



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



Community Entry and Stakeholders Mapping Report

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for

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Delta State. Nigeria.**

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Picture Showing How Rise in Sea Level Destroy Shoreline Vegetation in Obuguru Community Ogulagha Kingdom

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List of Abbreviations

AC.....	Advisory Council
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
GFA	Ghana Fishermen Association
GMoU	Global Memorandum of Understanding
HOMEF.....	Health of Mother Earth Foundation
LGA	Local Government Area
LGC.....	Local Government Council
NAOC	Nigerian Agip Oil Company
NAOS.....	National Association of Ogulagha Students
OKYC	Ogulagha Kingdom Youth Council
OKV	Ogulagha Kingdom Vigilante
RCV	Red Cap Vigilante
SPDC.....	Shell Petroleum Development Company
WANEP	West African Network for Peace Building
YSGV.....	Young Shall Grow Vigilante

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

Ogulagha is the ancestral headquarters of Ogulagha Kingdom. The Kingdom is comprised of ten communities: Ogulagha, Abara, Obotobo I, Obotobo II, Obuguru, Okuntu, Osain, Sokebolou, Youbebe and Youkiri. Ogulagha is riverine, it is by the Atlantic Ocean. The people are Ijaw speaking believed to have migrated from River Dodo, Ramos and finally settled at River Forcados. Ogulagha community has seven quarters according to his children. Namely: Keneke Dumo, Akareware Dumo, Obuko Dumo, Dasei Dumo, Brawei Dumo, Olorigbo Dumo and Obukobai Dumo. (Dumo meaning Quarters). It is located 33.3 miles away from Warri and constitutes part of the Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria.

Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Context

The people have a rich culture, with a high population density made up of indigenes and nonindigenous people from all over Nigeria. They have a unique festival called ‘Amanimiwarenimi’ and ‘Bini-bbi’ Festivals. These festivals according to them are for unity, togetherness and entertainment. The festivals bring people from far and near to meet at the community headquarters after a long period. It is believed that the ‘Osuopele’ is an ancestral deity that is worshiped for protection, divination and it brings wealth and prosperity to the people.

Ogulagha is an oil producing kingdom with SPDC, NAOC and Chevron oil companies. There are several oil wells and pipelines crisscrossing the entire Kingdom. Oil facilities are all over the land and sea. Ogulagha community was said to be displaced from their original place of settlement by SPDC. Ogulagha, was resettled in a lower part of the area and that makes it vulnerable to flood and ocean surge. Many houses have been washed away by the sea. According to them, there were residential houses about a 150metres into the sea.

The occupations of the people were formerly, fishing, farming, canoe carving, artisans, hunting and petty trading. However, with the advent of oil companies, several skills and occupations now exist, such as underwater welding, pipe fitting, plumbing, engineers, etc. Fishing is still the main occupation of the people; there are well established fishermen and women from Ghana who have been living at Ogulagha for decades now. They travel through the Atlantic Ocean to Ghana and back. Some of them are children who took over the fishing business from their parents. Farming livelihood is reducing due to flooding caused by the incessant rainfall and rise in the sea level which is saline and destroys farm lands. Thus, many persons have stopped farming.

Ogulagha Kingdom falls within Ward 11 of Burutu Local Government Area. The councilor representing ward 11, the member representing Burutu Federal Constituency in the National Assembly and the Director, Planning Research and Statistics Delta State Oil Producing Areas Commission are from Ogulagha Kingdom.

Ogulagha Kingdom Governance System

Ogulagha Kingdom has a central governance system with each community having governance structures that work with the apex center. The Kingdom is headed by a King, the Kingdom Traditional Council of Chiefs, Kingdom Youth Council, Kingdom Women Executives and Kingdom Vigilante.

However, individual communities have a uniquely structured governance system in accordance to the kingdom structure. At the community level, there is The Community Executive Council headed by the Chairman, Community Advisory Council made up of chiefs and Elders, the chiefs are members of the Kingdom traditional rulers council and are automatic and lifetime members of the council, the chiefs constitute the community executive council through a democratic process of election. The advisory council is followed by the Community Women Executive. Then the Community Youth Council, Community Vigilante, The Young Shall Grow Vigilante and the Red Cap Vigilante. There are members of the Delta State Water Ways Security and Ijaw Youth Council who are recognized in the Governance structure of the community and clan. The two positions are elected or appointed at the state level.

Gender Equality

Ogulagha is patriarchal in practice, and there are women chiefs and women are given leadership role in the governance structure of the kingdom and community level. However, the women, are not given equal opportunities with men. The community executive council is entirely men and that is the highest administrative organ of the community. Women also have an executive council but they are subservient to the Community Executive council.

Table: Showing Governance System and Functions

S/ No	Institution	Functions
Governance System and Functions at Kingdom Level		
1.	The King	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest traditional ruler in Ogulagha Kingdom. • Custodian of law, custom and order in the kingdom. • Mediate between parties in conflict, Intervene for peace and stability in the kingdom • Interfaces between government, oil companies on behalf of the kingdom
2.	Kingdom Traditional Council of Chiefs,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the king in the administration of the kingdom in accordance with their positions in the council • They represent the king in their respective communities and attend periodic meetings with the king where reports are given for decision making
3.	Kingdom Youth Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth wing of the kingdom. They implement decisions taken by the King in council on youth matters. • They serve as the soldiers of the kingdom in conjunction with the community -based youth organizations.
4.	Kingdom Women Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the women in the kingdom at the central level. They implement decisions that affect women • Disseminate information to the community-based women executives
5.	Kingdom Vigilante.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as the security body of the kingdom. • They work to complement the role of security operatives in the kingdom by working in collaboration with the security.
Governance System and Functions at Community Level		
6.	The Community Executive Council headed by the Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership body established by the community chiefs for the general administration of the community • They are in charge of development fees, Initiate project for community development. • Coordinate with development partners for the development of the communities • Peacebuilding and conflict resolution
	Community Advisory Council made up of Chiefs and Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chiefs are automatic members of the advisory council. They are members of the kingdom traditional council of chiefs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appoint or elect members of the community executive council • They interface between the communities and the kingdom • They are the custodians of customs and tradition at the community level
7.	Community Women Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate the women at the community level ▪ They work with the kingdom women executive ▪ Organize programs targeted at women development.
8.	Community Youth Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organize youth programs ▪ Work with the kingdom youth council ▪ Promote law and order ▪ Serve as the labor arm of communities
9.	Community Vigilante,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compliment the operations of security agencies in the community ▪ Work with the kingdom vigilante on community-based security activities.
10.	The Young Shall Grow and The Red Cap Vigilante	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perform same service, smaller units of security groups organized along age and university education
11.	Delta State Water Ways Security and Ijaw Youth Council members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compliments the role of the vigilante at the state level

Environmental and Climatic Characteristics

Ogulagha is generally riverine, it is located at the bight of the Atlantic Ocean, that explains why it is susceptible to flood, according to the people, Ogulagha kingdom used to be cold during rainy season from March/April to September/October but currently, the seasons are not predictable, its rainy and sunny all through the year with thunder, lightning, high temperature and storms. The area has mangrove and fresh water forest. They experience heavy rain storm, that destroyed houses in the past and recently about two weeks ago, electrical poles were destroyed. The soil is generally sandy with clay and mud in the fresh and mangrove forest.

Climatic Conditions

Flood and Erosion: Ogulagha is at the bight of the Atlantic Ocean. The people are experiencing high level of flood caused by heavy rain fall and rise in sea level. Farmlands are flooded with salt water from the sea, thus destroying crops and other fresh water plants. According to the people, the rain fall pattern has become unpredictable coupled with the sea surge which has erodes houses; these have continuously pushed the community inwards. They claimed to have lost about 150 meters of land with houses on it to the sea surge. Most persons with agricultural livelihoods, particularly crop farming, are forced to stop. According to them, maritime and general criminality is on the increase, that explains the reason for the security groups in the kingdom.

Rise in Temperature

It was said, that the atmospheric temperature is very high during the day and night. The community has 24 hours' electricity supply by SPDC and so, virtually every home craves to buy air conditioners. This was observed by the team. Most houses have ACs installed. According to them, Ogulagha, used to be a very cool area with a shallow continental shelf that extends several meters and Europeans used to come all the way from Lagos with their yachts to spend time at the Ogulagha beach for days. Air conditioners were not needed then due to the cool breeze from the Atlantic Ocean.

Livelihood Systems and Analysis

Agricultural Livelihoods Livelihood System

Fishing: There is a unique fishing value chain that the people unintentionally introduced and serves as employment for interested persons. There are fishermen and women, who go to fishing as deckhands (Fishing assistants). There are the local and city buyers' union members. Only the local members can buy directly from the fishermen/women. Similarly, only the city-based buyers' union members can buy from the Local Buyers union. In addition, a team for fish processing is usually engaged by the fishermen/women. In the event that the fish might get rotten or no immediate buyers. The processing team, immediately processes the fish for preservation. There are fish dryers and refrigerators. There is no comprehensive law guiding fishing in the kingdom, except for certain fishing nets that are not allowed.



Ghana Fishing Association Chairman and members

The Ghanaian fisher folks are very organized. They have a chairman and other executive members. It is a good business to employ a Ghanaian fisherman. Members of the community who employ Ghanaian Fishermen are called Landlords. They take care of the upkeep of the Ghanaian until the next fishing season and fish caught, are shared in an agreed percentage between the landlord and the fisherman. There were complaints that some of the Ghanaian usually run away through the ocean with the pretext of going for fishing. Thus, any Ghanaian to be engaged is guaranteed by the Chairman who had lived in the community for long, and participated in community affair with investment.

Firewood Cutting, weaving of fishnet, processing and storage materials- These are other lucrative businesses connected to fishing in Ogulagha that have been affected by the depleting fishing livelihood due to climate change impact. There are renowned firewood business owners, who employ workers to use sawing machines in the mangrove and forest.

The following complaints were made by the Ghanaian fisher folk during an interactive session:

- There is very low catch of fish
- Sea pirates attack in the sea
- High cost of fishing gear, an average cost of the construction of their fishing boat is about 7 million, while the fishing net cost about 6 million.
- The quantity of weeds caught by fishing nets is very high unlike it used to be in the past.
- The water level is always high, thereby making it difficult for them to time appropriately and predict the seasonality for fishing
- The high level of sea water has encroached on shoreline fishing, thereby increasing the concentration of fishing activity in an area and ultimately causing over fishing along the coastline.
- Crude oil spill and under water gas pipeline spills are frequent occurrences in the area, killing and destroying the aquatic environment for fish to breed and dwell.



Woman explaining her ordeal Low fish catch

Farming: Subsistence farming is practiced in the area. However, most farmers, have stopped farming due to poor harvest, resulting from rain and sea flooding of farmlands. According to them, the sea water rises to a level that they have not experienced in recent times. Sea water now invades their farmlands destroying crops.

Timber: Hard wood is of high demand in the area for canoe carving, construction of high sea fishing boats and housing etc. The business is controlled mostly by non-indigenes, who are required to pay a fee to the community for permit. Hard wood is said to be scarce, those involved in the business travel far into the forest areas to get hard wood that are barely mature. There are no laws guiding lumbering activities.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood System

Non-Agricultural livelihood increases with the need. Trading is the major non-agricultural activity and considered as an alternative to their main occupation of fishing. However, most of the indigenes were traders of fish and fish value chain related products such as nets, hooks, etc. Currently, due to the low catch of fish, some of them have started trading on other items. Skill based occupations such as electrical works, plumbing, pipe fitting, boat drivers and mechanics, carpenters, welding, weaving,

hairdressers, craft/artisans, tailors, bricklayers, local contractors, and several other unskilled and skilled jobs have become alternative sources of income in the area.

Challenges of Livelihood Systems

In addition to the complaints made by the Ghanaian fisherfolk in Ogulagha, community groups identified the following as challenges to livelihoods in the area:

- Flooding due to continuous increase in sea level and heavy rain falls
- Heavy storms associated with rainfall destroying plants and infrastructures
- Increasing erosion and sea surge that destroy houses and further push the inhabitants' inward
- Temperature increase
- Unpredictable seasonality; rainfall is almost all round the year now. Harmattan season, which is an indicator of good fishing season, because, according to them, fish catch is tremendously higher during harmattan season but it is no longer stable as it used to be and this is creating confusion and frustrations on livelihood strategies
- Population of fishes and sea water resources is drastically reducing, for instance, cray fish, mudskipper, jelly fish, oyster, etc.
- Poor primary health service care system
- Very high cost of living and cost of materials
- High cost of transportation
- Poor access to credit and financial facilities
- Inadequate knowledge of climate smart agricultural practice
- Poor knowledge of alternative livelihood systems
- Absence of community development plans
- High rate of migration of workforce especially the youths
- There is no comprehensive law governing fishing livelihood
- Youth who have been placed on contract employment by SPDC are not required to work. They are paid monthly stipends without going to work
- Distrust among the leadership and the community in general is very high.
- High level of poverty

Climate Change, Vulnerability and Conflict Analysis

Climate Change Issue	Vulnerability	Associated Conflict	Adaptation
Flood due to Rain and rise in sea level	Loss of Habitat	Land disputes	Build elevated houses
	Loss of Farm lands	Land Disputes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depend on alternative sources of income e.g. skilled/unskilled labour and trading • Planting on very high portions of land • Local shore protection with the use of wood

Rise in sea level and sea surge eroding houses	Loss of fishing ground	No conflict issue identified	Mutual relationship and prompt information dissemination on type of fish/the movement of fish when observed. amongst fisherfolk to enable fisherfolk with appropriate fishing gear to set out for fishing immediately. In addition, there is a fishing union that controls fishing patterns and styles
	Loss of Habitat		Build sub-standard and detachable houses in order to dismantle and move inwards when threatened by sea surge
Increase in Heat Wave	Loss of crops/plants	No conflict issue identified	Use of air conditioners

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	High	Low	Houses burnt, properties destroyed
2.	Domestic conflicts between and within families	High	Low	Community executive council resolves such disputes
3.	Conflict between oil companies and community	High	Low	Oil companies use security agencies to suppress conflicts
4.	Youth restiveness leading to conflicts	Low	Low	Youth; graduates and non-graduates form structures recognized as part of the community governance structure to manage youth restiveness
5.	Cult related conflicts	Low	Low	Community proscribes cult activities
6.	Inter personal conflicts	High	High	Community executive council resolves such disputes
7.	Conflict between indigenous and nonindigenous fishermen and women	Low	Low	Community administration involves nonindigenous business people in decision making.

.General Observation and Lessons Learnt

Ogulagha community is relatively peaceful. The people are friendly; the nonindigenous population is very high. They have a unique system of governance that is decentralized.

Observations

- There is a high level of unemployment. Most of the business in the community is owned by non-indigenes
- The people are generally aggrieved at the SPDC and AGIP oil companies for the unjust treatments.
- Most of the community youths depend on oil benefits as livelihood. The craving for other sources of livelihood is low.
- There is the challenge of benefit captors in the community. The economic status and properties owned by persons occupying leadership positions is high. Leadership tussle over the position of community executive council led to the conflict that destroyed houses and properties.
- High level illiteracy
- The people are generally aware of the changes in climate but they are not knowledgeable on the causes, thus processes are not put in place to mitigate the challenges
- The fear of losing properties in the event of conflict due to the leadership distrust has made many to invest in businesses outside the kingdom, reducing economic opportunities that can create employment.
- Engaging in legitimate livelihood is perceived to be for the lazy, youth are rather interested in becoming militants or other quick money making ventures that are mostly not legitimate means of income generation.

Lessons Learnt

- Gate keepers of the community have legalized their positions. Thus, efforts to engage community leadership without the support of gate keepers will be futile.
- There are strong negative legacies of NGOs; the community has negative experience with NGOs. NGOs, (sometimes oil company consultants masquerading as NGOs) have come to conduct studies or short-term activities, then never return or share the results of their studies with the communities. Thus, in some gatherings the moment we introduce ourselves as NGOs, some persons walked away saying “they have come again”. It took a great deal of persuasion to have them sit down with our team.
- One can travel from Ogulagha to Ageh by motorcycle through the sea shore

Recommendations for Intervention

- Training on climate change adaptation, resilience and conflict management: Mainstreaming climate change adaptation and resilience mechanism into community governance system.
- Training on fishing techniques and fishing business value chain as alternative livelihood strategies
- Training and establishment of micro credit scheme for women to enhance socio-economic activities.

- Leadership training and community development/crises management programmes for the leaders.
- Training on conservation and opportunities for partnerships
- Training the community leadership on PIA is highly recommended as there are concerns over the state government setting up of the trust funds and the administration of PIA funds.

Conclusion

Ogulagha Kingdom is an oil producing area in Delta state. The entire area has crisscrossing oil and gas pipelines with military gun boats and stations. The oil companies SPDC and AGIP have occupied areas directly behind the communities. Such areas have shore protection while the communities on one side appear to be buffers to sea incursion to the location of oil companies. The community is aggrieved about this. Their claim is that, the oil company operations made their environment susceptible to the harsh climatic conditions facing them. They are of the view, that the oil companies knew this, therefore deceived their forefathers into accepting resettlement to an area that is vulnerable to flooding and erosion. In addition, Ogulagha community has potentials for tourism and fish industries among others. An understanding between the oil companies, government and the community can address the climate change challenges and restore livelihoods in the area.

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