

**NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
DILEMMAS: THE CHALLENGES AND THE WAY
OUT**

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RURAL TRANSPORTATION IN NIGERIA, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD: A
CASE STUDY OF IKA-SOUTH AND IKA NORTH- EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF DELTA STATE.

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Abstract

The aspiration of Nigeria is to attain overall national development be it economic, social, political, cultural, scientific or technological towards growth and change, modernization and substantial improvement of the standard of living of its people, whether resident in the urban or rural areas. The study examines the role of transportation in the distribution of agricultural products in rural areas of Nigeria, using Ika Land (Ika-South and Ika- North East LGAs) as a case study. The study employed descriptive statistics in the analysis of data generated from field survey. The findings revealed that the rural road network in the study area is in deplorable condition and this pose some major challenges in the distribution of agricultural produce with which the area is richly endowed. The study concludes that, improved transportation infrastructure will impact positively, thereby mitigating the factors/challenges of the provision of transport infrastructure and Nigeria becoming a producer nation of both primary/secondary products, one identified as escape route to challenges of rural transportation is borne in the area of producing improved transportation that can reduce transport cost and accessibility.

Keyword: Rural Road Network, Rural Development, Transport and Infrastructure Constraints, Rural Settlement.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The economic development of any society is a complex process which depends on several interacting forces perhaps one of the most important of these force is the provision of adequate transportation infrastructure. The rural areas of Nigeria are inhabited by the nation's population which serves as the base for the production of food and fibre. They are also the major source of capital formation for the country and a principal market for domestic manufacture (Olatunbosun, 1975 in Abdulwahab et al, 2000).

Transportation otherwise known as the geography of movement is the means of relocating people, commodities and information through environmental media (Omiunu, 2007). According to Omiunu, transportation has three main components, namely, **the fixed transport infrastructure** such as roads, rail line; **the vehicle** which utilizes these infrastructure such as cars, buses; **the organizational structure** which ensures harmony between one and two above. These

components are very relevant to the distribution of agricultural products and sectorial development.

Transport according to Tunole and Adeniyi (2012) is regarded as an important factor involved in agricultural development all over the world. It is the only means by which food produced at farm site is moved to different homes as well as markets. It creates market for agricultural produce, enhances interaction among geographical and economic region and opens up new areas to economic focus. Thus it engineers growth and development.

Many transportation studies have been undertaken in recent years (Omiunu, 2006). The increased interest is due to the tremendous impact of transportation infrastructure on regional economy. Transport and development are usually regarded as closely related because, each of them influences the fortunes and the relative role of growth of the other. Stuckey (1973), Filani (1978) and Charles (1958). There are complete relationships that vary both spatially and temporal between transport and rural development, but for any meaningful development to take place, transport plays a crucial role. In the developing world, and Nigeria in particular, the rural area are more disadvantaged than the urban areas because of its improved transportation infrastructure. Several studies have confirmed that most rural areas are under developed because they are not directly located on motorable roads (Ogundana, 1972, Olaseni, 2004). In every organizational process as well as other human activities transportation is the main stay and of course the wheel in which all successful business and man's endeavours depends. This uniqueness is reflected on its importance on any land-use activities, especially agricultural land-use.

Despite the considerable impact made by the government in the area of rural transportation as it relates to agricultural productivities in Nigeria, there are still numerous and weighty challenges. According to Onokerhoraye (1995), the problems of transportation in Nigeria stem from three main causes, namely, inadequate funding, bad management of transport services and indivisibility/lump sidedness. Filani (1998) & Ikogbo (2001) observe that despite the huge investment in the transport sector in Nigeria, major rural roads throughout the Local Government areas in the country are in a deplorable condition as a result of difficult terrain and lack of road maintenance.

The National Bureau of Statistics, (2005), reported that since the attainment of independence in 1960, transportation problems in Nigeria included bad road networks and inadequate transport facilities in the rural areas.

According to Michael et al, (1982), "the poor condition of the rural roads has aggravated the rising cost of living in many urban centers which is partly attributed to the poor performance of the agricultural sector of the nation's economy. In a similar study, Kukaye (2003) examined rural accessibility of farmers to the commercial areas of Ika South area of Delta State. He identified long distance, poor rural connectivity and unavailable transport services as the major challenges to the evacuation/distribution of farm produce to the main urban markets in the study locations. He neither consider nor evaluated distance to farm plot and farmers houses and the annual loss incurred on perishable agricultural goods which is very crucial to the annual earning of the rural poor farmers.

Ogunsanya (1981) observed that there are three types of routes in the rural area viz: bush path, unsurfaced rural roads and surfaced rural roads. In a study carried out by Filani (1983) in rural areas of Nigeria, it was discovered that where motorable roads exist, they are mostly of unpaved surface (unsurfaced rural roads), narrow width, circuitous alignment and with low quality bridges. Economic activities cannot thrive well in such an environment, as rural markets centres are inaccessible to traders/farmers because of poor transport facilities. In many rural areas in Nigeria, it has also been observed that the size of plots cultivated is related to the distance of farm sites to the major transport arteries (Adetunji, 2003). In another study carried by Ogunsanya (1988) on relationship between transportation, underdevelopment and rurality, he posited that the greater the degree of rurality, the lower the level of transport development. Paul et al (2009) observed that the impact of road infrastructure on agricultural output and

productivity are particularly important to Sub-Sahara Africa because the provision of transport facilities is an important factor in the distribution of agricultural produce and the overall integrative development of the rural area. The development of an efficient transportation system is often regarded as crucial to the process of economic development of a country.

From the analysis, it is evident that transportation is not only essential for agricultural development, but also for the economic, political, social and other forms of development because transportation provides a framework for regional integration; thus, the role of transportation in the developmental process of any region cannot be over-emphasized. However, among geographers and practical planners, the precise nature of this relation is difficult to develop. Against this back-ground the paper used an empirical analysis of transport facilities provision and its impact on the development of agriculture vis-a-vis rural development in Nigeria.

Role of Transportation

Transportation plays very important role in the development of any economy. It encourages urban development, expansion and involvement through exchange of human/natural resources. It forms the circulatory system that connects cities, suburban and rural communities with one other. Transportation is basic or fundamental in nearly all aspects of life. It is perhaps in recognition of this interactive role of transportation that Lord Lugard (1919) in Orimunu (2007) contended that the national development of Africa can be summed up in one word "Transport". Transportation as facilitative link enhances general economic development, aids production and distribution and, above all, is a direct contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), thus enhancing high standard of living. This role has been well demonstrated in the distribution of both agricultural products and finished/manufactured goods across major cities and its neighboring communities.

In this study, emphasis is on road transportation. Road transportation network can be seen as one of the most basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function effectively. Due to the critical role played by road transport in development, the federal and the state governments should invest in the transport sector and in road building must be a necessity. Road network should be expanded in order to open up previously isolated and unexploited regions, so as to promote national integration (Airey 1985 & Filani 1993). Emphasis should be shifted from the major track roads to the expansion of secondary and feeder roads especially in the rural areas (Mwase, 1989).

To emphasize the crucial role of road transport in the nation's development, the government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) requested the World Bank's assistance to meet both its immediate and short-term funding needs for the implementation of its rural travels and transport programmes (RTTP, 2008). This was aimed at improving access, mobility and distribution. Ohwofasa (2010). It is in this regard that the study intends to examine the role of transportation in the distribution of agricultural products.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Rural Development.

There seems to be no clearer cut definition of or precise concept of rural development. In some quarters, agricultural development is seen as rural development, while in others, the provision of roads typifies rural development. The World Bank (1975), sees rural development as simply an economic issue. Osuntogun and Oludimu (1986), expanded this view and conceptualize rural development as improving the living standard of the mass of low income

population residing in the rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. Accordingly, rural development should promote significant increase in rural resource productivity. This implies that the ultimate aim of rural development is to achieve a high level of resources productivity, so as to sustain development.

Anker (1973) summarized these definitions of rural development as "strategies, policies and programmes for the development of rural areas and the promotion of primary activities carried out in the rural areas, principally, agriculture". The definition of Anker is most adequate and apt for this study. It sees rural people as the subject and object of development who participate in the development process and not just beneficiaries. For the rural people to participate actively, they needed to be transformed. Supporting this view, Adalemo, (1989) argument become very apt. According to him transformational development is the process which "seeks to increase the productivity of indigenous institutions and practice by building on and reinforcing those appropriate to local conditions and needs". The position of this paper is that rural transportation is a condition which results in general improvement in the quality of life of the rural people. A well conceptualized, articulated and operationalized integrated rural transportation programme is a time-tested vehicle that can start the process of true sustainable development; but the benign neglect of rural transportation planning and development has been a critical challenge facing agricultural development in Africa and Nigeria, in particular, due largely to lack of clear-cut policy on rural road network development.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study includes the following:

1. Examine the role of transportation facilities in the distribution of agricultural products.
2. Determine the major challenges militating against the distribution of agricultural product by rural farmers.
3. Identify different modes of transportation of agricultural produce in the study area relative to the agricultural productivity level of the rural farmers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the Study Area

The study area is Ika land which is made up of Ika south and Ika north east local government areas. These two local government areas are part of the twenty-five local government areas of Delta State. It is located on latitude $6^{\circ}06'$ and $6^{\circ}35'$ and longitude $6^{\circ}05'$ and $5^{\circ}55'$ east of the Greenwich Meridian. It shares boundaries on the north and west with Edo state, on the east with Aniocha-north and Aniocha south local government areas and on the south with Ndokwa-west local government area Umunede, Boji-Boji Agbor, Boji-Boji Owa and Owa-Oyibu are major sub-urban settlements in the two local government areas. The climate of the area is characterized by wet and dry seasons each lasting six to eight months. The average rainfall is about 150cm with a double maxima. Relative humidity usually 90%, (Onyekpeze 2003).

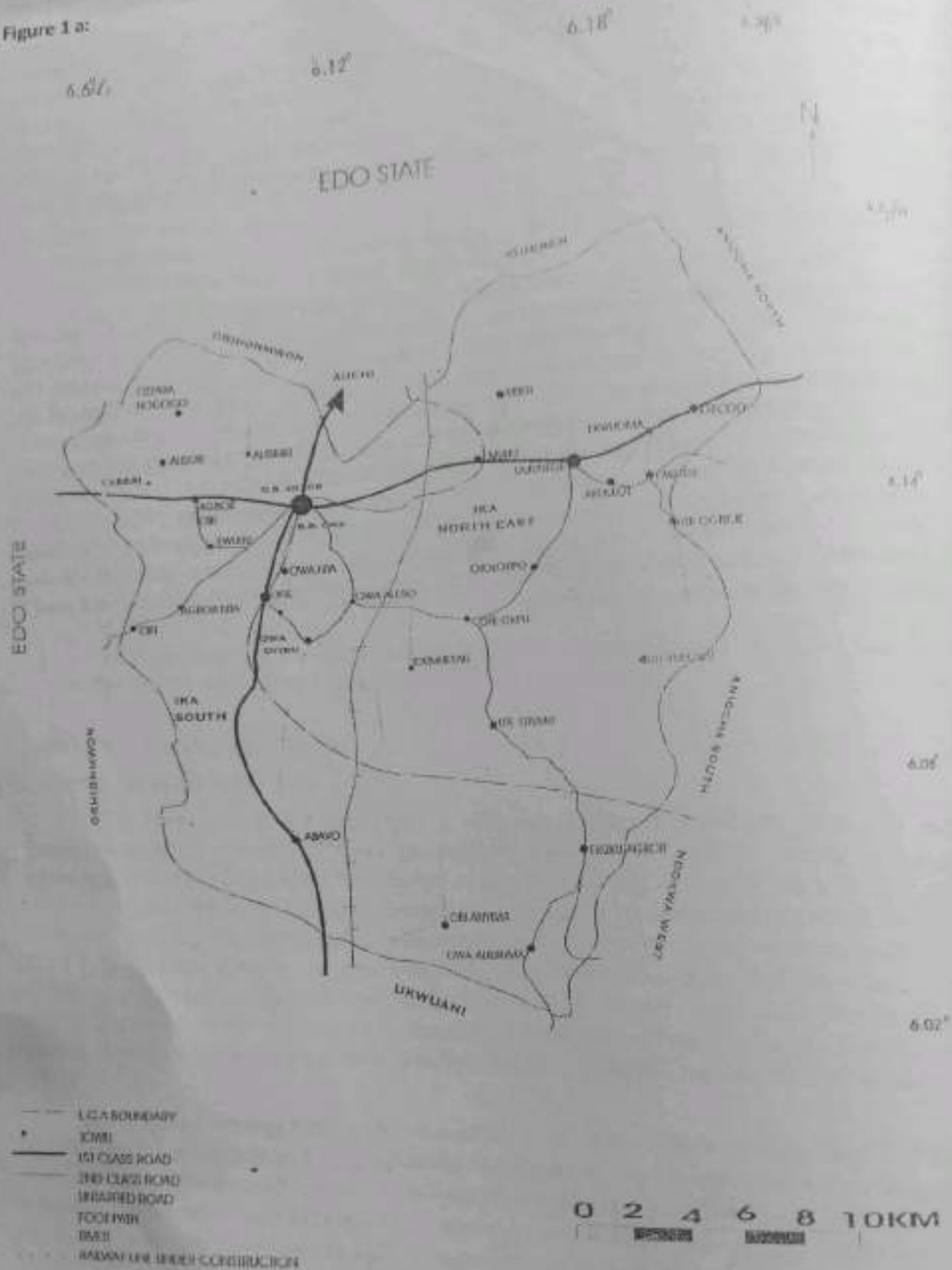
The average minimum temperature is about 31°C . It has within the rainforest belt and hence the dominant feature of the vegetation is of evergreen forest. The soil type, comprising sub stratum, is that of Benin sand" which is very fertile and encourage good farming process. The Ika Land has an area expanse of 432km^2 and a population of 124,483 (1996 census). The people of the area are predominantly farmers, cultivating crops such as yam, melon, pepper, okro, maize, cassava and vegetable, among others. The major means of transportation is road transport system and it is poorly developed; the few tarred roads are the once connecting Agbor, Umunede, Igbodo, Agbor-Nta, and Owa-Oyibu. This is a first class road network while the second class and untarred/hush paths connect some of the settlements like Abavo, Ekuku-Agbor, Ewuni, Alisume, Oza Nogogo, Idumesah, Ute Okpu, Alidinma, etc. (see figure 1a and b: The

study area and the study area road connectivity). There are few commercial buses pick up and lorries plying the first and second-class roads. The major means of transportation in the area is motorcycle (Okada). The deplorable state of the roads and the erosion ravage terrain of the area, has led to high cost of distribution of agricultural products and people from the rural area to other major urban centres. The major important markets in the area include Oyoko, Alifekede and Umunede market, of these markets, Alifekede market is located along the first class road that links Edo state to Anambra State while, Abavo (Oyoko market) is located in the second-class road linking Auchi to Warri.

Research Methods

Primary and Secondary sources of data such as questionnaires, texts, journals, oral interview and internet browsing were used for the study. Two hundred (200) respondents were selected from ten (10) settlements in the local government areas involving peasant farmers. The direct on site interview method was employed. Respondents were given copies of the questionnaire and retrieved immediately on completion. As such the analysis and discussion of the result was based on the 200 copies returned. The respondents were randomly selected, thus, only those who accepted to be interviewed were considered for the exercise. The questionnaire sought information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, characteristics of rural roads, frequency of movement between farm plots and markets, mode of transport used, means of transportation, the type of crops grown and output of agricultural production. Descriptive statistics such as table of frequencies and percentages as well as maps were used to analyse the data generated from the field.

Figure 1 a:



G 2^a IKA LAND (IKA SOUTH AND IKA NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS)

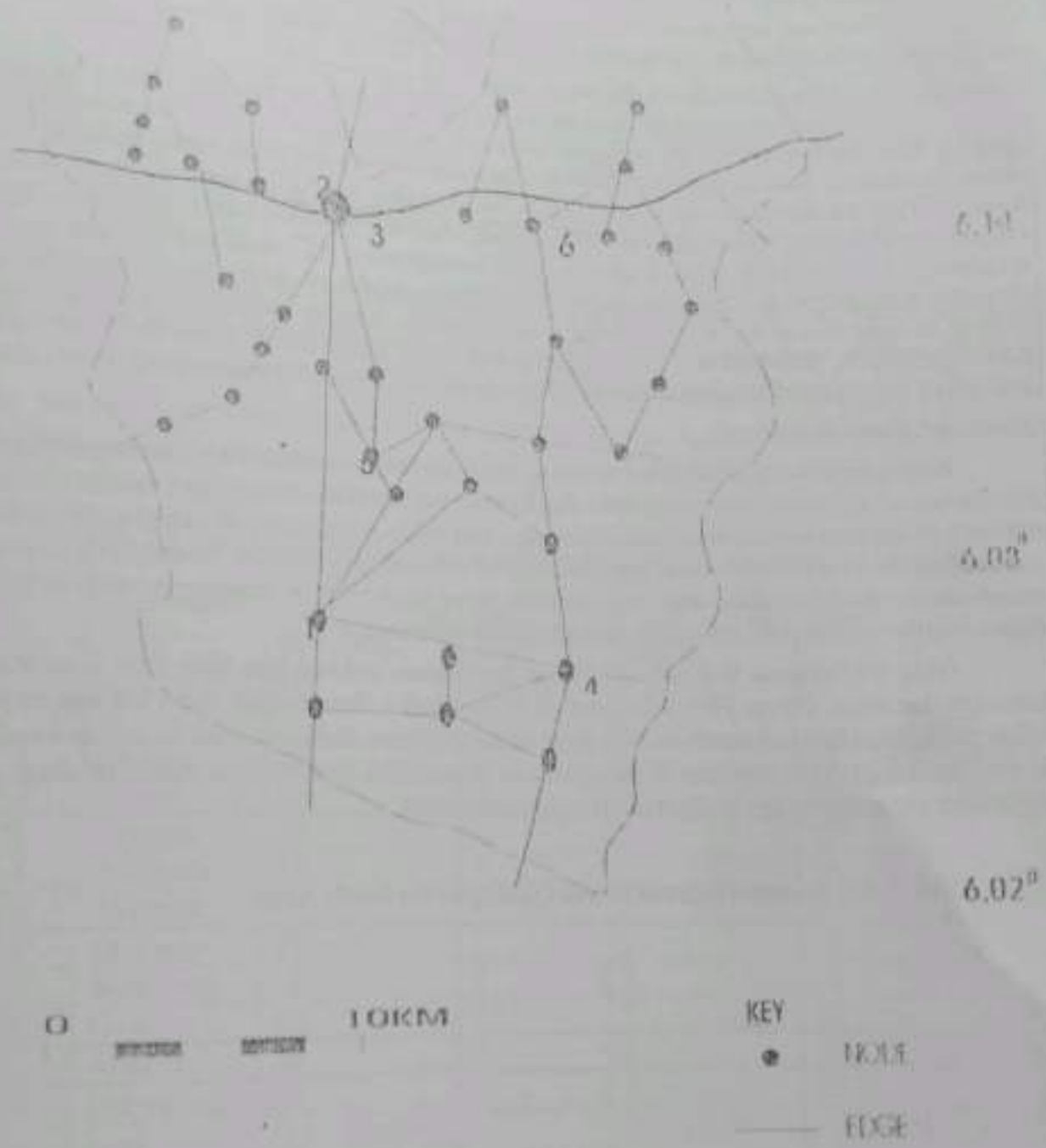


Figure 1 b:

Topographical map showing settlement nodes and road network connectivity of Ika land (Ika South and Ika North East L.G A. of Delta State)
 source: Field Survey 2011

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic/Demographic Characteristics

Ika Land which is principally made up more of rural settlement than urban centres reveals a true socio-economic characteristic of rurality. The socio-economic characteristics of the sample population reveal that a larger percentage (62.5%) are farmers, while teachers/civil servants and artisans/drivers constituted the lesser percentage (37.5%). A cross section of farmers sampled showed that the larger percentage (72%) of the farmers in the study area are male while 28% are female. The female are engaged more in the processing of the agricultural commodities than in land preparation/cultivation. Majority of the farmers are between the age brackets of 20-60 year, with a percentage of 65%. Characteristically, 5.5% of the farmers are married while 67% of them do not have above primary school education.

Mode/Means of Transportation in the Study Area

The study reveal that farm plots were scattered all over the study area at varying distance from the farmers homes and motorable roads. Analysis of roads characteristics, as shown in table 2.1 below, reveal that 80% of the sample roads are earth roads and liable to flooding. They are therefore seasonal as they are inaccessible during the raining season. Road sample also show that 75% of the transport infrastructure are footpath, single lane roads. The remaining 25% which are either 2-lanes or dual carriageways. (1st class and 2nd class roads network). Respondents were interviewed on the different modes of distribution of agricultural product to their houses as well as to the major markets. Modes identified included head-porterage, bicycle, motorcycle (Okada), pickup and buses, all of which made use of the road network as the most predominant and available mode of transporting their farm produce.

Transportation Challenges

Respondents were asked to list the transportation problems encountered in the process of distribution of agricultural produce from the farm to their various houses and market places. Majority of the respondents listed the followings; bad roads, irregularity of vehicles due to the seasonal nature of the roads in use, insufficiency of vehicles, government insensitivity to road maintenance/ road upgrades, and long distance from farm to their homes, as well as long distance to the various markets within and outside the settlements.

Table 2.3: indicate that only 46.5% of the farmers trekked less than 1km from their homes to the farms. Others 29%, 14%, and 10.5% trekked 1-3km, 3-8km and 8 km and above respectively from their various homes to their farms. All these distances pose major challenges to distribution of farm produce from source to destination and in most cases spoilage of vegetables crops among many other fragile crops cultivated.

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Roads Quality in the Study Area

Road Status	Roads Attribute	Percentage Of sampled Roads Quality (%)
Tarrod/Earth	Bitumen/Gravel surface	20%
	Laterite/Earth surface	80%
Width of road	4-lane road	10%
	2-lane road	15%
	Foot path-single lane	75%
Mobility	All year round	10%
	Partial seasonal	25%
	Seasonal	65%

Source:- field survey 2010/2011

Considering fig. 2.2 below, the frequency of farmers to farm plot, in other to determine the distance to farm from settlements sampled, 64.5% of the respondents in the study areas indicated they go to farm once per day. While 27.5% and 13% go to their farms once every other day and twice per week respectively. This is an indication that the closer the farm site the frequency of trips to the farms.

Table 2.2: Frequencies of Trips by Famers from Farms to Houses in the Study Area

	Settlements	Once per day (Everyday) (%)	Once every other day (%)	Twice per week (%)	Total
1	Omumu	12	5	3	20
2	Abavo	11	7	2	20
3	Agbonta	14	4	2	20
4	Alifekede	15	3	2	20
5	Akumazi	10	7	3	20
6	Otolopko	15	2	3	20
7	Idumuesa	12	6	2	20
8	Owa-nta	10	7	3	20
9	Abugba	10	8	2	20
10	Iduemewan	10	6	4	20
	Total	129 (64.5%)	55 (27.5%)	26 (13%)	200 (100)

(Percentage in parentheses)

The mode of transport has direct bearing on the frequency of trips to market places, as table 2.3 below reveal. The mode of transportation for distribution of farm produce to market

centers reveal that over 60% of the farm products in the study area conveyed to various markets was by human portage, because they trek short distances to farm plots. 25% of the respondent make use of bicycles and motorcycles respectively for similar farm purpose, while 15% convey their farm produce to market places by use of buses, pickup vans and taxis. Majority of those who use vehicles to convey farm produce to market places and farms where from settlements like Abavo, Umenede and Alifekede, which have access to good state and federal roads. About 100% and 50% of farmers in very remote settlement of the rural parts of L. G. A convey farm produce to the market places by human portage and motor cycles respectively. The reason for the use of this mode of transportation is because of the bad condition of the roads from their farm to the urban Areas.

Table 2.3 Distance from Farm Plot to House in kilometers (km)

S/No	Settlements	Distance from Farm Plot to House				Total
		Less than 1km	1- 3km	3- 8km	8km and above	
1	Omamu	10	6	2	2	20
3	Abavo	11	6	2	1	20
4	Agbonta	10	5	3	2	20
5	Alifekede	8	6	4	2	20
6	Akumazi	11	5	3	1	20
7	Otolopko	10	4	3	3	20
8	Idumuesa	7	8	2	3	20
9	Owa-nta	9	7	2	2	20
10	Abugba	10	5	3	2	20
12	Iduemewan	7	6	4	3	20
	Total	93 (46.5%)	58 (29%)	28 (14%)	21 (10.5%)	200 (100)

(Percentage in parentheses)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examines rural transportation in Nigeria and the challenges it poses to mobility pattern in the distribution of agricultural products. The study used descriptive statistics, using tables of percentages to identify problems farmers of Ika South and Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State encountered in the distribution of farm

produce. The study reveals that the rural roads network in the study areas have good connectivity but the roads are not only in deplorable condition but the provision of transport services is grossly inadequate. Majority of the farmers in the study areas made of transport hour loss in reaching desired destination. The distances to the farm plots and farm's perishable products thus affecting economics gains on the rural populace. It can therefore, be concluded that rural transportation should be improved so as to improve agricultural production and distribution in the study area. This will in turn generate more income and bring about high standard of living of the rural farmers in particular and the rural populace in general, thus enhancing the growth of the rural areas and the rural development.

The need for greater integration of both rural and urban sectors and the desire to stimulate increased spatial interaction within the rural environment in an under-developed economy such as Nigeria's call for paying greater attention to the provision of adequate transportation facilities in the rural areas as a means of stimulating rural development is recommended among others.

RECOMMENDATION

Nigeria, like other developing nations of the world, should be positioned to meet the challenges of the rural transport sector in the next decades. As a major stride in this direction, it is important to critically look at the various challenges presently confronting the sector as reviewed in the cases presented in the paper. In other to do a thorough job on the constraints of rural transportation in Nigeria.

One identified escape from the problems of rural transport is borne in the areas of providing improved transportation that can reduce transport cost. According to Ullman, (1956), in Udo, (1982) the condition of "Transferability" affects transport development. When transportation is improved, the measure of time and money cost is reduced and this result in increased interaction and trade.

Reduced transport cost, especially of the small scale rural farmers, is only but a short term effect, rather, the major impact of better and improved transport is likely to come from the reduced cost of transporting farm produce to markets

Agreed that some locations of the nation's terrains are bad, government should put in place well-constructed and well-maintained roads that can withstand variations in weather throughout the year.

If these recommendations are considered, it will enable passengers to enjoy their trips, there will be reliability in transport services, which will go a long way in enhancing patronage, preserve. The quality of the farms produce from the farm gate to the markets gate, and enable perishable goods to reach their destination in time and safely, thus checking food security in urban areas and eradicate poverty at the grass root. It is on these premises that sustainable economic development of a nation's rural sector can be achieved.

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