



## ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIC RULE ON SOME ASPECTS OF FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

Adesoji Gideon Adedayo<sup>1</sup> and Matthew Banji Oyun<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*The study investigated the impact of democratic rule on forest resources management in Ondo State, Nigeria. Two ecological zones (i.e. lowland rain forest and derived savanna) were purposively selected in the study area. Twenty respondents were randomly selected from forestry staff in the State Forestry Department in each zone to make a total of 40 respondents. Data were obtained from these respondents through well structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The results showed that *Tectona grandis*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Nauclea diderichii*, *Mansonia ultisima* and *Terminalia superba* are the major tree species planted in the study area between 1991 and 2007. The results showed that democratic rule has a significant influence on forest plantation development and training of forestry staff in the study area. The study identified poor funding, insecurity and low manpower as the major problems of forest management in the study area during democratic rule. The study identified 4 ways by which forestry sub-sector can benefit more from democratic rule in the study area. These include making more realistic budget and prompt release of funds to the forestry sub-sector, encouraging foresters in the state forestry department to go for more training, enacting legislation that will ensure forest industries in the state invest in forest plantation development and giving of tax relief to individuals that plant a stipulated number of trees.*

**Keywords:** *democratic rule, forest resources management, forest plantation development, Nigeria.*

### Introduction

From time immemorial forest resources have always been known to be of extreme importance to man. In the same vein, the management of forest

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology, PMB 704 Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Corresponding author (email): gideonadedayo@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology, PMB 704 Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.

resources has been accorded great importance world wide. This is because management of the forest determines to a great extent the continuous availability of forest resources for the use of the people for developmental purposes.

The concept of forest management can be described as the attainment of balance between society's increasing demand for forest products, benefits and the preservation of forest health and diversity (Augusta 2002). The balance is critical to the survival of the forests and to the prosperity of the forest dependent people. However it is important to note that governance in what ever form or level can have varied roles and influence on the management of forest resources in the different countries of the world. For instance, the role and influence of military rule on forest resources management may be quite different from that of an evolving democratic rule (as in Nigeria), while the role and influence of an evolving democratic rule on forest resources management may differ from that of advance democratic rule (as in USA). The reason for this difference might be due to the fact that the military rule is a dictatorial rule. They rule through force and coercion. For instance in Nigeria, during the military rule forest resources in most states of the country witnessed lots of abuse and over exploitation. The military use their power and might to suppress the professional advice and expertise of the various states Directors of Forestry on the exploitation and use of forest resources in the country. A great deal of forest resources were abused and destroyed during the military rule because the Directors of Forestry in the various states have little or no say in the management of forest resources. However under democratic rule be, it advanced or evolving one, there is freedom of speech and contributions to national issues. The states' Directors of Forestry and other foresters can therefore freely contribute meaningfully to the management of forest resources in their states. Akindele (2001) identified undue interference from officers who are superior to the Director of Forestry as a major problem in the management of forest resources in Nigeria. These officers include the Permanent Secretary, the Commissioner, the Military Governor or Military Administrator. In a survey conducted among state Directors of Forestry, 62.5% of them claimed that their major source of problem in forest management is the 'power that be' that is, their superior in government (Akindele 2001).

Even now with the advent of democratic rule in the country, the management of forest resources cannot be said to be receiving the best support from the different state governments. This is because the present state of democratic rule in the country is still nascent. Aka (2000) described democracy in Nigeria as an on-going process which signifies a transition away from dictatorial rule. This shows that democratic rule in Nigeria is still very young compared to those of advanced countries like United States of

America (USA). Those in power are yet to master the democratic norms and, as such, the dividend of democracy is yet to spread to all the sectors of the economy. It therefore follows that most sectors of the economy of the country might not yet have data or information on the impact of democratic rule on them. As such, as Nigeria moves towards democratic consolidation, efforts must be made to evaluate the impact of democratic rule on the major sectors of the economy like forestry. Such evaluation will help to shed light on the effects of the various government activities and programmes on forest resources management in Ondo State, Nigeria. It is in view of this that this study seeks to evaluate the impact of democratic rule on forest resources management, especially forest plantation development and capacity building of forestry personnel in the study area, to undertake the following:

- To examine funding of forestry projects under democratic rule in the study area;
- to identify the major problems of forest resources management under democratic rule in the study area;
- and to offer suggestions on ways by which forestry sub-sector can benefit more from democratic rule in the study area.

### **History of Democratic Rule in Nigeria**

Nigeria became an independent state on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1960. The country adopted the federal constitution by which its citizens were governed. No sooner the country attained independence than crises started. As noted by Ojigbo (1980), a number of reasons were responsible for these crises. These included a shaky tripartite federal structure with strong regionalism; disparity in sizes and population of the three regions; three major rationally based and tribally sustained political structures; cut-throat politicians, most of whom hadn't the vaguest idea about the act of politics and a weak constitution. The most notable crises were the general elections of 1965. The election crises resulted in a coup d'état on January 15, 1966 which brought an end to the first republic. As such, democratic rule was abolished in favour of military rule. In July 29<sup>th</sup> there was another coup that brought the regime of Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power. He restored the federal system. By July 1967 civil war started as a result of the attempt of the eastern region to secede. The Gowon administration managed to bring the war to an end on January 12, 1970. However, on July 29, 1975 the third coup brought to an end Gowon's regime. Murtala Mohammed came to power and he announced a 5-stage programme for return to civil rule. On February 13<sup>th</sup>, Murtala Mohammed was assassinated and Olusegun Obasanjo came to power. It was during the military reign of Obasanjo that an election to constituent assembly took place. Between July 7 and August 11, 1979, general elections were conducted and the country returned to democratic rule on October 1, 1979. Between October 1,

1979 and December 1983, Nigeria witnessed presidential system of governance under Shehu Shagari. However the military came to power again in 1984 with Mohamed Buari as the head of State. The regime of Buari was short lived, as a coup brought an end to his regime and General Babangida came to power in August 27, 1985. Babangida announced a transition programme which culminated in an election in 1993. Babangida, however, stepped aside in 1993 after the annulment of the 1993 elections. An interim government was put in place headed by Ernest Shonekan. His regime was brought to an end in 1994 by General Sani Abacha. Abacha ruled the country as a military Head of State until he died in 1998. General Abdulsalam came to power after the death of Abacha and he handed over power back to civilians in 1999. The elections of 1999 brought Obasanjo back to power as civilian president of Federal Republic of Nigeria. Promising signs of democratic change came swiftly on the heels of Obasanjo's inauguration. It included the creation of panels to investigate past corrupt leaders and human right abuses and the forced retirement of key military officers involved in previous military regimes.

### **Democratic Rule in Ondo State**

Ondo state was created on February 3, 1976 from the former Western region by the regime of General Murtala Mohammed. It originally included what is now Ekiti state, which was split off in the state creation of 1996.

Ondo state was governed by military rule from the time it was created in 1976 to 1979. The state then experienced democratic rule between October 1979 and December 1983. The military took over the governance of the state again in 1984 to 1999. However on May 29<sup>th</sup> democratic rule came back to the state. Alliance for Democracy (AD), one of the political parties in the country, won the election and chief Adebayo Adefarati became the governor of the state. He ruled the state till 2003. In 2003, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won the elections. Doctor Olusegun Agagu became the governor. He reigned between 2003 and 2009. Though, it was generally believed that up to 2008 the forestry sub- sector in the state had not received the best of support from the various governments, the forestry sub-sector state suffered more of a setback during this period through destructive exploitation of forest resources. It was generally believed that the laissez-faire attitude of the state government towards the management of forest resources during this period encouraged the destructive exploitation of forest resources (e.g. illegal felling and flitching). It was during this period that political thugs constituted themselves into gangs that illegally and destructively exploited the forest resources of the state. Adetula (2008) noted that another dimension had been added to the destructive exploitation of forest resources in the state. He noted that youngsters constituted themselves into militant groups to resist and even

harass uniform field staff whose mandate was to protect the forest estates. Cases of death in the hands of these gangsters has been recorded.

However, in February 2009, a new democratic government came to power. Since the emergence of this government concerted efforts have been made to correct the past anomalies and ensure sustainable forest management in the state. Recently the state government gave approval for the establishment of Community Based Forest Management System (CBFMS). It is believed that CBFMS will provide solution to the numerous problems faced in the management of forest resources in the state by involving the local indigenous communities hitherto excluded in the management of the state's forest estates.

## **Methodology**

### ***The Study area***

Ondo state lies between latitude  $5^{\circ}45'$  and  $8^{\circ} 15'$  North and longitude  $4^{\circ}35'$  and  $6^{\circ} 5'E$  (figure 1). Its land area is about 15,823.317 km<sup>2</sup> (Adetula, 2008). Edo and Delta states bound Ondo state on the east, on the west by Ogun and Osun States, on the north by Ekiti and Kogi States and to the south by the Bight of Benin and the Atlantic Ocean.

### ***Data Collection***

Data for this study was collected through structured and pre-tested questionnaire. Two major ecological zones in the study area were purposively selected. These are low land rain forest and derived savanna. The questionnaires were administered on 20 randomly selected forestry personnel in the state forestry Department in each zone to make a total of 40 respondents (Table 1, in Appendices).

### ***Data Analysis***

The data for this study were subjected to descriptive statistics. This is in form of frequency and percentage distribution tables. Chi square test was used to carry out statistical test on stated hypotheses. These hypotheses are:

1. Ho - Forest plantation establishment between 1991 and 2007 is independent of democratic or military rule in the study area.
2. Ho - Democratic rule has no significant influence on capacity building of forestry personnel in the study area.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Democratic Rule and Forest Plantation Development***

The results of the study showed that the major plantation tree species planted in the study area between 1991 and 2007 are *Tectona grandis*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Nauclea diderichii*, *Mansonia ultisima* and *Terminalia suberba* (Table 2).

*Tectona grandis* has the largest hectarage. 430 ha of teak was planted in the forest zone of the study area between 1999-2007 (democratic rule period) as against 225 ha of teak that was planted in the same zone between 1991-1999 (military rule period). 368 ha of teak were planted in the savanna zone of the study area during democratic rule as against 120 ha of teak that was planted in the same zone during the military rule in the study area. 130ha and 245ha of *Gmelina arborea* were planted in the forest and savanna zones of the study area respectively between 1999 and 2007 (democratic rule period). Between 1991 and 1999 (military rule period) 145ha and 230ha of *Gmelina arborea* were planted in the forest and savanna zones of the study area respectively. In addition 100ha and 133ha of *Nauclea diderichii* were planted in the forest and savanna zones of the study area respectively between 1999 and 2007 (Table 2).

From the foregoing, *Tectona grandis* is the most important tree species planted in the study area between 1999 and 2007. This is followed by *Gmelina arborea*. These 2 tree species are by no means the most popular plantation tree species in Nigeria. According to Malomo (1997) teak is widely used in Nigeria for house building, furniture, cabinet work and electric poles. It is on this basis together with the fact that it is easy to establish as a plantation crop that large hectares of teak plantations were established in the state and in the country. He noted that teak plantations have become widespread in the country. As such, the planting of teak received a boost during democratic rule (1999-2007). In the same vein, the planting of other plantation tree species like *Gmelina arborea* and *Nauclea diderichii* also received a boost during democratic rule than during the military rule in the study area. Chi-square test ( $p < 0.05$ ) shows that democratic rule has a significant influence on plantation establishment in the study area compare to the military rule (hypothesis 1 and chi-square value 1 of Table 3). More forest plantations were established in the study area during democratic rule than during the military rule. The reason for this might not be unconnected with the need for the democratic government to meet the increasing wood needs of the people in the study area. Democratic rule has been adjudged as being more responsive to meeting the needs of the people than the military rule. As such, the forestry department received many forestry development interventions between 1999 and 2007 (democratic rule). These included nursery establishment, planting of exotic and indigenous tree species and purchase of forestry equipment especially forest nursery equipment like cutlasses, polypots, watering cans and wheelbarrows (Table 4).

#### ***Democratic Rule and Capacity Building of Forestry Personnel***

Between 1991 and 2007 forestry staff in the state forestry department of the study area went for series of trainings in order to increase their knowledge and develop their skills and competence. These trainings include; forest

management training, forest survey training, forest regeneration training, computer training (data analysis) and mushroom production training (Table 5). Chi-square test ( $p < 0.05$ ) shows that democratic rule has a significant influence on the training (capacity building) of forestry staff compared to the military rule in the study area (Hypothesis 2 and Chi-square value 2 of Table 3). This is because more forestry personnel went for training during democratic rule than during military rule (Table 5). This further proves that democratic rule is more responsive to the needs of the people than the military rule.

### ***Democratic Rule and Funding of Forestry Projects***

The results of the study shows that forestry projects in the study area were not adequately funded during democratic rule. Table 6 shows that in the forest zone of the study area 25% of the respondents stated that financial allocation to the forestry sub-sector during democratic rule (1999-2007) is very poor; 35% of the respondents in the same zone of the study area stated that the allocation of funds to the forestry sub-sector during the military rule was very poor; 55% of the respondents in the same zone of the study area are of the opinion that allocation of funds to the forestry sub-sector during democratic rule is good as against 20% of the respondents in the same zone that were of the view that allocation of funds to the forestry sub-sector during military rule was good. In the same vein, 65% of the respondents in the savanna ecological zone of the study area were of the view that the release of funds to the forestry department was slow, as against 75% of the respondents in the same zone that were of the view that the release of funds to the forestry department was slow (Table 7). From the foregoing, though the allocation and the release of funds to the forestry sub-sector can be considered to be better during democratic rule compare to the military rule, the allocation and the release of funds for the execution of forestry projects is still considered grossly inadequate. Adedayo (2003) noted that allocation of funds for the execution of forestry projects in most states of the federation is very poor. He noted further that many times budgeted funds are either not released at all, or they are released late. In a similar vein, Akindele (2001) reported that in most states of the federation, the forestry department is poorly funded. He noted that there are several states in the country where no capital grants were released to the forestry department for many years. These had adverse effects on the execution of forestry programmes by many of the states of the federation.

### ***Problem of Forest Management under Democratic Rule***

Despite the fact that democratic rule has been adjudged the best form of governance, certain problems were identified as hindering proper management of forest resources in the study area under democratic rule.

These problems include: poor funding, insecurity, transportation problem inadequate equipment and low quality manpower (Table 8). Poor funding is identified by the respondents as the major problem of forest management in the study area: 65% and 30% of the respondents in the savanna and forest ecological zones of the study area respectively stated that poor funding is a problem of forest management during democratic rule (between 1999-2007) (Table 8). Poor funding is therefore regarded as a major problem of forest management in the study area under democratic rule. This is because almost all aspects of forest management depend on funds. Despite the fact that funds are always appropriated by government during budgeting to carry out forestry programmes in the study area, funding is a major problem because these funds are either not released or are released very late. Akindele (2001) noted that in recent past it was common experience between all the states to have large shortfalls between the amount budgeted and the actual amount released for forest development programmes. Such shortfalls he noted are often perceived as a reflection of government's unwillingness to release funds rather than unavailability of funds.

40% of the respondents in the savanna ecological zone of the study area stated that insecurity is a problem of forest management in the study area, because it has led to an unprecedented level in forest crime and wanton destruction of forest resources. Many forestry staff charged with the responsibility of protecting forest resources in the study area can no longer do so because of insecurity. Many times forestry staff have been attacked and beaten up. Their lives and that of their family members are not safe. This many people believed is as a result of democratic rule. This is because majority of those that are committing these crimes are believed to be political thugs. As reported by Adetula (2008), many of the political thugs have constituted themselves into armed gangsters. They have found illegal felling a very lucrative business and the situation seems to have gone out of control, resulting in massive destruction of forest resources in the study area. It is, therefore, not surprising that 95% and 80% of the respondents (forestry staff) in the forest and savanna zones of the study area respectively stated that the incidence of forest crime has increased tremendously under democratic rule.

Another problem that has hindered effective management of forest resources under democratic rule in the study area is low quality man power. It is believed that the quality of forestry personnel in the state forestry department is not good enough. This is so by virtue of the education or training that has been received by the forestry staff. This problem has been viewed as a carryover from the military rule, during which time not many forestry personnel were given opportunity for training. Their ability and capacity to effectively manage forest resources had therefore been drastically reduced. Akindele (2001) stated that many state forest services are



handicapped by shortage of trained personnel both in quantity and quality. Several staff have not benefited from any in-service training since having joined the service. Though great improvement has been recorded in the training of forestry personnel during democratic rule, there is still the need for many more foresters to go for training in order to improve their quality of service. This is because effective forest management requires high quality forestry personnel.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that democratic rule has a significant influence on forest plantation development and capacity building of forestry personnel in the study area. This shows that democratic rule is more responsive to the needs of the people than military rule. The study identified the problems of forest management under democratic rule in the study area to include poor funding and insecurity. The study further showed that in order to attract more benefits of democratic rule to the forestry sub-sector, the state government must ensure that it makes a more realistic budget for the forestry sub-sector. Government should also encourage foresters in the state forestry department to go for training; as well, government should give tax relief to individuals that plant a stipulated number of trees.

### **Policy Recommendation**

In view of the findings of this study, it is believed that the following suggestions will help to improve the benefits that the forestry sub-sector can get from democratic rule in the study area.

1. Stakeholders in forestry activities in the study area, especially the Forestry Association of Nigeria (FAN), Forests and Forest Products Society of Nigeria (FFPSN), Ondo State Forestry Advisory Commission and Timber Contractors Association, among others, should make a strong presentation to both the executive and legislative arms of government on the need to always make realistic budgets and ensure prompt release of funds to the sub-sector. This is because the forestry sub-sector is far too important to be toyed with or starved with funds. A well funded forestry will provide a good support for sustainable farming and ensure increased food production. In addition, a well funded forestry will help to reduce societal poverty to a great extent.
2. Though Ondo State currently raises an average of 400ha of tree seedlings per annum (Adetula 2008), there is still the need to raise more tree seedlings. In fact, Beaks (1998) recommended 900ha of tree seedlings per annum. In order to meet this shortfall and benefit more from democratic rule, a case can be made to the legislative arm of government to make laws that will compel forest industries in the study area to be involved in

- forest management. This can be done either by ensuring that the forest industries are involved in the direct establishment of forest plantations or they can make money available for the development of forest nurseries to raise tree seedlings. The tree seedlings will then be distributed free to the local farmers to plant on their lands. This will help to increase tree planting in the study area and such increase will be attributed to democratic rule.
3. Foresters in the State Forestry Department should be encouraged to go for training. This can be done by the state government's providing incentives that will encourage foresters to go for training. Training will help to increase the skills and competence of foresters in the management of forest resources in the study area. The training enjoyed by foresters will therefore be part of the benefits of democratic rule enjoyed by the forestry sub-sector.
  4. As part of efforts to encourage tree growing by the people of the study area, the state government should introduce a policy of giving tax relief to the people that have planted a stipulated number of trees. This will help to stimulate tree growing by private individuals and it will help to increase availability of tree products in the study area. This no doubt will also be an additional benefit of democratic rule to the forestry sub-sector in the study area.

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## Appendices

Figure 1. Ondo State Ecological Zones

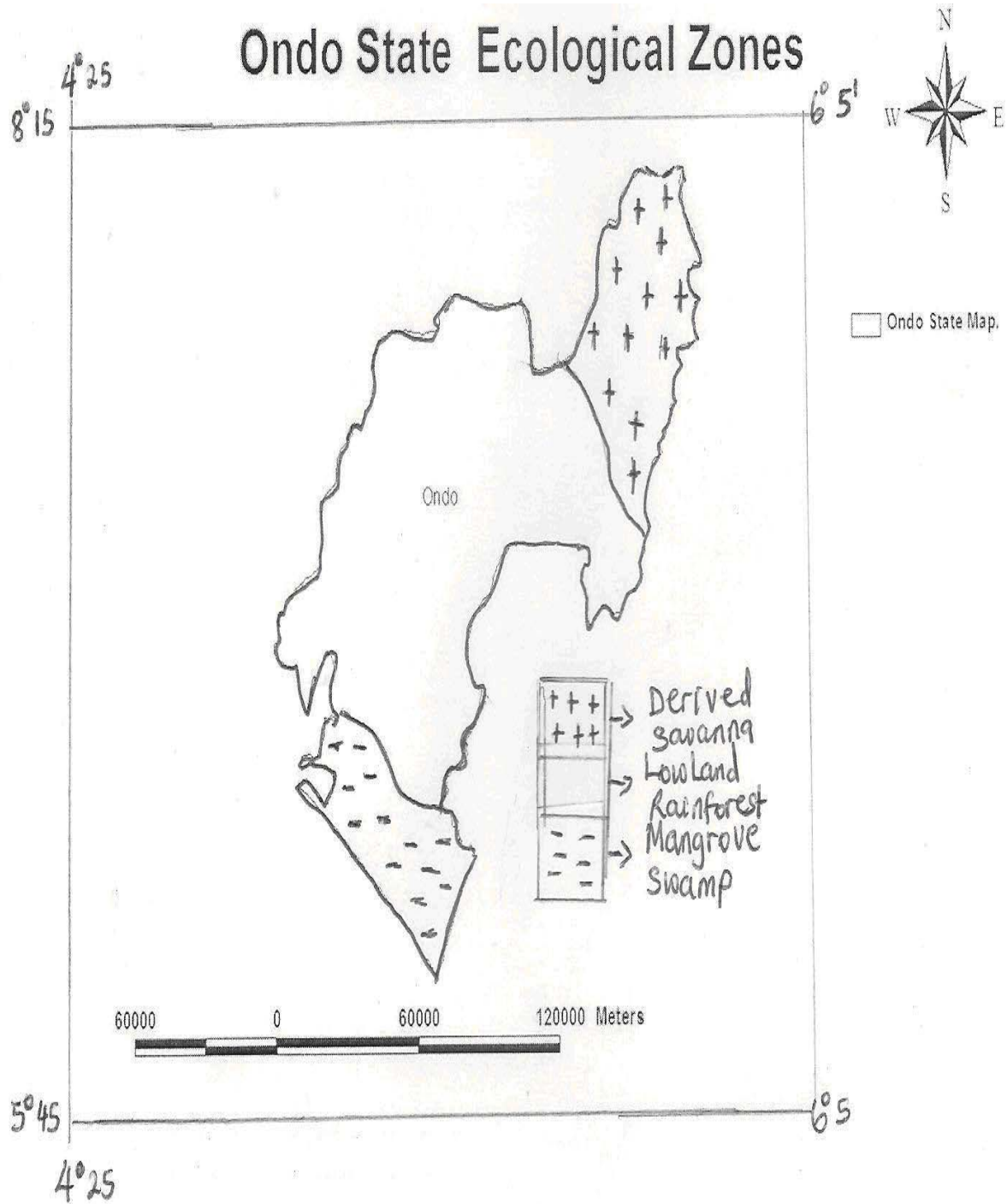


Table 1. Questionnaire Administration in the Study Area

Zone	No Administered	No returned	Percentage of Recovery
Forest	26	20	76.52
Savanna	23	20	84.96

Table 2. Plantation Size and Tree Species Planted between 1991 and 2007 in the Study Area

Tree species	1991 - 1999		1999 - 2007	
	Forest Size (ha)	Savanna Size (ha)	Forest Size (ha)	Savanna Size (ha)
<i>Tectona grandis</i>	225	120	430	368
<i>Gmelina arborea</i>	145	230	130	245
<i>Pinus caribaea</i>	5	0	0	0
<i>Nauclea diderichii</i>	41	54	100	133
<i>Milicia excelsa</i>	10	15	5	0
<i>Mansonina ultissima</i>	0	43	90	0
<i>Triplochiton scleroxylon</i>	0	20	0	110
<i>Terminalia superba</i>	120	44	40	10

Table 3. Chi-square Values for Hypotheses Tested

Hypotheses tested	Chi-square calculated	Chi-square tabulated	Degree of freedom	Remark
1. Democratic rule and size of Forest plantation established	753.64	32.67	21	*
2. Democratic rule and training (capacity building) of foresters	58.47	40.11	27	*

Note: \* = significant

Table 4. Kinds of Forestry Development Intervention Received between 1991-2007 in the Study Area

Kind of Intervention	1991-1999				1999-2007			
	Forest		Savanna		Forest		Savanna	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A. Physical support								
i. nursery establishment	10	50	15	75	13	65	15	75
ii. planting of exotic tree species	7	35	13	65	9	45	9	45
iii. planting of indigenous tree species	4	20	8	40	9	45	9	45
iv. purchase of forestry equipments	3	15	4	20	4	20	6	30
v. establishment of forestry demonstration plot	7	35	6	30	5	25	4	20
B. Financial support								
i. credit for the purchase of nursery equipments	7	35	6	30	4	20	6	30
ii. subsidies on forestry equipments	6	30	8	40	2	10	7	35
iii. loans to establish plantations or nurseries	3	15	1	5	1	5	3	5

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5: Kinds of Training Received by Respondents in the Study Area between 1991-2007

Kinds of Training	1991-1999				1999-2007			
	Forest		Savanna		Forest		Savanna	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
General Forestry	8	40	12	60	4	20	6	30
Forest Survey	0	0	0	0	3	15	1	5
Forest Management Training	4	20	0	0	6	30	0	0
Post Graduate Training	2	10	0	0	4	20	7	35
Forest Regeneration Training	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	5
Computer/ICT Training	0	0	0	0	5	25	8	40
Seminar/Conferences	0	0	0	0	2	10	4	20
Administrative Training	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	25

for Forest Officers								
Silviculture/nursery technique training	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	5
Mushroom production	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	10

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 6. Respondent's Perception of Financial Allocation to Forestry Department between 1991 and 2007

Financial Allocation	1991-1999				1999-2007			
	Forest		Savanna		Forest		Savanna	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very Poor	7	35	4	20	5	25	1	5
Poor	9	45	10	50	1	5	8	40
Good	4	20	6	30	11	55	10	50
Very Good	0	0	0	0	3	15	1	5

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 7. Respondent's Perception of the Release of Funds to Forestry Department between 1991 and 2007

Release of Funds	1991 -1999				1999 -2007			
	Forest		Savanna		Forest		Savanna	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Slow	20	100	15	75	13	65	13	65
Prompt	0	0	3	15	4	20	5	25
Fast	0	0	2	10	3	15	2	10

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 8: Identified Problems of Forest Management in the Study Area between 1991 and 2007.

Problem	1991-1999				1999-2007			
	Forest		Savanna		Forest		Savanna	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poor Funding	6	30	11	55	6	30	13	65
Encroachment	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	5
Low manpower	1	5	4	20	2	10	4	20

Inadequate Equipment	0	0	5	25	3	15	6	30
Insecurity	0	0	3	15	2	10	8	40
Transportation problem	2	10	2	10	2	10	2	10

Source: Field Survey, 2008