

RIVERS AND BAYELSA STATES BORDER COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the issue of provision of social amenities at border communities between Rivers and Bayelsa States along the Orashi River. The overall objective was to examine the socio-economic implications of the provision or lack of provision of facilities for border communities. This study adopted the descriptive survey design, with sample population of study consisted of 200 respondents of border communities. The questionnaire structured in a likert scale format served as the primary instrument for data collection. The data collected for the study was analyzed using basic descriptive statistics such as; percentages, mean and standard deviation. Findings from the study revealed that these communities are generally not happy with their living conditions because governments at all levels have failed to provide for them. They suffer alienation, deprivation from employment for even companies operating beside their communities because that portion of land now belongs to another state. The only government presence is the numerous combined security formations. Many would prefer to belong to the other State. Based on the findings it was recommended that provision of amenities would probably change their feelings and perceptions.

Keywords: Border communities, Development, Rivers State, Bayelsa State, Government, Projects etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Providing developmental infrastructure for communities sharing boundaries with national and inter-state communities is common. For socio-economic, political and security purposes, many states in Nigeria try to put up infrastructure in their border communities to at least let

those outside the boundary and visitors to see the state's efforts in providing for its citizenry. Rivers and Bayelsa State governments have in various ways tried to provide development facilities in their states, spanning from 1967 when they were one (old Rivers State) and since

1996 when the old Rivers State was split into two - Rivers and Bayelsa States.

Border regions development meant that the new boundary communities of the sister states expectedly will be provided with roads, schools, industries, special scholarship schemes, etc. to showcase reflections of development in the inner communities.

States are created to bring about better and faster administration of governmental business, and to bring the administration closer to the people through the provision of roads, schools, industries, security, etc. Thus, the Rivers and Bayelsa State governments are expected to provide infrastructural and administrative systems that will bring about faster development of the areas.

From 1967 when Rivers State was created, the state restructured itself first into five divisions (Port Harcourt, Ahoada, Brass, Ogoni, and Degema, popularly called PABOD), and later into 18 divisions. With the local government reforms of 1976, it again restructured itself into 10 LGA, and by 1991 into 24 LGA. The creation of Bayelsa State also came with increase in the numbers of LGAs by 1st October 1996, with Rivers 23, and Bayelsa 8.

The above restructurings were aimed at faster development of various communities through competitive spirit both by the people and the local government councils in the areas of provision of needed infrastructure and closer administrative system to the people.

An enormous amount of literature exists on border regions development (Asiwaju, 1993; Chukwurah, 1993; Omibighe, 1993; Ekoko, 1993; Barkindo, 1993; Bobbo, 1994; Amadii, 1994;

Ajibade, 1994; Ifeanyichukwu, 2017; Ndakor, 2017; Major, 2017). These studies addressed different aspects of the development of border regions.

However, this particular study appears to be a novel one, looking specifically at Rivers and Bayelsa States boundaries along the Orashi River and environs, in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Border regions, alternatively referred to in broad terms as borderlands or frontiers region is defined as sub-national areas whose economic, cultural, social and historical life is significantly affected by its proximity to the nation's or state's boundary (Bobbo, 2004:1).

The geographical position of the infinitesimal line called boundary means a lot to the millions of people living in close proximity to such line. Boggs perceives the line as a state frontier within which the state can exercise its own sovereignty rights (Bobbo, 2004:1). According to Bobbo (2004), the location of the boundary may therefore determine for millions of people the language and ideas which children shall be taught at school, the books and newspapers which people will be able to buy and read, the markets in which to buy and sell and perhaps even the kinds of food they may be permitted to eat, it determines the national culture in which they may be identified, the army in which they may be compelled to serve.

Bobbo (2004) notes also that as arbitrary, the history of colonial boundary which often dissect ethnic groups into different political spheres may be, the line makes such border areas a 'door' with one side looking in and the other looking out. He said this door perception of borderlands and boundaries is

particularly significant to the conceptualization and strengthening of the strategic roles and functions of border regions as “bridges of cooperation and cement of international relations between adjacent nations” regions or states in this case.

Asiwaju (1989) opines borderlands as a coherent areas split into two or more separate jurisdiction spheres: their immediate neighbours are in a foreign jurisdiction; their peripheral locations put them at a structural disadvantage vis-à-vis core areas of the state.

Ekpenyong (1993) observed that most people at border regions belong to the same ethnic groupings, they, by and large, operate the same or identical social institutions, and that with these continues contacts, it is very difficult to accept any claims of continuous conflict at the borders at the grassroots. Bobbo (2004:2) aver that border regions share common history, culture and in most cases ethnic background. He therefore notes that for meaningful development and effectiveness, border regions development must take cognizance of this historical homogeneity which the people value very much.

Ekpenyong (1993) further noted that basic infrastructural facilities tend to be located in the major urban centres to the exclusion of border areas. This position was shared by Barkindo (1993) when he noted that successive administrations in Adamawa State have recognized that compared with other States of the Federation the State is backward in terms of physical development. The core or central parts of the state could, however, compare more or less favourably with many states of the Federation. On the other hand, the

border areas of Adamawa are not only the most neglected parts of the State but they should be listed among the most backward areas in the whole Federation of Nigeria. Barkindo (1993) however traced the neglecting of the border areas and concentrating all developments in the core areas of the provinces started with the inception of colonialism and has continued up to date.

Ibrahim Alkali, a onetime Governor of Kwara State affirmed the pitiable condition of boarder areas of the State thus:

“The absence of basic facilities at our border towns also creates avoidable problems for government. Roads that link these places to the State and Local Government headquarters are bad and in a state of disrepair and this predictably makes the transportation of goods and by implication economic activities difficult; Nigeria’s daily newspapers hardly even get there, none of the radio or television signals within Nigeria could be received and so they are practically cut off from Nigeria in terms of information (Adejuyigbe, 1993:10)”

Adejuyigbo (1993) noted that a development programme for the borderlands would have political, economic, social and security components. The political component would be aimed at effective integration of the borderlands with the rest of the country. The economic component would involve development of local resources to provide employment and increase productivity so that the income of borderland residents would be enhanced. The social development involves the

provision of infrastructural facilities which will facilitate interactions within the regions and also interactions with the central part of the various states and the entire federation, and also facilities which will improve education, health, provide clean drinkable water and routes which are motorable at all seasons. The security would guarantee the protection of the lives and property of citizens in the borderlands as well as ensure that overall national interests and policies do not suffer. He argued that borderlands are of great political significance in that they constitute contact zones between a political unit and its neighbours, or, in the case of coastal borderlands, with the rest of the world.

Hinjari (1993) in reporting the plight of Kano and Katsina States' border communities of Nigeria noted that the socio-economic reality of the border communities in this region is one that can be said to be characterized by poverty. The economy is a peasant economy largely in arable and pastoral agriculture. A sizeable proportion of the population is also engaged in petty trading. This category of the population moves from market to market along the border villages and also across into border markets in Niger Republic.

On the Ondo and Ogun border, George (1993) reports that the nature of the problem in the Arijan Land Area is that the Ikales in Arijan want to merge with their kit and kins in Ikale Local Government Area of Ondo State. It is a problem of long-standing which, having been in existence since the old days of Ondo and Ijebu Provinces, pre-dates the creation of States in 1976. The area has remained a zone of relative backwardness and underdevelopment as

the Arijan Ikales had rejected and have subsequently been bye-passed by development programmes/projects from Ogun State in preference to assistance from Ikales in Ondo State and their internally organized community efforts. Border communities or frontiers are often the fringes of any state with relatively poor infrastructural facilities. They are often peripheral to the regions or state, and serve as points of contact between neighbouring states or regions. Often people are both sides because of their proximity tend to share similar culture, and in many developing nations because of their almost rural nature, are often not well considered in developing planning and implementation. Given the above antecedents, this study seeks to investigate the following objectives;

1. To find out the special projects and programmes initiated by each state in the border communities of Rivers and Bayelsa States.
2. To examine the political, and socio-economic implications of the provision or non-provision of facilities in the border communities.
3. To examine the effects of the state creation exercise of 1996 as it affect the border communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design, which is appropriate to obtain the objectives of the study. The sample population of study consisted of 200 respondents of border communities along the Orashi River and environs in both Rivers and Bayelsa State. The study purposively selected five communities

each from Rivers and Bayelsa State {Mbiama, Joinkrama, Okhaki, Emelogo, Kugbo (Rivers), Tein, Egbebiri, Igbogene, Ibelebiri, Yiba-ama, Amurukini (Beyelsa)} and administered 10 questionnaires in each community making a total of 200. Four questionnaires were discarded because they were not properly completed, leaving a total of 196 respondents.

The instrument for data collection was a carefully designed questionnaire intended to elicit information from the respondents on their feelings on issues raised on the development of border communities. The items were scored on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (DA). The data collected from the study was analysed using basic descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For the analysis of data in this section, the four point Likert scale of measurement were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. In doing this, the cut-off for the acceptance of any item was pegged at 2.50 and above. Hence, any item that fell below the mean cut off of 2.50 is rejected. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the items rejected is completely useless, it simple means that it is having a less significant level of acceptance by the respondents.

Research Question 1: What specific projects and programmes have been provided by Rivers and Bayelsa States governments for their border communities?

Table 1 shows that item one have a mean score of 2.16 and a standard deviation of 1.47 which means that government has not provided new schools with equipment, item 2 had a mean score of 2.80 and a standard deviation of 1.67, this indicates that government has indeed provided new schools without equipment. Item 3 results also showed that government has provided and equip new health centres, as this item had a mean score of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 1.70.

Furthermore, the results showed that government has not provide special developmental programmes as this item(item 4) had a mean score of 1.94 which is less than the 2.5 level of acceptance. Findings about government renovating old schools had a mean score of 2.62 showing that government actually renovated the old schools that were existing. Results about government constructing new roads had a mean score of 1.78 showing that government has not participated in the construction of any new road except the ones that were in existence. Results showing if Government provided special facilities were rejected owing to the fact that it had a mean score of 1.87. Finally, results about Government providing new security posts were accepted as responses from this item had a mean score of 2.9 which is within the acceptance level.

Table 1: Projects and Programmes provided by Government

S/N	Details	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	sd	Research Decision
1.	Government provided new schools with equipment	31 15.82	49 25.00	36 18.37	80 40.82	2.16	1.47	Reject
2.	Government provided new schools without equipment	65 33.16	39 19.90	78 39.80	14 7.14	2.80	1.67	Accept
3.	Government provided and equipped new Health Centres	48 24.49	86 43.88	51 26.02	11 5.61	2.88	1.70	Accept
4.	Government provided special development programmes	21 10.71	32 16.33	58 29.59	85 43.37	1.94	1.39	Reject
5.	Government renovated old schools	45 22.96	71 36.22	40 20.41	40 20.41	2.62	1.62	Accept
6.	Government Constructed new roads	15 7.65	25 12.76	58 29.59	98 50.00	1.78	1.33	Reject
7.	Federal Government provided special facilities	23 11.73	29 14.80	44 22.45	100 51.02	1.87	1.37	Reject
8.	Government provided new security posts	73 37.24	57 29.08	40 20.41	26 13.27	2.9	1.70	Accept

Research Question 2: What are the effects of the state creation exercise of 1996 on the border communities of Rivers and Bayelsa States situated along the Orashi River and environs?

Table 2 showing the effect of state creation on border communities revealed that with regards to division of kin group into two states, respondents overwhelmingly accepted the postulate, with a mean score of 3.19 showing that state creation indeed divided kin groups. The result also showed that, state creation deprives has deprived respondents from their farm lands across border as this item attracted a mean score of 3.16. Again, the analysis above

further showed that state creation deprived respondents of employment opportunities as this item had a mean of 2.63. Still, the table also revealed that state creation caused clashes between border communities with a mean. This is showed in the mean score of 2.59. Findings also showed that respondents have not actually enjoyed better life since the creation of a new state. This is seen in the mean score of 1.9. Additionally, the study also showed from the table that psychological problems of alienation and deprivation now exists among respondents as a result of state creation as indicated with a mean score of 2.59. Similarly, the results also reflected that

there are regrets on each side of the boundary about state creation as this item attracted a mean score of 2.8. Finally, result from the table with a mean score of 2.59, shows that more persons

from the areas of border communities are now in government.

Table 2 Effects of State Creation Exercise

S/N	Details	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	sd	Research Decision
1.	Divides our kin group into two states	75 38.27	95 48.47	15 7.65	11 5.61	3.19	1.79	Accept
2.	Deprives us of our farm lands across the boundary	89 45.41	63 32.14	31 15.82	13 6.63	3.16	1.78	Accept
3.	Deprives us of employment opportunities	53 27.04	66 33.67	28 14.29	49 25.00	2.63	1.62	Accept
4.	Frequent clashes between boundary communities	58 29.59	52 26.53	35 17.86	51 26.02	2.59	1.61	Accept
5.	Now enjoy better lifestyle due to more amenities	16 8.16	28 14.29	71 36.22	81 41.33	1.9	1.39	Reject
6.	Psychological problem of alienation and deprivation	81 41.33	33 16.84	21 11.22	61 31.12	2.59	1.61	Accept
7.	Regrets being on this side of the boundary	55 28.06	77 39.29	33 16.84	31 15.82	2.8	1.67	Accept
8.	More persons from the area are now in Government	50 25.51	70 35.71	23 11.73	53 27.04	2.59	1.61	Accept

Research Question 3: What are the implications of the boundary delineation exercise on the border communities of Rivers and Bayelsa States?

On the implication of state creation in the development of border communities, the data on table 3 reveal that respondents farmlands now belong to a sister state with a mean of 2.72, it also showed that respondents oil well are

now given to a sister state with a mean of 2.91, also, the table reveals that the delineation exercise fail to look at social and historical factors with an high acceptance rate of 3.14, the results also showed that respondents area is being over militarized by different security agencies with a mean score of 2.53, also revealed from the study is that delineators promised certain facilities and

have failed to provide them (score mean of 2.67) and Finally, the last item in this table had a mean score of 2.68 showing

that the conditions of respondents being the major producer of oil in the two states is regrettable.

Table 3 Implication of Boundary Delineation

S/N	Details	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Sd	Research Decision
1.	Our farmlands now belong to a sister states	58 29.59	66 33.67	33 16.84	39 19.90	2.72	1.65	Accept
2.	Our oil wells are now given to a sister state	69 35.20	63 32.14	42 21.42	22 11.24	2.91	1.71	Accept
3.	The delineation exercise fail to look at social and historical factors	88 44.90	73 37.24	11 5.61	24 12.24	3.14	1.77	Accept
4.	Our area is being over militarized by different security agencies	58 29.59	49 25.00	28 14.29	61 31.12	2.53	1.59	Accept
5.	Our State government has forgotten us	76 38.78	63 32.14	41 20.92	16 8.16	3.01	1.73	Accept
6.	The delineators promised certain facilities but have failed to provide them	58 29.59	61 31.12	33 16.84	44 22.45	2.67	1.63	Accept
7.	Our being major producer of oil in the State is regrettable	59 30.10	66 33.67	22 11.22	49 25.00	2.68	1.64	Accept

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall objective of this paper was aimed at examining the level of development of border communities as provided by Rivers and Bayelsa States along the Orashi River and environs. It was also aimed at examining the socio-economic implications of the provision or lack of provision of facilities in the border communities, the effect of 1996 state creation exercise on the people as well as the implication of the delineation exercise.

The major findings from this study revealed that the border communities are not happy with their living condition because they expected government to provide new schools, hospitals, roads, electricity, etc. which they see as indices of development. The respondents showed considerable negative attitude in their living conditions and more than fifteen years after the state creation exercise, many border communities are still without electricity and motorable roads.

The conclusions from the research indicate that governments (Federal, Rivers and Bayelsa) did not provide infrastructural development for the border communities. They suffer from employment restrictions, even for companies working behind their communities because of stateism. They lose their claims to land through the delineation exercise, yet the promises made during the exercise seem forgotten. They regret being oil bearing communities without anything to show for it.

The motivation for this study stems from the fact that the researcher holds strong belief in the provision of infrastructural facilities and development of manpower as key to society's development. These calls for the need to timely provide succour to the communities sharing boundaries with other states or nations, as they are the first travellers or visitors meet with and opinions formed about that society.

The study also showed that there is significant dissatisfaction amongst the people. Many respondents, particularly those of Engenni and Odual feel not satisfied being in Rivers State, as their kin and kit the Epies and the Ogbias, respectively are in Bayelsa, besides; they are located within 10 kilometers to the city centre of Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital.

In addition, government have increased police formations in the area where minor cases that could have been settled amongst family members are taken to the police and suffer from both mental, physical and financial losses in trying to settle cases between them and sometimes between companies.

Finally, the study found that border communities feel neglected in both Rivers and Bayelsa State, as they remain minority communities in both states. Their sons and daughters are hardly given prominent appointments as they call daily for federal and state presence in the provision of amenities, which they very much lack, and appointment of their sons and daughters to prominent offices at the federal and states level.

To alleviate their psychological state, governments at all levels, and the NDDC need to specifically plan development projects for the area, which should include infrastructural, as well as manpower training? Oil companies should also be directed to provide more infrastructure as this is one of the major oil rich areas of both States. To forestall clashes, the indigene factor for employment into oil companies should be deemphasized among border communities.

The Engenni-Ijaw, Odual and Kugbo communities have not relented in their demand for merger with their kit and kin (Epies and Ogbias) in Bayelsa State. Therefore it will be appropriate that a properly constituted boundary adjustment team to have a second look at the boundary between Rivers and Bayelsa State, as the Orashi River appears to be a natural marker.

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