STATUS OF LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Community-based forest management has evolved in the past decade as an approach for the sustainable management of forest resources. This study investigated the status of local participation in forest resources management in Southwestern Nigeria. Study sites were selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques from the six states within the region. The target population for the study were 'the Public', timber contractors and sawmillers (TCS) as well as forestry officials. Data, which were collected using structured questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were analyzed using descriptive and Chi Square statistics. Results revealed that Community-based forest management (CBFM) was not in practice in Southwestern Nigeria. Awareness of this initiative varied significantly among the three stakeholders interviewed for the study (the public = 23.8%; TCS = 56.5%; Forestry officials = 84.5%). Identified factors responsible for the non-existence of CBFM included non introduction of the management strategy by the government; lack of awareness on the part of the public; lack of policies and legislations to back up the management strategy; lack of institutional strategy/framework for CBFM at State Department of Forestry level among others. Meanwhile, there is a strong relationship between management styles of forest reserves and the inability of government to alone solve the problem of forest degradation ($Pr < 0.01$, $\chi^2 = 11.146$, $df = 3$). The pronouncement of new policies and promulgation of new laws in respect of participatory initiative will be the basis for sound footing of CBFM in the study area. A valuable starting point will be the raising of awareness level on this initiative, and also improving and strengthening relationships among stakeholders.

Keywords: *sustainable forest management; community-based forest management; perception and awareness; forest degradation*

INTRODUCTION

State ownership of forests, a legacy of the colonial past, is a characteristic of African forestry programme. In this system of ownership local people who are the original owner of lands under which the forests grow were kept out of the management of the forests despite the fact that the state governments have very little, if any, corresponding capacities to manage the forests (Wily, 2003). Forest management as practiced during the colonial era was characterized by subjugation, repression, dissuasion and monopoly. This phenomenon led to frustration and anti-forestry backlash within the local population and it's touted as one of the factors responsible for forest degradation and decline across the tropics particularly in Africa.

The ineffectiveness of excluding people in forest resources management has led to a paradigm shift in management approach, favouring local people's participation. To this end, community-based forest management has evolved in the past decade as an approach for the sustainable management of forest resources. Although, its

effectiveness and efficiency has become a contentious issue in many quarters, there have been considerable documentations of community forestry in some parts of the world, most especially in the Asian countries. Similarly, there are growing efforts towards community forestry in some States in Africa. Significantly, the initiatives are in progress in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia where over one million hectares of natural forests are under community forest management (Wily, 2003; Dubois, 1998). It is evident that many African States have imbibed this management strategy with the rate of involvement increasing in space and time.

Community Forestry can provide an opportunity for effective and efficient management. It can be an appropriate strategy for the rational and sustainable management of the forests, useful for decentralized natural resource management and for local development (Danso *et al.*, 2000). Despite these huge benefits, the forest resources in South-western Nigeria are still centrally managed by the States. Consequently, the rate of forest degradation in the zone has been alarming and progressive. Although, the zone has relatively significant areas of natural forests cover totaling 1,948,863 ha including free areas and plantations, this figure only represents 22.48% natural forest cover, showing a decline from 33.45% coverage noted in 1978 (FORMECU, 1998).

The forests in Southwestern Nigeria are opened to abuse, and usually a focus for illegality. De- reservation of forest estate for agricultural production and urban development is on the increase with attendant negative environmental consequences including flooding and erosion (Kuchelmeister, 2000). As it is, tropical forests in South-western Nigeria are facing questionable governance with regards to the rules under which power is exercised in the management of their resources and in the relationship between the State and its citizens. This study therefore, investigates the status of local participation in forest resources management in Southwestern Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

The study was carried out in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti (Table 1 and Figure 1). The area lies between Latitude 6^{o} 20' North to 8^{o} 37' North and Longitude 2^{o} 30' to 6^{o} 00' East (Agboola, 1997) with a total land area of 77,818 km^2, projected population of 17.6 Million people as at 1998 and population density of 226.168 people per Km^2 (FDF, 1997). The study area is bounded by the Republic of Benin in the West, Kwara and Kogi states in the north, Edo and Delta states in the east and the Bight of Benin (Gulf of Guinea) in the south. Southwestern Nigeria has 80 constituted Forest Reserves with a total forest area cover of 793,266 ha while the Free Area cover is 1,005,871 hectares (FDF, *Op. cit.*).

Table 1: Information on the Six States of Southwestern Nigeria

State	Total Land Area (Km^2)	Population 000,000	Population Density (N/Km^2)	No. of Forest Reserve	Area of Forest Reserve (Ha)	No. of LGAs
Osun	9,491	3.45	232	11	92,242	30
Ondo/				16	307,616	18
Ekiti	20,454	3.44	191	18	24,296	16
Ogun	16,086	2.3	145	15	195,790	20
Oyo	27,848	5.59	124	18	169,173	33
Lagos	3,939	5.7	1444	02	6873	20
Total	77,818	19.48	250.33/Km^2	80	793,266	121

Collated from Forest Resources Study and Forest Management Plans of Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo and Osun States (FDF, 1997)

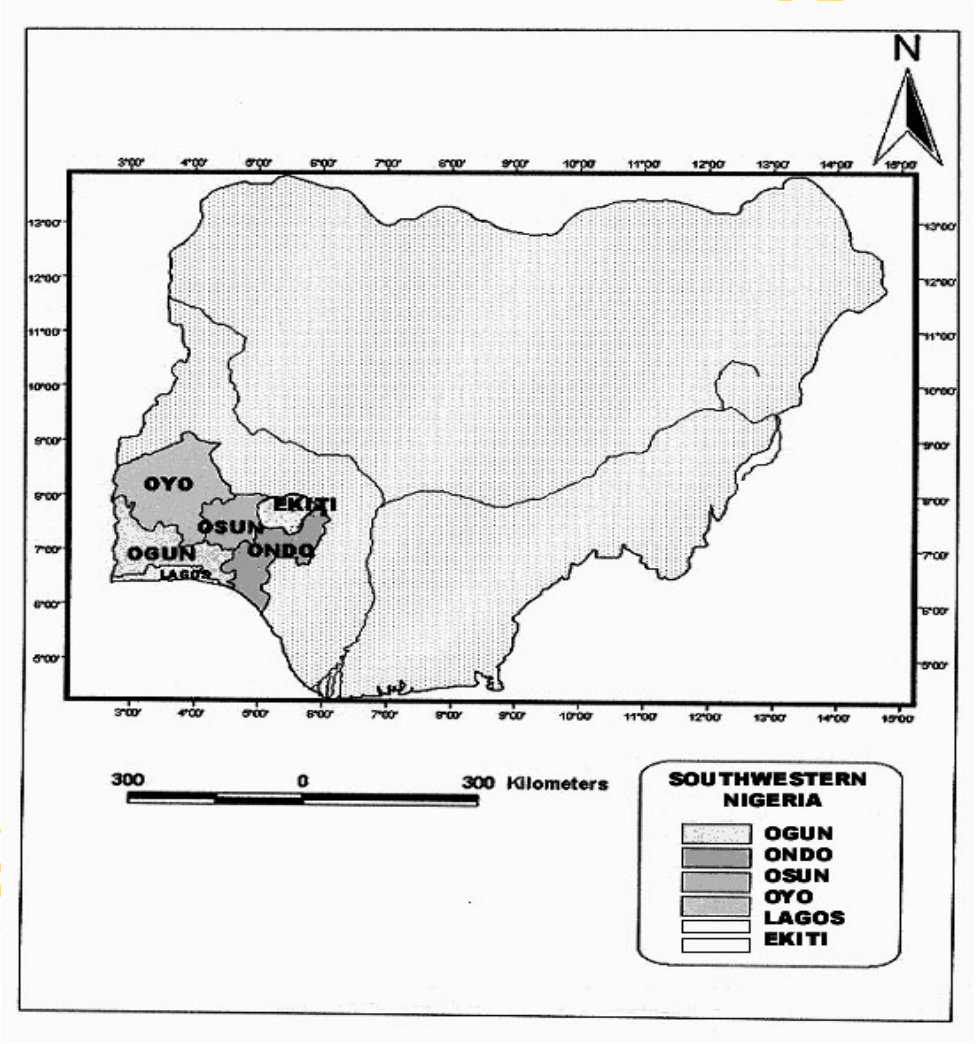

Figure 1: Southwestern Nigeria showing the States within.

Survey Procedure (Study Site)
The study sites were selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques from the six states making up the South-western Nigeria. Lagos State, being a rallying point for others was purposively selected because of its megalopolitan nature. All the remaining five states were assigned numbers and based on random sampling technique; three (3) of them were selected. The selected states were Osun, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos.

The Local Governments Areas (LGAs) of the selected states were further identified. Twenty percent (20%) of the Local Government Areas were randomly selected for the study. In all, six (Ife South, Ejigbo, Ila, Atakumosa, Oriade, Ayedade/ Irewole), four (Ondo west, Ose, Owo, Akure North), four (Ijebu East, Ijebu North, Odeda and Yewa) and four (Badagry, Ikorodu, Ikeja and Epe) LGAs were sampled in Osun, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos states respectively.

The target population for the study included (a) 'the Public', which comprised the local inhabitants and other categories of people such as artisans, civil servant, teachers, and traders living in enclaves and around the forest reserves; (b) timber contractors and sawmillers and (c) forestry officials.

The instruments used for data collection were structured questionnaires which elicited information from the respondents through administration and/or interview. The questionnaires were designed to obtain information on demographic bio-data, socio-economic variables, and forest resource uses of the respondents in and around the forest reserves, perceptions on community forestry and their perceptions towards participatory approach to forest management.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were employed to obtain detailed information from the rural people. This strategy was used to elicit information on perceptions about various management issues, and views about other forestry stakeholders, which the respondents would not want to respond to in the questionnaire. Group of people of the same sex were gathered through the village heads for the exercise in the four states studied. Notes, were taken, pictures and voices were recorded. The participants spoke freely about the status of the forest resources and reserves, status of community forestry/community based forest management, their perceptions on land issues and benefit sharing if participatory management is introduced as presented in the topic guide questions.

Other Sources of Data
Apart from the use of structured questionnaire for the gathering of primary data, secondary data were obtained from State Forestry Departments and archives on available maps, gazettes, staff strength, revenue generation, afforestation programme, budgetary allocation and releases where available and other available reports.

Pilot Survey /Questionnaire Validation
A pilot survey to validate the questionnaire was carried out on a sample of 10 people in a local government area adjoining a forest reserve that was not included in the sample. Error of ambiguity, misinformation and misinterpretation were corrected to improve the validity and consistency of the questionnaire. A test-retest reliability value of 0.85 was obtained which confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire.

Analytical Technique

Descriptive statistics employed include Frequency and Percentage Distribution, Tables, and Bar charts. The Chi Square Analysis was used to examine the relationship between management styles of forest reserves and problem of forest degradation in the study area.

RESULTS

Awareness of Community-Based Forest Management among the Respondents

Community based forest management is not in practice in Southwestern Nigeria as evident in the result of the survey in Table 2 where 74.2% of the local residents indicated lack of awareness of Community-Based Forest Management. The 23.8% of the respondents that claimed awareness must have heard or read about this management strategy and must be few of the enlightened members of the public. Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) is not in practice in the study states. However, from the study 56.5% of the timber contractors and saw millers sampled are aware of the management strategy while 43.5% are not aware of the strategy. This might be as a result of the non-confinement of the contractors/saw millers to their locality and or the level of educational status of some of them. The awareness of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) and Community Forestry (CF) is high (84.5 %) among the forestry personnel (Table 2) although these management strategies are not in existence in the study area.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' awareness of Community-Based Forest Management

Public	Osun		Ondo		Ogun		Lagos		Total	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
No	217	93.5	60	51.7	48	55.2	28	68.3	353	74.2
Yes	15	6.5	51	44.0	36	41.4	11	26.8	113	23.8
No response	-	-	5	4.3	3	3.4	2	4.9	10	2.1
Total	**232**	**100.0**	**116**	**100.0**	**87**	**100.0**	**41**	**100.0**	**476**	**100.0**
Timber Contractor and Sawmillers										
No	41	55.4	20	38.5	18	36.7	12	35.3	91	43.5
Yes	33	44.6	32	61.5	31	63.3	22	64.7	118	56.5
Total	**74**	**100.0**	**52**	**100.0**	**49**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**	**209**	**100.0**
Forest Officials										
No	11	22.0	4	9.5	-	-	-	-	15	10.6
Yes	39	78.0	31	73.8	37	100.0	13	100.0	120	84.5
No response	-	-	7	16.7	-	-	-	-	7	4.9
Total	**50**	**100.0**	**42**	**100**	**37**	**100.0**	**13**	**100.0**	**142**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

Existence of Community Forest and Community Forestry

Response of the public on the presence of community forest and the practice of community forestry in the study area indicated that an average of 89.1% of the community dwellers affirmed that they do not have community forests nor practice community forestry in the study area. However, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed similitude of community forests in the form of sacred grooves. A frequency distribution of 95.8% of the forest officials sampled as shown in Table 3 confirmed that the State Forestry Departments (SDF) in all the four states sampled do not

practice Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) or Joint Forest Management (JFM). This result confirms that Community Forestry (CF), Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM), Joint Forest Management (JFM) or any other participatory forest management is neither in practice nor in place in South-western Nigeria. Nearest to CBFM initiative is Ondo State which has just approved its implementation in 2007. Sustainable Forest management is not in practice in Nigeria (ITTO, 2006) and forest resources management in Nigeria has been in the hands of the government and its agencies for over a century (Idumah *et al.*, 2003).

Table 3: Existence of Community Forest and Community Forestry

Public	**Osun**		**Ondo**		**Ogun**		**Lagos**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
No	229	98.3	85	73.3	78	89.7	32	78.0	424	89.1
Yes	1	0.4	27	23.3	6	6.9	7	17.1	41	8.6
No response	3	1.3	4	3.4	3	3.4	2	4.9	12	2.5
Total	232	100.0	116	100.0	87	100.0	41	100.0	476	100.0
Forest Officials										
No	47	94.0	40	95.2	36	97.3	13	100.0	136	
Yes	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	
No response	3	6.0	2	4.8	1	2.7	-	-	6	
Total	50	100.0	42	100.0	37	100.0	13	100.0	142	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Forest degradation and community intervention

An average of 86.6% of the forestry personnel interviewed confirmed the poor status of the forest reserves and indicated that they were aware of forest degradation while an average of 11.3% were not aware of forest degradation (Table 4). Through further discussion the forestry officials suggested that there is need for community or public intervention in forest management.

Table 4: Awareness of forest degradation

Awareness	Osun		Ondo		Ogun		Lagos		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
No	5	10.0	5	11.9	6	16.2	-	-	16	11.3
Yes	45	90.0	35	83.3	30	81.1	13	100.0	123	86.6
No response	-	-	2	4.8	1	2.7	-	-	3	2.1
Total	50	100.0	42	100	37	100.0	13	100.0	142	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Government and Forest Degradation

Forest degradation and deforestation are driven by proximate and underlying factors which are acting together to impact forest-land use change of which the most prominent are economic factors, institutional arrangements, national and state land use policies and inappropriate political influences. All these encourage agricultural expansion, unsustainable wood exploitation and infrastructural development, which are proximate causes. An average of 91.6% of the respondents perceived that government alone could not solve the problems of forest loss and degradation (Table

5), which are hydra headed and have to be solved through community and other stakeholders' interventions. Chi-square analysis (Table 6) revealed that there is a strong relationship between management styles of forest reserves and the inability of government to solve the problem of forest degradation alone ($Pr < 0.01$ $\chi^2 = 11.146$, $df = 3$).

Table 5: Government alone on forest degradation problem

	Osun		Ondo		Ogun		Lagos		Total	
Solution	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
No	47	94.0	37	88.1	33	89.2	13	100.0	130	91.6
Yes	3	6.0	3	7.1	3	8.1	-	-	9	6.3
No response	-	-	2	4.8	1	2.7	-	-	3	2.1
Total	50	100.0	42	100	37	100.0	13	100.0	142	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Table 6: Summary of Chi-Square Analysis of relationship between management styles of forest reserves and the inability of government to solve the problem of forest degradation

	Value	Df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	11.146[a]	3	.011
Likelihood Ratio	9.259	3	.026
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.934	1	.047
N of Valid Cases	142		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .34.

Public Perception on the existence of Community Forestry and Community Based Forest Management

From the response of the interviewed public (Table 7), the perceived reasons for non-existence of community forestry in South-western Nigeria include among others non introduction of the management strategy by the government (NICF); lack of awareness on the part of the public (LA); non availability of land for the practice of community forestry (LL); lack of education on forestry matters (LE); land ownership in most cases is on individual basis (ILO); lack of policies and legislations to back up the management strategy (LPL); non availability of fund on the part of the public on one hand and that of the government on the other (LF). The respondents were also of the opinion that community forestry was not introduced so as to avoid conflicts among the communities and other forestry stakeholders (AC) and that; trees are long term investment (TLI). These factors are perceived to be responsible for non-existence of community forestry as single determinants and as combinations of, two or more determinants. From Table 6, 66.8% of the respondents gave various combinations of factors while various percentages of single factors were given with the exception of trees being long-term investment. Among the factors, non-introduction of the strategy by the government was perceived to be the most

acclaimed factors responsible for non-existence of community forestry with a record of 44.7 percent while avoidance of conflicts among communities and stakeholders was the least perceived factor with 3.6 percent.

Table 7: Perceived Reasons for non-existence of Community Forestry

	Osun		**Ondo**		**Ogun**		**Lagos**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
NICF	2	0.9	-		3	3.4	-	-	5	1.1
LA	19	8.2	6	5.2	6	6.9	-	-	31	6.5
LL	5	2.2	3	2.6	3	3.4	2	4.9	13	2.7
LE	2	0.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.2
ILO	12	5.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	2.5
LIG	5	2.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1.1
LPL	3	1.3	-	-	-	-	2	4.9	5	1.1
LF	3	1.3	-	-	-	-	2	4.9	5	1.1
AC	4	1.7	2	1.7	-	-	-	-	6	1.3
LIF	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Combinations	160	69.0	71	61.2	60	69.0	27	65.9	318	66.8
No response	17	7.3	34	29.3	15	17.2	8	19.5	74	15.5
Total	**232**	**100.0**	**116**	**100.0**	**87**	**100.0**	**41**	**100.0**	**476**	**100.0**

Factors	**Freq**	**% of 476**
Non Introduction of Community Forestry(NICF)	213	44.7
Lack of Awareness(LA)	203	42.6
Lack of Land(LL)	152	31.9
Lack of Education(LE)	72	15.1
Individual Land Ownership(ILO)	92	19.3
Lack of Initiative by Government (LIG)	72	15.1
Lack of Policy and Legislation (LPL)	144	30.3
Lack of Fund (LF)	37	7.8
Avoidance of Conflicts (AC)	17	3.6
Long Term Investment nature of Forestry (LIF)	34	7.1
Non Response (NR)	74	15.5

Source: Field Survey

Forestry Personnel Perception on non existence of Community Forestry and Community-Based Forest Management

Forestry personnel alluded to various reasons perceived to be responsible for the non existence of Community Forestry and Community-Based forest management in South-western Nigeria, notable among which are lack of government policy on Community Forestry (CF); lack of awareness, illiteracy; land tenure system;. heterogeneity of land ownership (in terms of caste, ethnicity, assets, income and individual land ownership); lack of legislation on the management strategies; lack of institutional strategy/framework for CF and CBFM at State Department of Forestry (SDF) level; lack of fund from the government or financial support from donor agency; conflict within communities and around communities; prejudice and discrimination against women; heterogeneity of the locals in terms of caste, class, ethnicity; disparity in wealth and social status); long gestation of forestry business ;

interference by politician-(unstable government); negative attitude of government towards forestry programme ; fear of losing job, insecurity, fear of non-relevance, misunderstanding about the objective of the people; attitudes /values and skills of agency personnel; government monopoly of decision making processes and benefits derivable from the forest (Table 8). The most prominent reason among forestry personnel for non–existence of CBFM in the study area is the lack of a policy framework for its existence (45.8%). Closely linked is the lack of awareness about it in the study area (36.6%) and lack of legislation to back up the strategies (21.8%).Other identified reasons are land tenure system (19.7%) which is influenced by heterogeneity of land ownerships in terms of caste, class and ethnicity (13.4%) political interference with regards to poor funding of forestry programme (14.8%) and job insecurity on the part of forestry officials (10.6%).

Table 8: Perceived reasons for non-existence of Community Forestry and Community Based Forest Management

Reasons	Osun		Ondo		Ogun		Lagos		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
Lack of policy	17	34.0	20	47.6	18	48.6	10	76.9	65	45.8
Lack of awareness	22	44.0	14	33.3	11	29.7	5	38.5	52	36.6
Land tenure system	8	16.0	9	21.4	3	8.1	8	61.5	28	19.7
Heterogeneity of land ownership	8	16.0	5	11.9	5	13.5	1	7.7	19	13.4
Lack of legislation	7	14.0	11	26.2	7	18.9	6	46.2	31	21.8
Lack of institutional framework	2	4.0	10	23.8	4	10.8	6	46.2	22	15.5
Lack of fund	11	22.0	2	4.8	3	8.1	-	-	16	11.3
Conflict	5	10.0	2	4.8	1	2.7	-	-	8	5.6
Gender prejudice	4	8.0	-	-	2	5.4	-	-	6	4.2
Heterogeneity of local residents	5	10.0	4	9.5	4	10.8	1	7.7	14	9.9
Long gestation	5	10.0	1	2.3	1	2.7	-	-	7	4.9
Political interference	9	18.0	6	14.3	-	-	6	46.2	21	14.8
Insecurity	-	-	6	14.3	6	16.2	3	23.1	15	10.6
Government monopoly of benefits	1	2.0	1	2.3	7	18.9	-	-	9	6.3
No response	14	28.0	13	31.0	11	29.7	1	7.7	39	27.5

Source: Field Survey, 2005

Relationship among stakeholders

From Table 9, 94.8% of the respondents believed that there are cordial relationships among the communities around and within the forest reserves while an average of 3.4% were of the opinion that the relationship may not be cordial at all times as a result of land disputes which was regarded as one of the strong constraints for community forestry implementation (Sonko and Camara, 1999). An overwhelming average of 93.9% of the respondents indicated that their communities were interested in working with outside groups for sustainable management of the forests in their localities with the highest percentage recorded in Osun State and lowest of 61% in Lagos State (Table 10).

From Figure 1, an average of 45.6 % of the public respondents perceived that the relationship between them and the timber contractors and forest officials are not

cordial, with the non-cordiality being highest in Osun State. Average of 11.1% of respondents has passive relationship, while 41.6% have cordial relationship, with the highest cordiality recorded in Ogun State. The non-cordial relationship among the timber contractors and the respondents living within and around the forest reserve may stem from the exploitation within and outside forest reserves and damage to cash/food crops and the community roads. From FGDs conflicts occur between the forest officials and the locals in the former's attempt to enforce laws on access into the forest reserves and resources on the latter.

Table 9: Relationship between Neighbouring Communities

	Osun		**Ondo**		**Ogun**		**Lagos**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Not Cordial	3	1.3	7	6.0	6	6.9	-	-	16	3.4
Cordial	228	98.3	107	92.2	81	93.1	35	85.4	451	94.8
Passive	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4.9	2	0.4
No response	1	0.4	2	1.7	-	-	4	9.8	7	1.4
Total	232	100.0	116	100.0	87	100.0	41	100.0	476	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Table 10: Interest of Community in working with outside groups

	Osun		**Ondo**		**Ogun**		**Lagos**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Yes	229	98.7	109	94.0	84	96.6	25	61.0	447	93.9
No	-	-	5	4.3	3	3.4	12	29.3	20	4.2
No response	3	1.3	2	1.7	-	-	4	9.8	9	1.9
Total	**232**	**100.0**	**116**	**100.0**	**87**	**100.0**	**41**	**100.0**	**476**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

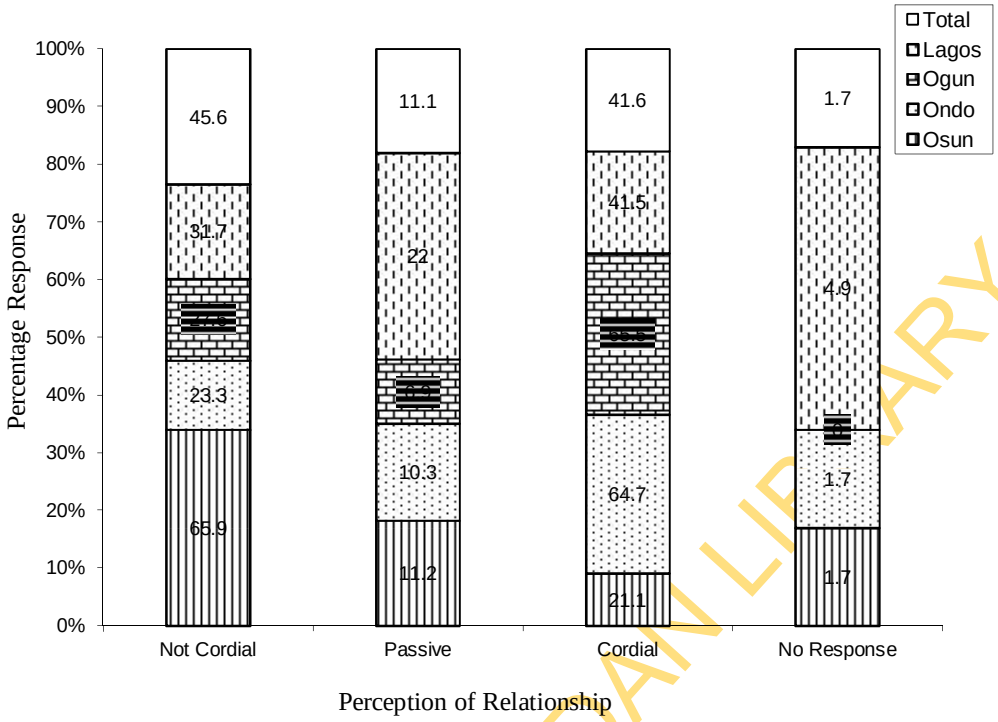

Figure 1: Perception of Relationship of Public Respondents with Timber Contractors and Forestry Personnel

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study have shown that the perception of the three categories of stakeholders interviewed do not vary on the status of community-based forest management in the study area. Invariably, sustainable forest management as posited by the ITTO (2006) is not in practice in South-western Nigeria. Despite the potential benefits of community-based forest management, central governments and state forestry department have continuously resisted choosing appropriate local institutions and transferring appropriate and sufficient powers to local authority (UNEP, 2002; Ribot, 1999). For any forest management to be effective, however, it has to be accompanied with democratic structures that ensure involvement of the rural dwellers most especially the less powerful group, women and other forest stakeholders**.** Experience from decentralization indicates that local communities can manage decentralized natural resources very well (Larson and Ribot, 2004). Larson and Ribot (*op.cit.*) asserted that, in addition to the presence of downwardly accountable representation, outcome also depend on variety of regulations and incentives that accompany such decentralization. The pronouncement of new policies and promulgation of new laws in respect of participatory initiative will be the basis for sound footing of Community-Based Forest Management that have not found a place in South-western Nigeria. Awareness of new initiative is a strong indicator of empowerment, which is the basis of effective participatory forest management strategies. As confirmed from the study, the awareness ratio on community-based forest management varies from state to state and among stakeholders. A valuable starting point towards the institutionalization of community-based forest management therefore will be to raise awareness level on this initiative, particularly among the rural dwellers.

CONCLUSION

The non-existence of community-based forest management in Southwestern Nigeria is inimical to the tenet of sustainable forest management. State governments within the zone should therefore, promote and provide the environment for the participation of interested stakeholders, including the rural poor, indigenous people, non-governmental organization forest dwellers and women in the planning, development and implementation of forest policies and other management activities. Most importantly, there is the need to raise awareness level on this initiative and also improve and strengthen relationships among stakeholders.

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