

# THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFPS) TO RURAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN GASHAKA- GUMTI NATIONAL PARK, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The increasing empowerment of rural dwellers through the harvesting and processing of various non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) has attracted more participants in the industry. This paper therefore examined the contributions of NTFPs to household income of communities living in Gashaka-Gumti National Park. 100 structured questionnaires were distributed to the communities living in Gashaka-Gumti National Park and 95% were retrieved. Data collected included among others the socio-economic characteristics of the rural community, quantity and type of non-timber forest products harvested/processed, income per month and uses. Interview method and focus group discussion were equally used to complement the data for this study. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as means, frequencies and percentages. The economic tool used is Net Income (Gross Income  $G_1$  less Gross Cost  $G_c$ ) (Olukosi and Isitor 1990). The result of the study shows that NTFPS contributes significantly to household income of the inhabitants of Gashaka Gumti thereby augmenting the much needed rural empowerment.

Keywords: Non-timber forest products, household income, rural empowerment.

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## INTRODUCTION

The World and in particular Nigeria is presently confronted with the problem of reducing rural poverty. Indicators of poverty include low income, lack of food, poor health, water, environmental and housing facilities among others. Harvesting, utilization and processing of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) has the potential of increasing rural income thus boosting the interest of rural dwellers to encourage forest development (Amadi; Dishan; Jatau and Tella 2005). NTFPs are vital in terms of basic livelihoods areas such as fuel wood, protein, medicines and raw materials. It also has important place in the cultural and social values for forest communities. Moreover the sales of NTFPs in rural and urban communities provide economic growth to rural dwellers. The people who depend on NTFPs are the rural poor whose well-being can fluctuate widely, characterized by extremely low income and large

family size. These rural poor meet small needs by selling or mortgaging assets such as land, livestock, tools, trees, jewelry, standing crops or future labour. The wealth from NTFPs are used both as food and to improve income.

Gashaka-Gumti National Park is endowed with 97 different types of NTFPs (Zaku, 2013). NTFPs refer to all biological resources, products and services which are harvested from the forest ecosystem for subsistence and trade. The term NTFPs is used interchangeably with terminologies such as minor forest products, secondary forest products, non-wood forest products etc. NTFPs are important in a number of ways such as food, feeds, energy, cultural value, economic gains, craft for local tools and technology etc.

The gathering of NTFPs is as old as man himself. The early man was a wonderer, hunter and a gatherer of wild nuts, fruits and berries. NTFPs contributes to

household self-sufficiency, food security, income generation, accumulation of savings and risk. These minimization are important in filling seasonal or other food or income gaps by providing a buffer in time of hardship or emergency. It is an activity of last resort that often presents an opportunity for improving household income and food security. This corroborates the findings of Adekunle (2009) that, it is very common to have a large family in Nigeria in order to supply farm labour and to assist in the collection of Minor forest product for family consumption. The objective of this study is therefore to find out the various NTFPs being harvested and processed by the inhabitants of Gashaka Gumti National park and the extent the local industry has enhanced their local income.

### **THE ROLE OF NTFPS**

According to Alison (2007), NTFPs provide a wealth of resources for both rural and urban dwellers throughout Central Africa. These include foods, medicines, construction materials, fuelwood, as well as resources of spiritual and cultural significance. These are important in improving livelihood security. They may provide one of the main sources of food (for example, for Pygmy peoples when they are based in the forest (Ichiakawa, 1993), or they may provide a safety net in times of agricultural shortage (Ndoye & Tieguhong, 2004). The wealth of forest resources that are used as foods also provide valuable source of nutrients, particularly for the poorest sectors of society and in times of shortage, for example, prior to the agricultural harvest. As a source of medicine, NTFPs provide the basis of healthcare for the vast majority of the region's population for whom western medicines are unavailable or too expensive. In addition, a large proportion of the population use forest resources to build houses, tools and other implements, and the majority of households use wood or charcoal for cooking, as well as meeting subsistence needs, many of these resources are traded, and so provide a valuable source of income.

NIFPs are often collected and traded by women, and so help to increase their livelihood security and economic status. Women dominate the collection and trade of many products, such as Gnetum and caterpillars, while men are more involved in the harvest of higher value products, for example rattans,

bushmeat and pharmaceutical products. Some NTFPs do provide a valuable income for many and can, in certain circumstances, help to reduce poverty. Even where they do not enable people to get out of the poverty trap, they may be crucial as a safety net and to improve livelihood security.

Despite the use and importance of NTFPs in Nigeria, forest regeneration is not encouraging and it hoped that this work in concomitance with others will make all tiers of Nigerian government to consider their negative stand on forest regeneration and development.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Gashaka-Gumti National Park lies between latitude  $6^{\circ}55'N$  and  $8^{\circ}05'N$ , longitude  $11^{\circ}11'E$  and  $12^{\circ}13'E$  of the equator. The park is situated in Taraba State of Nigeria. The inhabitants of the area are predominantly farmers, craftsmen, hunters and traders. Questionnaires sourcing data on socio-economic characteristics of the GashakaGumti dwellers, NTFPs harvested, quantity, income per month, number of persons in the industry, were distributed to the inhabitants of Gashaka-Gumti National Park to extract data. Interview method and Focus Group Discussion were also used to complement the data for this study. The data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as means, frequency and percentages. The economic tool used is Net Income (Gross Income  $G_1$  less Gross Cost  $G_c$ ) (Olukosi and Isitor 1990).

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The list of NTFPs available in Gashaka Gumpti Area is given in Table 1 while the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 2. 32% of the respondents were males while 68 % were females. Women are vital to the success or failure of the family. They participate actively supporting family income through harvesting of NTFPs in the study area. The married respondents consisted of 84% and must be in the industry as one of the means of supporting their family income. In the same vein, those with large family size were also involved more in the harvesting and processing of NTFPs as a means of augmenting household income. There is no much difference in educational status of

the people involved in the collection and processing of NTFPs. Therefore educational qualification is not a prerequisite for collection and processing of NTFPs. Occupationally, Farmers, Civil Servants and Fishermen were involved more in the collection and processing of NTFPs than traders and artisans. Farmers found it easier to combine the industry with their farming activities, Civil Servants use the industry as part-time activities while traders and Artisans find it difficult to combine.

Table 3 shows various level of income generation from the sales of NTFPs. A collector is able to make additional annual income of 102,000 Naira (\$514) from sales of 144 Pickup vans of fuelwood. In the production of charcoal, an additional annual net income of 95,600 Naira (\$488) can be generated. The craftsmen producing mortar and pestle, farm implements and baskets make additional income of 96,000 Naira (\$480). In the same vein, the Palm Wine Tappers likewise makes an income of 384,000 Naira (\$1,920) annually from the sales of about 2000 liters of the product. In the production of cattle sticks, a person that produces 2000 cattle sticks in a month will make a net income of 120,000 Naira (\$600). In palm oil production, a person that produces 2000 liters will get 192,000 Naira (\$960) at the end of the year.

Problems encountered by the respondents in the industry include, long trekking distances, bad rural road networks, park legislation officials, processing facilities and market trade unions. However all the respondents agree that their family income is enhanced through the collection and processing of NTFPs.

The findings of this study is in line with Shrivastava (2009) who stated that the use of NTFPs is as old as human civilization as source food, fodder, fibre, medicine, cosmetics and local crafts and 350 million people living in or near dense forests depend highly on it for their subsistence or livelihood both for their own consumption and income generation. On the hand, Alison (2007) observed that markets in NTFPs are often hampered by poor infrastructure, storage and lack of market information. NTFPs Producers face challenges in the lack of organization into viable trading entities, lack of credit and investment

opportunities and they are often victims of many types of informal taxes. (Alison 2007).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The result of the study indicates that majority of the inhabitants of Gashaka-Gumti National Park are involved in NTFPs harvesting, processing and trade. This is an indication that NTFPs contributes to household income and this agrees with the findings of Okafor (1994) which states that, the gathering and selling of forest products is a major economic activity of the rural populace.

The inhabitants of Gashaka-Gumti National Park should form themselves into co-operative organizations such as forest products collectors' co-operative group and buyers co-operative group and should register with the National Park Service and should be charged token fees per quantity of NTFPs collected and their activities supervised by the Park management. This implies that if one is not a member, he cannot collect or harvest or buy NTFPs and since they are charged token fees per quantity of NTFPs collected, this will spur them not to allow a non-member, or non-contributor to harvest or buy NTFPs and since they are living together, it becomes easier to apprehend intruders and this will cushion over-exploitation since they are under close watch.

Having established that majority of the rural populace depend on NTFPs for livelihoods and income generation, disappearance of forests is a signal of danger to the livelihood and economic well-being of the rural people. The government should then create an enabling environment for the various departments of forestry to embark on reforestation and forest development programs.

*Table 1: List NTFPs in Gashaka Gumti National Park*

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NTFPS
Bush meat
Fish
Honey
Basketry
Forest foods
Palm wine
Medicinal Plants
Fruits/nuts
Insects
Mushroom
Charcoal
Ropes
Palm Oil

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*Table 2: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents*

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	30	32
Female	65	68
Total	95	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	15	16
Married	80	84
Total	95	100
<b>Age</b>		
20-40	35	37
41-60	45	47
61 & Above	15	16
Total	95	100
<b>Household Size</b>		
1-4	35	37
5-8	45	47
9 & Above	15	16
Total	95	100
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Quaranic / Arabic	20	21
Primary	40	42
Secondary	25	26
Tertiary	10	11
Total	95	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	55	58
Civil Servant	15	16
Trading / Business	5	5
Artisan	5	5
Fishing	15	16
Total	95	100

Source: Field Survey 2013

Table 3: Annual Contributions of selected NTFPs to household income

Annual Quantity of NTFPs harvested	Gross Cost (N,000) / (\$)	Gross Income (N,000) / (\$)	Net Income (N,000) / (\$)
<b>FUELWOOD</b>			
144 pickup vans	216.0 / 1,080	318.9 / 1,594.5	102.9 / 514.5
<b>CHARCOAL PRODUCTION</b>			
240 bags of charcoal	115.2 / 576	196.8 / 984	95.6 / 488
<b>CRAFT</b>			
100 Mortar & Pestle	120.0 / 600	216.0 / 1080	96.0 / 480
200 Farm implement handles	480.0 / 2,400	840.0 / 420	360.0 / 180
200 Mats and baskets	96.0 / 480	144.0 / 720	480.0 / 2,400
<b>PALM WINE</b>			
2000 litres of palm wine	576.0 / 2,880	960.0 / 4,800	384.0 / 1,920
<b>CATTLE STICKS</b>			
2000 cattle sticks	240.0 / 1,200	360.0 / 1,800	120.0 / 600
<b>PALM OIL PRODUCTION</b>			
160 litres of palm oil	288.0 / 1,440	480.0 / 2,400	192.0 / 960
<b>ROPE</b>			
40 Bundles of Rope	240.0 / 1,200	360.0 / 1,800	120.0 / 600

SOURCE: Field Survey 2013

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