba, which was a virgin land and dwelled there. They are known to be great farmers and fishermen, their prowess in farming and fishing attracted people from neighbouring communities to the area.

Esuk Mba is located in Akpabuyo Local Government in Cross River State. Its geographical coordinates are 4° 52' 0" North, 8° 24' 0" East <https://goo.gl/maps/pXmooii2rvfcCP4k9>

## **Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Context**

The people of Esuk Mba have very close relationship with Creek Town. The renowned Ekpe society that is celebrated in Esuk Mba, got its origin from Creek Town. Other cultural activities including the Obong, Akatti, Abang Akpan and Ukwa festivals are the roots of the socio-cultural activities in Esuk Mba. It is believed that the festivals

are celebrated for cleansing and divination for good fishing season, farming harvest, prosperity and protection.

The Esuk Mba community market in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State is still practicing trade by barter, by exchanging one food item for another. The market was reestablished in 1956. It is a weekly market that starts in the morning on every Saturday.

## **Esuk Mba Governance System**

The Paramount ruler is the overall traditional head in the Local Government, He is a clan head of one of the clans and is elected by other clan heads. Thus, the paramount ruler is first among equals. Similarly, the clan heads are elected by village heads. One of the village heads will be elected by the village head as the clan head. Extended family or tribe groups make up the clans, who constitute the Clan Council. The village heads are the next in authority. The villages Heads in charge of Family Heads. Below the village heads you have the youth group comprising both males and females as well as the Women Group, Age Grades, Social Cultural Groups and Religious Groups.

## **Gender Equality**

The issue of gender is similar across most states in the Niger Delta. However, the Efik women in Cross Rivers State as it is in Esuk Mba are very powerful. At the family level the first daughters are in control of all the inheritance of the family. They can become chiefs and participate in the community decision making process. It is a unique system of governance that involves first daughters in the affairs of the family and considered very important in decision making process at the family level. Except the woman become a chief, she cannot participate with other chiefs. But as first daughter, she commands high level of authority in the family. She can influence who becomes family head and ultimately the village head and so on.

## **Esuk Mba Institutions, Governance and Functions**

| <b>S/<br/>No</b> | <b>Institution</b>                               | <b>Functions</b>  |
|------------------|--|---|
| 1.               | The Paramount Ruler                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Custodian of law, custom and tradition</li> <li>▪ Strengthens community peace and stability.</li> <li>▪ mediation of disputes and facilitates resolutions</li> <li>▪ Promotes development by engaging with development partners</li> </ul> |
| 2.               | Clan Council of Chiefs                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist the King in his functions as directed by the King</li> <li>▪ Represents the community in traditional functions</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution</li> <li>▪ Decision making</li> </ul>   |
| 3.               | The Village Head and Community Council of Chiefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support and Represents the Chiefs in traditional functions if directed</li> <li>▪ Represents the community in traditional functions</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution</li> </ul>  |

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
|    |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision making</li> </ul>   |
| 4. | Family Heads and Elders at the Family Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take decision at the family level to support the village head</li> <li>▪ Information dissemination point to family members</li> <li>▪ Represents the family in traditional functions</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution at the family level</li> <li>▪ Decision making</li> </ul>  |
| 5. | Youth Executives Male and Female            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementing instructions from higher traditional authorities</li> <li>▪ Organize youth programs.</li> <li>▪ Organize provide community labour, execution of community projects etc.</li> <li>▪ In charge of community Security Provide community</li> <li>▪ Organize recreational and community entertainment programs etc.</li> </ul>  |
| 6. | Age Grades                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initiates community developmental projects and activities.</li> <li>▪ Coordinate with donor agencies for the smooth execution and completion of community projects.</li> <li>▪ Find employment opportunities for youths.</li> </ul>  |
| 7. | Women Group                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizes women development programs.</li> <li>▪ Implementing instructions and decisions from higher authorities</li> <li>▪ Fund and implement community development projects</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution</li> </ul>  |
| 8. | Social/Cultural Groups                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizes social functions (burial ceremonies, special coronations)</li> <li>▪ Promote the tradition and culture of the people</li> <li>▪ Settling disputes when the need arises</li> <li>▪ Provide support and funds to educational and economic activities</li> <li>▪ Involve in community development efforts (donation of small facilities like chairs, tables, canopies)</li> </ul> |
| 9. | Religious Groups                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayers for peace and stability</li> <li>▪ Role models</li> <li>▪ Advisory roles</li> <li>▪ Spiritual/divine healings</li> <li>▪ Support community development efforts</li> </ul>  |

### **Environmental and Climatic Characteristics**

Esuk Mba has a wide mangrove forest and fresh water forest. However, the livelihood potentials of these forests have reduced tremendously due to climate change issues. As a result, some members of the community and guest fisher folks who settled within the coast of Esuk Mba have resorted to cutting of mangrove trees for construction purposes. Timber, which used to provide for wood used in construction is no longer available in the fresh water forest. The endemic logging of timber in the area, perceived as an alternative business to fishing and farming has resulted to a colossal impact of climate change in Esuk Mba. Heavy rainfalls associated with storm has become very unpredictable, houses are destroyed by the storm and most farm lands that were hitherto dry have become swampy and flooded. Plants no longer produce crops, there is a noticeable rise in sea level, rise in temperature, etc. affecting agricultural production which is the main source of income generation and food security in the area.

Climate change challenges faced by the community has attracted some NGOs to the area, for instance, there is an on-going World Bank and Government partnership project on REDD+ in the area, titled: Building Mangrove Forest Communities and CSOs Response to Climate Change and Mangrove Conservation in Esuk Mba Community.

The project intends to contribute to the reduction of carbon emission and encourage the use of alternative energy sources as well as promote environmental conservation at the grassroots level, through energy/environment/climate change education to schools and communities, training young persons on simple techniques of alternative energy source, carry out demonstration in the construction of simple improved cook stove with local materials, thus reducing the impact of carbon emission and climate change in Nigeria. The project is aimed at raising nursery of 3,000 stands of mangrove seedlings and plant them in total land area of 1 hectare in 5 project communities. The mangrove species will be nursed and trans-planted will be *Rhizophora mangle* (Red mangrove) and *Avicennia germinans* (Black mangrove) which are native species in Cross River State. It is a REDD+ strategies project supported by the World Bank.



### **Food Scarcity, Hunger and Poverty**

The people complained about food scarcity, hunger and poverty in the land. This is because the farm lands have become unproductive due to heavy rain fall, increased heat wave, flood etc.

### **Flood and Erosion**

The community is faced with gully erosion due to incessant heavy rainfall. The major road to the water front where traders berth with their goods is cut off by gully erosion. Most part of the community have issues of erosion. Erosion has also washed away the top soil, rendering it infertile for farming.

### **Rise in Temperature**

A farmer, rhetorically has this to say; “Temperature increase has become a serious burden to us the farmers and fishermen, after the day’s activity either in the farm or river, we start thinking of coping with the heat. There, is no electricity, we cannot afford to buy electricity generators and so we leave our doors open to mosquitoes and sometimes criminals at night. It’s like, the world is coming to an end”. AAPW team, received similar complaints about temperature increase in other communities visited. The local adaptation strategy of opening their doors at night due to the heat level has further made them vulnerable to health issues from mosquitoes’ bites or criminals. According to them, they barely catch some sleep at early hours of the day, at which point, the early morning breeze would have reduced the level.



## **Heavy Rain, Storm and Wind**

Rain in the area is often associated with heavy storm. According to them, the wind destroys properties, particularly roofs of houses, crops in the farm and affects them health wise.

## **Rusting of Zinc used for Roofing**

Also stated, is the issue with rusting of zinc used for roofing. AAPW received similar complaint in Kono. It was suspected that, the case in Kono could be associated to acid rain as a result of oil pollution in the area. Thus, it is surprising to receive the same complaint in Esuk Mba. Could it be that the heavy rainfall, storm and wind as a result of climate change cause corrosion of metals? On the other hand, carbon emission can also cause acid rain over time, which may have affected the zinc roofing sheets. A further study on this is necessary for an explanation of the cause of zinc corrosion in the communities.

## **Migration**

The elites of Esuk Mba are afraid of visiting the community due to insecurity. The village head of Esuk Mba told AAPW team that his family: wife and children were kidnapped in 2012 and since then, there has been high incidence of kidnapping in the community and its environs. Thus, most elites are afraid of visiting the village. There is no police station in the area. Apart from the issue of insecurity, loss of livelihood has also contributed to migration.

## **Livelihood Systems and Analysis: (Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Livelihood)**

### **Agriculture**

**Farming:** Farming is an integral part of the community traditional livelihood system. Sadly, the farming practice is decreasing due to serious environmental and climatic impacts. The soil is no longer fertile, virgin dry land areas have become swampy, most farmers had to travel very far into the forest to find suitable land for farming, and this has caused serious security issues, as farmers are attacked sometimes in the forest by timber loggers, criminals etc.

**Fishing:** Most households are into fishing and farming. According to them, they have fishing and farming seasons. It was easy to engage in both for improved income and food security. In past times, the weather for fishing and farming season occur simultaneously. When this happens, the men take the responsibility to clear the land, while the women and the children continue with tilling and planting, to allow the men go to fishing. This is no longer the case, a community respondent said, it is only persons who do not have alternative livelihood that are still involved in farming and fishing.

**Timber:** Timber logging has become an alternative source of energy; most militants are involved in the business and there is no control. Esuk Mba has an expanse of forest but all the economic trees have been cut down for timber. This has further posed serious environmental challenges in the area and increased the climate change impacts.

**Hunting:** According to the community, hunting used to be a lucrative business. Most of the hunters in the past were known to be wealthy. Regrettably, the animals have

migrated to other areas or are simply in extinction due to the incessant logging activities.

**Alternative Medicine Practitioners:** The shrubs and herbs used by traditional medicine practitioners are no longer in existence in their forest. Most Herbal doctors, have migrated from the area to other places, while others have resorted to other livelihood opportunities in the area.

### **Non-Agricultural Livelihood System**

Transportation, (Okada transport) is the major non-agricultural activity in the area. Virtually every household has persons involved in motor bike transport. When asked, some respondents said, “as farmers, we need motorbikes to go far into the forest in search of suitable and fertile land for farming but unfortunately, farming has become unproductive, irrespective of such efforts; thus, some of us resorted to ‘okada’ transport business as an alternative income generation activity.” To some who were farmers or fishermen, trading, bicycle and okada mechanics, transportation etc. are climate change adaptation strategies.

### **Challenges of Livelihood Systems**

- Health issues; AAPW team saw a two room dilapidated building that is having serious leaks, used as a Health Centre with only one community health extension worker. There are no materials to work with, no first aid kits; it was a horrible place to be as a sick person.
- Insecurity is very high in Esuk Mba as well as the entire Akpabuyo Local Government Area. It is a boundary area between Nigeria and Cameroun and most militants, pirate gangs and criminals dwell in the area.
- Deforestation is high and this has exposed the soil to direct sun light, storm and other climatic hazards that adversely affect farming.
- Unpredictable heavy rainfall patterns, storm and wind in the community have created increasing confusion among persons with livelihood that depend on nature
- Rise in temperature and its attendant impact on livestock and crops are high
- Extinction of some plants and animal species due to unfavourable climatic conditions

### **Climate Change, Vulnerability and Conflict Analysis**

| <b>Climate Change Issue</b>   | <b>Vulnerability</b> | <b>Associated Conflict</b> | <b>Adaptation</b>   |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| The soil 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 depend 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 |
| 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

| 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                                     | High | High | Residents/Travelers are constantly in fear of being attacked by pirates and kidnappers.   |
| 8. | Bunkering/Artisanal refining and associated conflicts | Low  | Low  | 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 new sustainable skills and techniques to revamp agriculture in the community.
- About 70 percent of the houses in the community are mud houses showing the level of poverty in one instance and on the other hand, some persons, the aged in particular, prefer mud houses due to its cooling effect. Thus, mud houses are conceived as an adaptation strategy to the rise in temperature.
- Livestock rearing is a household business in Esuk Mba. Almost all households, have livestock, such as the African Dwarf goat, fowls, dogs, docks, etc.
- There is fear and tension in the community due to periodic attacks; rape, kidnapping, food robbery etc. particularly on market days
- There is high expectation of community members from the REDD+ project as a means of alternative livelihood and income generation
- The community dwellers are mostly natives. Most of the strangers have fled the community due to insecurity

### Lessons Learnt

- Communities demonstrated knowledge of climate change and were able to relate it to issues of livelihood and conflict
- Legacy issues has made communities skeptical about NGO activities in the area The people have a strong traditional religion with laws that are strictly adhered to.
- There is increase in the death of livestock, mostly during birth, this was attributed to the unfavourable climatic condition in the area

## Recommendations

- Training communities to have technical knowledge on climate change, adaptation, resilience and conflict management
- Develop a climate change adaptation and resilience plan that can be integrated into the community governance system.
- Training and sensitization of communities on bio-fertilizers, bio-gas and environmental conservation and management.
- Training on Networking and Collaboration of CSNs in all 10 communities and Fisherfolks across coastal fishing communities for CSNs to facilitate.

## Conclusion

Alternative livelihood options to enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation is very crucial. Sustainability of household livelihood strategies has become more imperative to the community members than conservative efforts that do not generate immediate revenue for their survival. They want projects that can be directly transformed to income generation activities. The people requested for techniques to mitigate flooding of farms, support for improved seedlings and other strategies that will restore their livelihood.

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