

EVALUATION OF FREIGHT ALONG THE CALABAR-ORON INLAND WATERWAYS CORRIDOR, NIGERIA

¹Ekop Godwin and ²Ibok Akarawak Nduonyikoyo

¹ Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos

² Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Calabar

Corresponding Author's email: gekop@unilag.edu.ng



Abstract

This paper examines traffic of inbound and outbound freight along the Calabar-Oron corridor. The corridor has been neglected with inadequate facilities as well as inadequate monitoring by National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA). These have given room for the presence of touts and none adherence to safety measures. The data was collected through field work by observation and interactions with the operators of the boats as well as traders at the terminals. The findings of the study concluded that an appreciable volume of traffic with 15 metric tons of goods valued at ₦ 6.8 billion from both inbound and outbound goods. Also, the inbound goods were mainly fish, crayfish, snail, periwinkle, plantain and banana. While the outbound goods were petroleum product, electronics, provision, cosmetics, drinks, garri, beans and onions. The study recommended the presence of National Bureau of Statistics to document these activities.

Keywords: Freight, Traffic, Inbound Goods, Outbound Goods and Calabar-Oron Corridor

Introduction

Transportation is the movement of persons and goods (tangible and intangible) from a location to another. This transportation can be in form of different modes which include road, rail, water, air and pipeline. Today, inland waterways transportation is an alternative mode of transportation to reduce the pressure on road especially in conveying heavy goods. Nature has also made things easy for man because some inland waterways corridor leads to the sea or ocean where the ports are located. As a result of the port location, goods can be conveyed for import and export through the inland water corridor. In developed societies, this has been harnessed and developed because it has been seen as a resource. While developing countries, especially Nigeria, is yet to develop her waterways despite the vast network of water which the country is blessed with.

A lot of legislations have been made to develop this mode of transport but not up to standard when compared with some developing nations especially in Asia. The Federal Government has established the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) through the Decree No. 13 of 1997 with the duty to improve and develop the inland waterways in Nigeria for efficient and effective navigation. Also the Cabotage Act (2003) which was aimed at promoting local participation in the maritime space in Nigeria through the building of vessels was enacted to develop the sector. Furthermore, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) Act 2007, was

also established to encourage local participation in inland waterway transportation by giving soft loans to operators, yet such loans are not available. In spite of the effort of the government, the corridor has not felt the impact in terms of development and supervision of activities of operators.

Problem Statement

The institutional failure in maritime transport is felt on the inland waterways in Nigeria. The terminals have been neglected and with inadequate facilities (Bassey and Ekpenyong 2018). The use of local boats makes the journey very boring and life threatening. The boats sometimes overturn, thus damaging the goods while passengers are drowned. Also, the corridor has not been adequately monitored by National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) these have led to the presence of touts at the terminals and not adherent to safety measures. These challenges have created a lot of setbacks because most fragile and very expensive products do not use the water corridor because the terminals lack cargo handling equipments. The decline in importance of the corridor started with the onset of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967. Many users of the route from the hinterland states were cut-off. Despite these challenges, the corridor still conveys agricultural items including fish, cray-fish, periwinkle and snail etc, produced from coastal communities, and exported from the corridor to the Republic of Cameroon. While the outbound goods conveyed were petroleum product, provisions, drinks, within the corridor and beyond to neighbouring Cameroon. Most owners of these products do not pay any form of duties (import or export) and a lot of smuggling activities is done because of the poor presence of relevant authority to secure the corridor.

This paper seeks to assess the volume of freight being conveyed along the Calabar-Oron inland waterways corridor.

Study Area

Calabar and Oron are located in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States respectively. Calabar is a port town and her major access was by waterways before the construction of Calabar-Itu road. Calabar has always remained a dominant commercial and political centre in the region. It served as the seat of the Colonial Administration of the protectorate of the Southern Nigeria before the amalgamation by Lord Frederick Lugard.

The waterway corridor was very viable because it was used to convey agro produce from oil palm plantations, raw materials and finished products from factories that existed then. However, the corridor declined in its importance when the Calabar – Itu Highway was opened in 1977. These States are part of the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. They lie between longitudes 8°07' and 8°19' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitudes of 4°30' and 5°15' North of the Equator, respectively. The location of the three terminals of the corridor studied are Calabar (Nsidung) is located at 4°57'N & 8°18' E, while Oron (Oron and Ibaka) are located at 4°49'N & 8°13'E and 4°39' N and 8°18'E within the Cross River Estuary respectively. The corridor lies in the Cross River estuary and also has access to the coastal region of Atlantic Ocean. The catchment area which includes the adjoining Islands and Bakassi Peninsular is an important fishing and trading region.

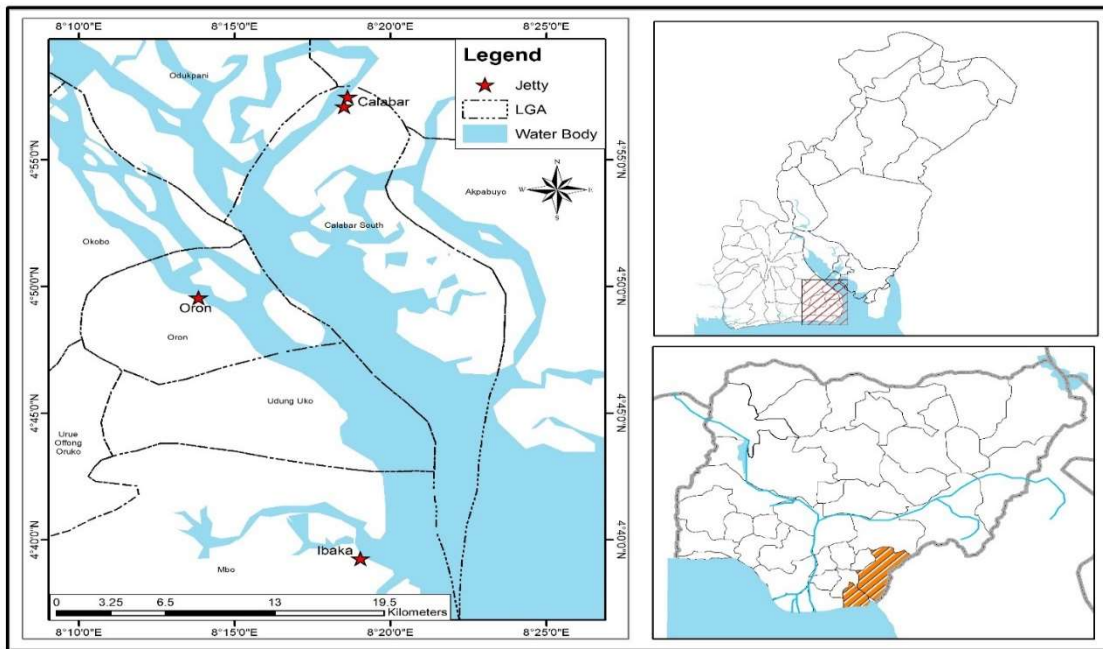


Fig 1: Map of Study Area Showing Jetties
 Source: Cartography Laboratory, University of Calabar (2017)



Plate 1:OronTerminal

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Literature Review

National Bureau of Statistics, Transport Sector Statistics, (2014) scored inland water mode of transportation in Nigeria as second to road transportation in terms of patronage of passengers and goods. Faajir & Zidan (2016) analyzed the transport challenges in Nigeria. The study

confirmed that inland waterways transport scores far behind road transport, with an average contribution of about 1.6 percent to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This was achieved with the aid of secondary data sources. Ezenwaji (2010) looked at inland waterways transportation in Nigeria with emphasis on the constraints to effective riverine transportation and estimated that only 0.08 percent of the total volume of goods and people used the mode of transport. Ephraim (2019) studied inland waterways transportation in Epe area of Lagos State and identified agricultural produce (farm produce, sea or maritime food and other perishable goods) as major cargos.

Bussinger, (2009) undertook a comparison study of the distribution of the different modes of transportation in many countries/regions across the world. The study estimated the modal share of inland water transport in Canada, Australia and Russia respectively at 11, 4 and 11 percent respectively for the total freight and passengers. For China, Europe and Brazil, inland waterways transportation handled 13, 25 and 14 percent of the total freight and passengers respectively. Similarly, Azad (2009), studied the Bangladesh inland waterways corridor, estimated that about thirty percent (30%) of goods and twenty percent (20%) of passengers were transported using the inland waterways transportation. Also, Kimba (2008) worked on the development of inland waterways in Freetown Sierra Leone and found that only 3 percent of the total volume of people and freight patronized the inland waterway mode of transportation. Rangaraj & Raghuram (2007) in their study on the viability of inland water transport in India, they compared the utilization of India inland water corridors with some other countries including Bangladesh and Germany. The outcome of the study put modal share of inland water transport at 32% and 20% of cargoes and passengers for Bangladesh and Germany respectively, compared to a mere 1% for India. Likewise, Rahaman (2009) in his studies of trans-boundary water resources management and Ganges treaties in Bangladesh showed that inland waterway transportation accounted for about thirty-two (32) percent modal share of the total transport sector. The directorate general of shipping in India estimated that inland water transportation accounted for a total of 20 million tons of cargoes which represented a mere 0.15% of the total cargo in the country in year 2009. Thus, inland waterways are much more intensively utilised for transportation in Bangladesh than India. Inland waterways transport in Nigeria is a viable economic sector to invest because most riverine communities lack bridges and roads.

Research methodology

The study employed data from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) made up of 5 respondents in each terminal making a total of 15 respondents for the three terminals studied. Issues discussed included: time for operation, the charges each operator pays, sanitation of the terminals and level of government participation. The discussion took place on a market day during the study. Furthermore, the measurement of inbound and outbound goods was done with analogue scale which took place for 104 market days using 34 operators in each terminal with 17 operators measuring inbound and outbound goods respectively. Observation at the terminals including recording traffic of goods, image capturing of scene with the aid of a camera at the terminals were also employed as study instruments. The secondary sources were documented records of published and unpublished items, journals, maps, books and other completed project that were relevant to the study and constituted the background information to this paper.

Data and Results

The Focus Group Discussion established the nature of operation at the terminals. They agreed that operations at the terminal begin at 7am and closes at 6pm each market day for both

inbound and outbound goods. The inbound goods were mainly fish, crayfish, snail, periwinkle, vegetables, plantain and banana, while the outbound goods were petroleum product, electronics, provision, cosmetics, drinks, garri, beans and onions.

The corridor, with only three terminals in focus, generated annual traffic of great economic impacts in their respective communities and far beyond. The study established in Tables 1 and 2 as well as Figure 2 that there was a total inbound freight of 7,675,200 kg, with another 7,336,628 kg as outbound. Thus, a total of 15,011,828 kg of freight was moved annually along the corridor, with only the three terminals in focus. The total value of outbound goods was put at ₦1,947,920,000 while the corresponding inbound figure was estimated at ₦4,860,180,000; thus yielding an annual total of ₦6,808,100,000 in 2017.

The dry fish and cray-fish from these trading terminals were carried and marketed in all major cities across Nigeria at prime prices. They are popularly known as “Calabar fish” and “Calabar crayfish” respectively; and are highly cherished. On the other side of the trade, some of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) loaded from the terminals found their way beyond the fishing settlements to the Cameroon mainland. Here they service the economy and enjoy good parallel market prices.

TABLE 1: Annual Traffic of Inbound Goods at Studied Terminal

Items	Weekly Quantity	Annual Quantity	Unit Weight (kg)	Weekly Weight (kg)	Annual Weight (kg)	Rate (₦)	Total Annual Value (₦'000)
Dry fish on sticks	24,000 sticks	1,248,000 sticks	3	72,000	3,744,000	1,500	1,872,000
Dry fish non sticks	470 basket	24,440 basket	40	18,800	977,600	40,000	977,600
Cray fish	600 bags	31,200 bags	15	9,000	468,000	40,000	1,248,000
Snail	170 bags	8,840 bags	55	9,350	486,200	25,000	221,000
Periwinkles	360 bags	18,720 bags	55	19,800	1,029,600	4,000	74,880
Vegetables	90 bags	4,680 bags	40	3600	187,200	20,000	93,600
Plantain and Banana	70 bundles	3,640 bundles	15	1,050	54,600	2,500	9,100
Miscellaneous includes; savon soap, second hand clothes, assorted petty items, personal effects & luggage and empty drums				14,000	728,000	500	364,000
Total					7,675,200		4,860,180

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

TABLE 2: Annual Traffic of Outbound Goods at Studied Terminals

Items	Weekly Quantity	Annual Quantity	Unit Weight (kg)	Weekly Weight (kg)	Annual Weight (kg)	Rate (₦)	Total Annual Value (₦'000)
Premium Motor Spirit (PMS)	550 drums	28,600 drums	167	91,850	4,776,200	40,000	1,144,000
Automotive Gas Oil (AGO)	33 drums	1,716 drums	183	6,039	314,028	47,500	81,510
Electronics	80 packs	4,160 packs	10	800	41,600	30,000	12,480
Provisions	100 sacks	5,200 sacks	60	6,000	312,000	50,000	260,000
Pure water	1,150 bags	59,800 bags	12	13,800	717,600	150	8,970
Drinks	340 cartoons	17,680 cartoons	10	3,400	176,800	2,000	35,360
Food items	120 sacks	6,240 sacks	60	7,200	374,400	15,000	93,600
Miscellaneous includes; fishing nets, clothes, foot wears, medications, stationeries, assorted petty items, personal effects and luggage				12,000	624,000	500	312,000
Total					7,336,628		1,947,920

Source: Field Survey, 2017

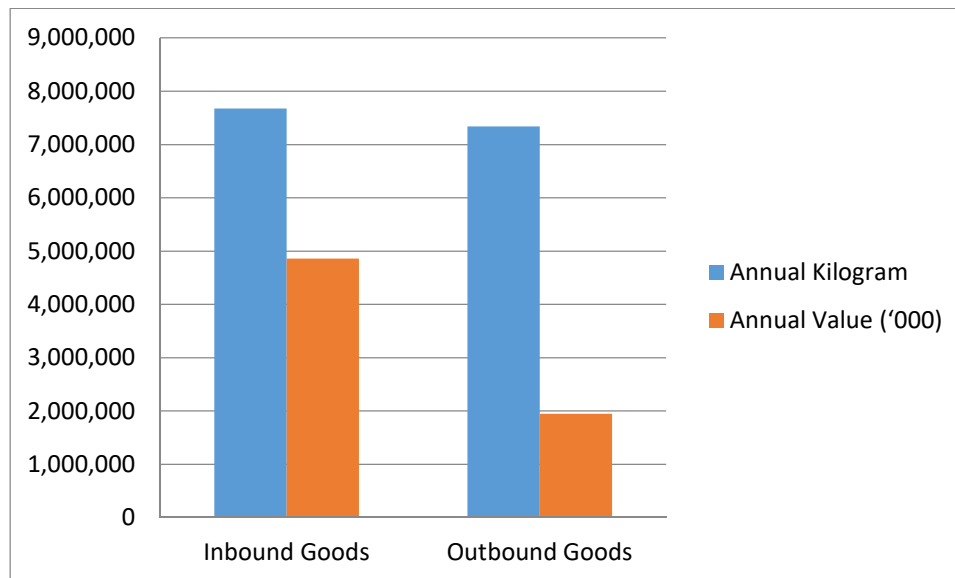


Fig 2: Chart Showing Inbound and Outbound Traffic along the Calabar-Oron corridor

Discussion of Findings

The total volume of goods was put at 15.011 metric tons and valued at over ₦ 6.808 billion. The inbound goods largely comprised fish and related sea foods. On the other hand, the out bound

goods were dominated by petroleum product, part of which probably found its way to the Cameroon mainland beyond the fishing settlements.

A considerable trans-border movement and trans-border trade was established. The total worth of ₦ 6.808 billion traffic could be classified under “legal” undocumented trade. The operators during the FGD said that there were also large volumes of “illegal” undocumented trade, otherwise known as smuggling, which took place secretly at various water fronts. The principal items covered were the banned rice, timber and roofing sheets which were brought in without payment of duties.

The terminals are faced with challenges of neglect by government. There are no parking space, shops, clean water, paved surfaces and difficult terrain to drive during wet season. The outcome from the Focused Group Discussion showed that both the trader and operators complained of the absence of regulatory agencies as well as the poor sanitary conditions of the terminals. There was a wide gap in the provision of facilities, such as toilets, modern harbor, loading bay and forklifts within the terminals.

Conclusion

The volume of traffic generated from the terminals provides employment to the local people and stimulates economic activities especially trade in the communities where the terminals are located. The outbound goods were dominated by petroleum products because these riverine communities do not have functional ‘petrol station’. While the inbounds goods comprised mainly fish, crayfish and related sea food because fishing is the major occupation of the inhabitants of these riverine communities. The ongoing trading activities ‘Calabar fish’ and ‘Oron crayfish’ have made Calabar and Oron respectively popular.

Recommendations

The volume of traffic at the terminals is very significant, with combined annual worth estimated at over ₦ 6.8 billion and providing employment for thousands of people. This volume of economic activities, although undocumented, should not be allowed without support. The presence of the representatives of National Bureau of Statistics is therefore recommended at the terminals for proper documentation of these activities. Such records could prove vital for both developmental and academic purposes. The study also recommends that the Local Government as well as the indigenes of these terminals should embark on monthly sanitation programme.

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