

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Coastal indigenous fishing communities have close economic, social and cultural linkages with marine ecosystems that are vital for maintaining their food security and cultural heritage (Durand, 2003). Like other small-scale fisheries, they are vulnerable to global changes, including those related to climate. Little is known, however, about the impacts and influence of climate change on indigenous fishing management. This represents a significant global issue, as indigenous groups are often the most vulnerable coastal communities. This research aims to help fill this knowledge gap by providing a global overview of development and management of indigenous fisheries in Nigeria.

It has been estimated that most of the world's major indigenous fisheries are now at their maximum level of exploitation (FAO, 1995). Furthermore, Welcomme and Bartley (1997) have indicated that catches from indigenous fisheries are in decline due to the deteriorating quality of the aquatic environment and poor management. FAO (1995) has also identified, that in response to this crisis, there has been an increase in the level of fishery interventions, including various enhancements, as defined by the following statement: "Any increase of the yields from indigenous fisheries will in future be derived from fisheries enhancement activities and the effects of direct human intervention in the production processes of aquatic environments".

The indigenous systems of fisheries management in Nigeria have originated within the communities concerned, and conform with the definition of "indigenous" provided by Berkes and Farvar (1989), i.e. practices which have historical continuity among a group of people. Under the indigenous system, the fisheries can also be classed as common property resources in that use-rights for the resource are controlled by an identifiable group (e.g. local community who may exclude others) and are not managed by government of the modern state. As explained in Neiland et al. (1997), the objectives of the indigenous fisheries systems in Nigeria are not easy to ascertain. However, three objectives have been identified, including the control of fishing rights and reduction of conflict, generation of food/income for the community, and conservation of fish stocks. The main method of management is the

control of access, and the decision-making authorities are the leaders of the community and traditional government, although all users can have an input into the process ("bottom-up" approach), under certain circumstances.

The major indigenous method of fishery in Nigeria is the artisanal fishery. The Coastal artisanal fishery sector of Nigeria is scattered among numerous large and small fishing settlements along the 960km. coastline of Nigeria with its extensive coastal lagoons. Majority of these settlements are characterized by their remoteness and are cut off from the main national roadway system which have to be approached by boats and by trekking several kilometers from the nearest road-head (Cunningham et al, 2005).

The coastal artisanal fishermen number approximately 250,000 and operate about 50,000 traditional wooden canoes of various sizes - a small percentage of which approximately 4,000 are fitted with out-board motors of different manufacturers. Fishing gear used from these canoes comprise mainly of set-gill nets, beach seines, long line, basket traps, cast nets etc. This indigenous fishery as being practiced now is labour intensive and because of the limited capabilities of the craft and gear results in low productivity. Their operating range is generally around the 20m depth contour, with operations sometimes extending up to a maximum depth of 40 metres (Cunningham et al, 2005).

Yet in view of the large number of craft and gear involved, this sector has recorded a production of nearly 270,000 tons of fish in 2005 which is nearly 50% of the total fish catch of Nigeria and which shows a probable 35% increase in the catch during the decade. About 95% of the catches of the coastal fishermen are normally smoked and the limited quantities which are sold fresh are mostly consumed within a range of 25 Km, from the coast. These fishes are handled by traditional marketing channels that are dominated by fish mummies who are most often wives or mothers of fishermen (Cunningham et al, 2005).

A recent desk study of the Fishery sector in Nigeria prepared by the Investment Centre of the FAO/World Bank Cooperative programme at the request of the World Bank has concluded that "the principal developments which would lead to an expansion of landings would probably be restricted to providing more effective means of fishing, handling, processing and distribution of catches and the provision of adequate services in the indigenous small scale fishery sector. An improvement in this sector would provide the most immediate and

productive returns as compared with the other sectors".

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The constraints to the development and management of the indigenous fishery sector in Nigeria were well identified when the country's National Development Plan was drawn up and they include lack of modern fishing inputs by way of improved fishing craft, gear and methods, lack of access feeder roads or canals from the nearest road-head, lack of proper service facilities at the village sites, loss of product due to lack of facilities for proper handling, processing, transport and marketing, shortage of trained manpower, and lack of effective fisherman organizations.

Several efforts have been made by the government of Nigeria through National Development Plans to manage and develop the sector properly while laying emphasis on increased fish production with a view to attaining the goal of self-sufficiency in fish production and also aims at encouraging local manufacture of fish products, which are being imported now, providing employment to young school leavers and increasing the per capita income of the fisherman to enable him improve his lifestyle.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To examine the state of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria.
2. To determine ways to develop the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria.
3. To identify ways to achieve proper management of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the state of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria?
2. What are ways to develop the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria?
3. What are the ways to achieve proper management of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The following are the significance of this study:

1. The outcome of this study will educate the stakeholders in agriculture sector and the general public on the state of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria with emphasis on

ways to develop it and ensure the effective management of the sector.

2. This research will be a contribution to the body of literature in the area of the effect of personality trait on student's academic performance, thereby constituting the empirical literature for future research in the subject area

1.7 SCOPE/LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will cover the present state of the indigenous fisheries sector in Nigeria and ways to develop and manage the sector effectively.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

Financial constraint- Insufficient fund tends to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, literature or information and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire and interview).

Time constraint- The researcher will simultaneously engage in this study with other academic work. This consequently will cut down on the time devoted for the research work.

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