

Socio-Cultural Profiling and Development in Southeast Nigeria: A Case Study

Professor Pat Uche Okpoko

Department of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Email: patrick.okpoko@unn.edu.ng

Dr. Chinwe Okpoko

Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Email: chinwe.okpoko@unn.edu.ng

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Abstract

Development projects have better chances of succeeding in this part of the globe if intricate socio-cultural issues are identified and recognized in the planning and implementation process. Yet, efforts to document the dynamic social processes for development purposes appear to be haphazard in spite of the fact that Nigeria's Environmental Impact Assessment Decree of 1992 recognizes this need. This paper uses a multiplicity of approaches to identify, document and describe the socio-cultural indicators that may influence and be affected by gas oil and exploitation and New Awka Capital City project in Anambra Basin. Research results reveal that the people of the region, like many peoples of Nigeria, have sentimental attachment to land, forests and the resources therein, water bodies and other aspects of their cultural heritage. In actual fact, some of these heritage resources, namely land, forests, lakes, streams, pythons, tortoise etc, are seen as sacred possessions and therefore must not be desecrated by any form of development. This paper provides a platform that will guide the increasing development projects in Anambra Basin.

Keywords: Anambra Basin, development projects, Environmental Impact Assessment, profiling, Social Impact Assessment, Socio-cultural.

1. Introduction

This paper was conceived to provide baseline information that will guide the spate of development currently being witnessed in the region. Such development projects have been catalyzed first by the discovery of commercial gas deposits in the region, and second by the desire of current Anambra State government to redesign Awka Capital Territory into what has been termed New Awka Capital City. Anambra Basin has proven gas reserves and a number of multinational and indigenous oil companies have been granted concessional licenses to develop them. Because its organic matter is terrestrially derived, the basin is said to have more gas accumulation than oil (Okeke *et al*, 2013). The New Awka Capital City development project on its part extends to 20 km radius as against the original 10 km radius. Consequently, development activities are expected to be intensified in the region.

It is a known fact that development projects impact on people either negatively or positively or both. Hence, a major requirement of governments and corporate bodies in these parts since the last three decades is that project proponents should predict/anticipate project outcomes so as to mitigate the possible adverse effects and enhance the positive impacts. Unfortunately, much effort in this respect has been directed at the physical environment to the near disregard of socio-cultural dimensions. This is in spite of the fact that socio-cultural profiling or social baseline studies broadly assist in providing an idea of the project impact on socio-cultural and economic lives of the host communities based on a comparison of pre and post project situation; and the basis for determining appropriate mitigation measures to address any adverse impacts.

The study delineates the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the study locations, the authority structure and political profile, demographic profile, education profile, livelihood activities and income profile, land use and land rights, water rights, cultural property profile, housing and infrastructure, transportation and travel activities, communication profile etc. and associated issues. The selection of these social indicators was preceded by ad hoc scoping of potentially sensitive items that may influence and/or be affected by development actions from which the above key areas were identified and studied. This will provide the basis for understanding the characteristics of the existing environment and the

benchmark for subsequent evaluation of project impact. Such information is necessary for promoting harmonious relations with the host communities while giving them a sense of responsibility and ownership.

It must be reiterated that the selection of the profile indicators studied was informed first, by gas exploratory projects that are ongoing in the basin and second, by the New Awka Capital City development project, which is being put in place by Anambra State government. While delineating the profiles and the probable areas for study, we took cognizance of the likely interaction between project activities and the receiving cultural systems. As Whitehead (2005) avers, while a holistic attempt should be made to include all possibilities, research teams should be prepared to create a list of specific set of indicators that are specific to their project. Such a list attempts to delineate and describe the key aspects of each indicator that are sensitive to the resource development in question. This approach was adopted in the execution of this research.

2. Socio-Cultural Profiling and Development in Nigeria

Socio-cultural profile simply refers to the description of a geo-cultural area or setting. It is an attempt to delimit and describe the socio-cultural items and trends within a project area that may influence and/or be affected by project activities. Socio-cultural items are immensely invaluable in defining a people's perception, disposition, reception and assessment of development interventions and their probable effects. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to include socio-economic studies in environmental assessment (Seibo-Brass EIA, 2006).

Whitehead (2005) identified sixteen socio-cultural profiles that should be studied when initiating development interventions as follows: geographic; demographic; economic; education; housing and human ecology; health; political; crime adjudication and public safety; human resources/assets organization and action profiles. Others are technology, infrastructure and natural resource; expressive culture; ideational; material culture; play, recreation and leisure; culture reproduction and historical profiles. Howbeit, he argued that "attempting to collect data for all 16 profiles would take an inordinate amount of time and generate a tremendous amount of data" (Whitehead, 2001:5). Consequently, he identified four basic profiles that should not be ignored when handling community data as follows: (a) geographic, in terms of the community's precise location; demographic that is, who lives in the community; economic, in terms of income and employment levels; and history, which provides the contextual data for interpreting the data collected.

It is argued that resource development pressures can be effectively mitigated if social, cultural and economic factors or social profiles are considered as integral parts of the mitigation and preparatory framework (Joint Secretariat, 2015). Such profiles provide a framework for storing and organizing various data with which to facilitate the planning, implementation and evaluation of community-based initiatives regardless of the methods used in collecting the data (Whitehead, 2005). In other words, baseline data on social, economic and cultural indicators are vital for determining the potential and actual impacts of resource development. It is done to establish the baseline information with which to anticipate and/or predict the impacts of proposed projects. Indeed, it forms the basis with which to identify the likely adverse and beneficial effects of project actions so as to mitigate and enhance them as the case may be. The essential aim is to ensure that development projects are environment-friendly and in tune with the values and sensitivities of the host communities.

The very significance of social analysis to project outcomes has also been echoed by scholars (Renshaw, 2001; Okpoko, 2007; Echague, 2013 and Nzeadibe *et al*, 2015). According to Renshaw (2001:6), "social analysis is particularly important for projects with a poverty focus; [and] offers the opportunity to define or characterize the different groups of potential beneficiaries or poor people that are affected by an operation;" as well as the factors that may inhibit their access to project benefits. In his study in Chile, Echague (2013) observed that many environmental groups are now demanding improved participation on sensitive matters, particularly those with potential effects on their daily lives and customs and cultural heritage. He noted that baseline studies underpin the prediction of socio-cultural impacts; therefore participating members of the public have generally rejected environmental assessment reports that did not take cognizance of such sensitivities. He outlined the lack of free, prior and informed consent; ... the use of deception in order to obtain data; and the lack of means of verification of interview transcripts which would have created greater transparency of the process of data analysis etc. as the bane of environmental impact assessment practice in Chile; and the bases for which participating members of the public have called on environmental authorities to declare particular environmental impact assessment reports void.

In his study of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria Okpoko (2007), argued that oil operations have tremendously impacted the social, economic, psychological and cultural wellbeing of the host communities because social issues were either considered irrelevant or manageable simply by applying a little superficial knowledge and a smattering of common sense (also see Hall, 1987). He concluded that a joint and community-oriented strategy anchored

on insider and outsider perspectives are required to effect the changes that will be acceptable to all. Furthermore, Nzeadibe *et al* (2015) have argued that there is need to integrate community perceptions and cultural diversity in social impact assessment in Nigeria. They noted that socio-cultural and natural resources such as rivers, forests, animals, ancestral sites, burial grounds, land etc are held in high esteem by the people. Some of them are even regarded as sacred possessions. Therefore, for social assessment to be meaningful in the region, it must be preceded by appropriately structured and well executed baseline studies that will address the dynamic social processes and sensitivities so as to match project activities with such sensitivities.

2.1 Study Area

The people of Anambra Basin are Igbo by ethnic origin who live mainly within a vast geographical area known as South Eastern Nigeria. They constitute one of the three populous ethnic groups in Nigeria. The others are the Yoruba and the Hausa. Based on geographical location and environmental conditions, the Igbo categorize their territory into three sections as follows: *Anaocha*, *Enu-ani* and *Olu*. The first refers to the dry and infertile section covering Awka- Orlu-Okigwe axis. The fertile highland between the Niger and Edo-speaking people to the west is called *Enu-ani*, while the low-lying, fertile riverine section on both sides of the Niger is referred to as *Olu* (Oguagha and Okpoko 1993: 104).

However, using territorial location and general cultural similarity, modern ethnographers have classified the Igbo into five main groups. These are the Onitsha Igbo, the southern or Owerri Igbo, the western Igbo, the eastern or Cross river Igbo and the north eastern Igbo (Okpoko and Anyanwu, 2000). The communities covered by this study fall under the northern Igbo sub-group that is believed to be the earliest point of settlement in Igbo culture area. Today, the bulk of the Igbo populations are located in Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, and Abia States, collectively called the South East States. They form the second largest ethnic group in Delta State, and are also found in substantial numbers in Rivers State.

2.1.1 Scope

Anambra Basin is one of the major sedimentary inland basins in Nigeria. It is about 300 km long in a northeast southwest direction, and 160 km and 48 km wide towards the southwestern tip and northeastern extreme, respectively (Whiteman, 1982 in Ekine and Onuoha, 2008). It is bounded on the east by Abakaliki anticlinorium and on the southwest by the Benin hinge-line. The southern extreme is marked by the upper limits of the Eocene growth faults of the Niger Delta, which extend from the Calabar hinge-line to the Benin hinge-line through the Onitsha high (Ekine and Onuoha, 2008).

The communities selected for study fall within three states, namely Enugu, Anambra and Abia, a greater majority of which are in Anambra State. They are Lormara in Umu-Nneochirea Local Government Area of Abia State; Imezi Owa, Aguobu Owa and Aguobu Umumba in Ezeagu; and Ugwuoba in Oji-River local government areas of Enugu State. Others are Amansea and Okpuno in Awka North; Mbaukwu in Awka South; Ekwluobia in Aguata; Ndikelionwu and Isulo in Orumba North and Umunze in Orumba South local government areas of Anambra State.

3. Method

Focus Group Discussion (FGD), direct observation, key informant interview (KII) and questionnaire were used to elicit information from respondents in the study communities. The first three approaches were used to give details and meaning to non quantifiable social issues and address the peculiarities of the subject matter from the point of view of the study subjects; while the questionnaire was used to collect information that could be addressed in numerical terms and which can also be generalized.

4. Results

4.1 Authority Structure and Political Profile

The communities surveyed have mainly two spheres of complementary authorities. They are the Chief, commonly called *Igwe* and his cabinet that is appointed from the federating villages to take charge of issues related to culture and tradition; and the town union that handles development matters. The town unions are called different names in different communities, generally to reflect the intents and purposes of the initiators. Thus, Ugwuoba and Isulo have Development Unions, Aguobu Umumba and Aguobu Owa call theirs Town Unions, while Umunze refers to hers as Progressive Union. Under the town unions, development decisions are taken at two levels – village and town. At the apex is the President

General who is assisted by an executive council comprising branch chairmen from major cities where their indigenes are resident, and village chairmen made up of representatives of the constituent villages. There are also Age grades within the communities that play socio-political roles. Some provide the labour force; others serve as security men for the communities while the remaining enforces law and order. Also identifiable are youth associations of which that of Ugwuoba appear the most prominent. Their sign posts are at strategic locations in the town. They cater for the wellbeing of their members, while attending to such duties as may be assigned to them by the development union. Although the association is yet to assume a position of prominence in development decisions in the town, it is likely to metamorphose into a pressure group once oil operation commences in the area. The zeal with which they attended to us during the field work tellingly buttresses this fact. Another important source of authority is the women associations, particularly Christian associations. They are consulted before decisions affecting them are taken in the communities. They also contribute to peace process through advice to their husbands and the youths.

It must be pointed out that a new wave of community configuration and/or alliance is beginning to appear with the emergence of autonomous communities, particularly in Enugu and Abia States. What this means is that some of the towns under discussion have been delimited by the respective state governments into further sub units each of which is given the authority to have its own *Igwe* and community development unions. There are for instance two autonomous communities in Aguobu Owa, four in Ugwuoba and three at Lormara. These autonomous communities currently appear hidden and unpopular particularly at Ugwuoba where most of the respondents could not instantly mention their names, number and constituent villages; they are however, likely to be a force to reckon with during development activities. It must be stressed here that the five villages that are co-owners of the oil well location at Ugwuoba do not fall under one autonomous community. Thus, while Agungu and Umualu are under Umuogbuagu Autonomous Community, Agungwu Ogbuu, Umalu and Ude are in Eziobinagu Autonomous Community. Currently, the people of Anambra basin, as with other peoples of Nigeria, are subject to the authority of the Federal, State and Local governments.

4.2 Demographic Profile

The Anambra Basin constitutes one of the regions with the greatest density of population in Nigeria. According to Oguagha and Okpoko (1993:119) "Population densities here appear to exceed seven hundred per square mile and in parts of Orlu, Owerri and Awka figures of one thousand have been recorded". As early as the late 1977, the area recorded a population of 635 persons per square kilometer. In 1980 this figure rose to one thousand persons per square kilometer in Awka-Nri axis (Okpoko and Anyanwu, 2000). This figure must have increased tremendously following the spate of development in the region and the increasing population growth rate in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that the 2006 Census, the last official census in Nigeria, estimates an annual national population growth rate of 3.2% for the country.

Ekwulobia, with a projected population of 62,580, is the most populous of the communities studied, followed by Umunze (43, 707) and Mbaukwu (25, 787), all of which are in Anambra State. These communities also fall within the Awka-Orlu-Okigwe axis earlier classified as a high population density centre. It is important to note that the population of Lormara was not available. However, using the local government area's projected figure of 195,400 and dividing it by the seventeen constituent communities, one could safely conclude that Lormara, one of the smaller communities, would not exceed 11,494 people.

Research results reveal that 77% of the respondents are married while 23% are single. Marriage is generally contracted through a combination of traditional and Christian practices. Although polygyny was and/is acceptable under traditional laws and customs, it is no longer widely practiced following the adherence of most of the people to Christian religion. Furthermore, 25% of the respondents fall within 25 - 35 years age bracket; 24% between 36 and 45 years; and 23% between 46 and 55 years. Those that fall within 56 years and above represent 13% of the respondents; while the remaining 15% are aged between 36 and 45 years. The size of the households is spread between 2 and 13. Male-female ratio is 11:10; with a mean household size of 5.

Some of the demographic problems in the study areas and indeed Nigeria include favoritism, under-enumeration, and deliberate omission of thousands of people in some areas and gross over-enumeration in others as well as the non inclusion of information on migration.

4.3 Education Profile

Access to education is high in the region. There are many and varied educational institutions in the study communities and their precincts. Ugwuoba, Umunze and Ekwulobia host a greater proportion of such schools when compared with other communities studied. For instance, there are four government-owned secondary schools respectively in the first two

communities. Umuze also has a considerable number of private secondary schools and a federal technical college of education. Ekwulobia on its part has two government-owned secondary schools and six primary schools. It also hosts a considerable number of private commercial/secondary and primary schools. Isulo and Aguobu Owa have three and two secondary schools respectively, while Aguobu Umumba, NdiKelionwu, and Okpuno have one secondary school each. Thus, primary schools are spread across the length and breadth of these communities, with up to eleven found in Uguwoaba alone. There are also pre-primary schools (nursery) for those aged between two and four years in most of these communities. An analysis of the data collected from field work is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents/spouses by Educational Attainment

Educational Level	Males		Spouses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No formal	10	10	8	10.38
Primary	22	22	12	15.58
Secondary	38	38	34	44.15
Post Secondary	30	30	23	29.87
Total	100	100	77	100

Source: Fieldwork data 2008/2009

The above table shows that literacy level among the respondents and their spouses is fairly high. This becomes meaningful if we remember that none of the states under survey fall within the educationally less developed states (ELDS) as delineated by the federal government. Thus, the percentage of husbands and spouses (90% and 89.2% respectively) that attained any level of education far out-numbered those that had no formal education. A fair number of respondents and their spouses attained the various levels of education. The table also shows that secondary education was the most commonly attained level of education by both respondents and wives representing 38% and 44.15% respectively. This was followed by post secondary school attainment (30% and 29.87% respectively). Primary school attainment was lowest with respect to the number of attainment, representing 22% and 15.8% respectively. It is also shown that more spouses than husbands attained secondary school. However, the males marginally out-numbered the females at the post-secondary school level. The level of educational attainment as recorded above is quite understandable given, as we noted earlier, the emerging urban nature of some of the study communities and/or their proximity to the cities. This is because many of the respondents reside in the communities from where they commute regularly to cities for their day to day livelihood engagements, including public service jobs. Some of such jobs are even available in the communities.

Within the vicinity of the communities studied are a substantial number of tertiary institutions. Prominent among them are the Namdi Azikiwe University, Awka which is within about ten kilometers radius from Uguwoaba, Okpuno, Amansea, Mbaukwu etc. Others are the Anambra State University, Uli, Madonna University, Okija, Federal Polytechnic, Okoh, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe all in Anambra State. At the Enugu State axis are University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu and a host of others. In essence, there are ample opportunities for the attainment of higher levels of education in the study communities.

The major constraints to good quality administration and schooling in the study communities are poor funding and remuneration with the attendant poor infrastructural facilities, low morale of instructors, and inadequate teaching aids. These factors, particularly poor remuneration, accounts for the near-absence of male teachers and the lower transition rate by males into JS1, especially in Anambra State.

4.4 Livelihood Activities and Income Profile

The major means of livelihood of the respondents as shown in table 4 are trading (30.5%), farming (29.5%), fishing (11.4%) and civil service (10.9%). Other salaried employment; hunting and the collection of forest products etc constitute other available sources of livelihood. In essence, farming and trading are prominent occupations of the people. However, trading is marginally predominant. Paid employment, craftsmanship, blacksmithing and hunting are also significant sources of livelihood.

Table 4: Livelihood Activities

S/No	Activity	Frequency	Percent
1	Crop farming	65	29.5
2	Trading/marketing	67	30.5
3	Fishing	25	11.4
4	Civil servant	19	8.6
5	Other salaried jobs	24	10.9
6	Hunting	4	1.8
7	Others	16	7.3
	Total	220	100

The people emphasize a root crop economy. They cultivate such crops as yam, cassava and cocoyam. Plantain, maize, fluted pumpkins and other leafy vegetables etc are also produced. Table 5 shows that yam (22.7%), maize (20.7%) and cassava (19.6) are the major crops grown by respondents. These three crops are commonly grown on one piece of land as the people practice mixed-cropping. Leafy vegetables like fluted pumpkins, green *Amaranthus*, garden eggs, water leaf and bitter leaf etc constitute 13% of the crops grown by respondents. Only four percent of respondents cultivate rice.

Table 5: Distribution by Crops Grown

S/No	Crop	Frequency	Percent
1	Maize	0	20.7
2	Cassava	80	19.6
3	Rice	17	4.2
4	Yam	93	22.7
5	Leafy vegetable	53	13
6	Oil palm	49	12
7	Others	32	7.8
	Total	409	100

Another important agricultural activity in the area is palm oil production and its attendant palm kernels. Twelve percent of the respondents claim to cultivate and process this all important crop either for commercial purpose or household use. The men cut the palm fruits while women and children are responsible for the collection and processing. Depending on the type of oil desired, the communities studied employ two main methods of oil processing. The soft oil is produced by boiling the palm nuts until they become tender. These are then pounded in huge mortars after which the fibres are separated from the nuts and pressed to produce the oil. But the palm nuts are not boiled when producing the hard oil. They are pounded and separated as in the first instance after which the fibres are mixed with water. The oil rises to the surface from where it is skimmed off, boiled and stored. The first method is more commonly used these days. In actual fact, a modernized version of this method namely, palm oil processing mills are common features in the communities studied.



Plate 1: A Typical Oil Processing Mill at Lormara

The residues of palm oil processing are also exploited for economic benefits. For instance, palm nuts are cracked to extract the kernels which are used for the production of local pomade that served not only as lubricants, but also as local medication. The fibres were, and sometimes still are, used to produce local lamp for illuminating the house. The sap of oil palm tree is also tapped and consumed as liquor. In actual fact some members of the communities depend on the tapping and sale of palm wine for their livelihood.

In spite of their efforts to ensure a fairly adequate standard of living through agricultural production, a number of problems tend to constitute a major impediment. These problems and their magnitude as reported by respondents are listed below.

Table 6: Agricultural Problems Encountered in order of Magnitude

Item	No Problem Frequency (%)	Minor Problem Frequency (%)	Severe Problem Frequency (%)
Insufficient land	6 (9.5)	12 (19)	45 (71.4)
Poor land quality	9 (13.4)	20 (29.9)	38 (56.7)
Lack of capital	4 (5)	18 (22.5)	58 (72.5)
Lack of labour	4 (5.6)	29 (40.8)	38 (53.5)
Lack of storage facility	6 (8)	33 (44)	36 (48)
Low processing capacity	6 (10.7)	18 (32.1)	32 (57.1)
Inadequate extension services	4 (7.3)	14 (25.5)	37 (67.2)

As shown in the table, the most significant impediment to agricultural production in the region is lack of capital (72.5%) and the attendant low inputs. This was closely followed by the lack of sufficient land (71.4%) and consequently poor land quality (56.7%). It must be remembered here that high population density when combined with increasing urbanization in the region, has considerably reduced the portion of agricultural land available to some of the communities. This explains why crop rotation is in vogue particularly in Awka-Nnewi-Orlu axis. The consequences of this to agricultural production are so obvious to warrant undue attention here. Inadequate extension services (67.2%), low processing capacity (57.1%), lack of labour (53.5%) and lack of storage facility (48%) are other problems encountered by respondents.

There are also people in the region who specialize in craft production. Among them are blacksmiths who fashion the farming implements, household utensils and weapons for the people. Awka and Nkwere people are prominent in this regard. Wood carvers are also found, but not in great number. They produce among others, wooden stools, mortars and pestles, laddles and masks for masquerades. Other occupations available in the study area are hunting and fishing, the percentage contribution of which has earlier been delineated. Animals hunted include: antelopes, grass cutter, buffalo (particularly in Ebenebe) and duiker. Tailoring, carpentry, welding, bricklaying etc are also available in the region. The collection and sale of forest products is yet another source used by the people to supplement their income generation. Bamboo poles, fuel wood, ogbono, spices and raffia fibre are some of the products they collect.

With respect to income, table 7 presents the monthly income of the respondents as derived from the variable number of sources listed above.

Table 7: Monthly Income Distribution of Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percent	Mid point	Aggregate Income
Below N10,000	17	17	5, 000	170, 000
N10,000 – 20,999	37	37	15, 500	573, 500
N20,000 -N50,999	35	35	35, 500	1,242,500
N50,000 -N80,999	9	9	65, 500	589,500
Above N80,000	2	2	80, 500	161,000
Total	100	100	202, 000	2,736,500

Aggregate income was calculated by multiplying the mid point of income with the number of responses; while the Mean income was calculated by dividing the aggregate income with the total number of responses.

The modal income category is between N10, 000 and N20, 999 and this represents 37% of the survey population. The average or mean income of respondents is N27, 365. This translates to \$143 (USD) per month when calculated with the current exchange rate of N192.00 to one USD. The above figure is higher than the national minimum monthly wage of N18, 000.

4.5 Land Use and Land Rights

Land is owned at individual and communal levels in the study area. The people of the study communities see land both as a natural heritage and a sacred possession. Therefore, land and its various products, some of which are regarded as sacrosanct, are highly esteemed in the communities. In actual fact, land is deified, and the earth goddess is popular across Igboland and amongst the people of the study area.

As seen in table 6, land is generally lacking due to the high population density of the region. In actual fact, 71.4% of respondents classify the lack of enough arable land as a severe problem. Table 8 below shows the rating of environmental problems in the region of which land-related problem is predominant.

Table 8: Environmental Problems in Order of Magnitude

Type	Minor Frequency (%)	Moderate Frequency (%)	Severe Frequency (%)
Flooding	9 (10.5)	15 (17.4)	62 (72.0)
Erosion	15 (15.8)	27 (28.4)	53 (55.8)
Pollution	20 (39.2)	21 (41.2)	10 (19.6)

The table shows that flooding (72%) is the most severe environmental problem in the region; followed by erosion (55.8%). It is instructive that a great proportion of cultivable and/or useable land in the region has been lost to gully erosion. Today, gully erosion has continued to constitute a serious menace to the people of the region.

4.6 Water Resources and Water Rights

The communities under study are upland communities. However, they rely on the lakes, rivers and/or streams within their individual locations for water supply. These water bodies are regarded as communal property whose developments are associated with legends. *Ngene* and/or *idemmili* deities are generally associated with the origin of water bodies in communities within this culture area. Water tankers are also commonly used for water supply in some of these communities. Some others rely on bore holes, tanks for collecting rain water and cisterns depending on their individual capabilities.

Ugwuoba and Amansea appear to be more particularly endowed with water bodies. Both communities have lakes, locally called *ezu*, and a multiplicity of streams and spring water. In actual fact, almost every village within these communities has its own stream and/or spring water. Some of these water bodies also constitute the fishing areas within the communities. Imezi Owa community appears to be the least endowed with water, as the Ajali River, its main source of water takes a minimum of four hours trek to and fro.

In Ugwuoba, Amansea and Isulo communities, fishing areas are generally communally owned. Some of the water bodies in these communities including the lakes are believed to be sacred. This explains the presence of such deities as *ngene* in Ugwuoba and Amansea (locally called *ngene adisha* in Ugwuoba) or *ngele* in Isulo, which also has the *okumiri* deity. These deities were appeased annually in the past to ensure a bountiful harvest in the coming year. In some communities, the deities are represented by animal totems which are not hunted. The crocodile is typical of such totems, which is forbidden in Umuonwu village in Ugwuoba. This animal is also not hunted in the neighboring Agulu Lake.

4.7 Cultural Property Profile

There are no known sites within the study communities that were declared national monuments or historic property by National Commission for Museums and Monuments. There are also no recorded archaeological sites within the area. However, this does not mean that the people of the area have no historical past and therefore valuable cultural property. For instance, the numerous festivals which the people celebrate, their sacred groves, shrines and revered animals etc. constitute their valued heritage that must not be denigrated and/or desecrated if development actions must succeed. Apart from the new yam festival that is popular with all the communities, each community has its local festival that serves its local needs. For instance, Imezi Owa, Aguobu Owa and Aguobu Umumba celebrate the *ibono* or masquerade festival; Ugwuoba and Amansea celebrate *egwu alusi* to mark the end of the year while heralding the beginning of the farming season. Isulo people celebrate *ihe okumiri* in honour of *okumiri* deity, while Umuonze celebrates the *okuka* or *duji* festival to appease the gods. Furthermore, the sacred groves and shrines within these communities are many and varied. Ugwuoba hosts *ajagu*, *ofufe*, *idu onunu* (swamp) and *usempu* groves etc; while Amansea has *ofia udo* and *ofia ajagu*

among others. These communities along with others in Anambra Basin also have totem animals that must not be hunted. These are African Civet (*edi abani*) for Ugwuoba, and Ubaha village in Umunze; python for Isulo and Lomu village in Umunze; and black monkey (Black Colobus) for Okpuno. Isulo people also regard the tortoise as a totem animal.

4.8 Housing and Infrastructure

With respect to housing, data from direct observation and oral interview show that the average person builds a bungalow of between three and four rooms. A vast majority of the respondents live in own houses and/or houses inherited from their fathers. Most of these houses were constructed with blocks and roofed with corrugated iron sheets. Room occupancy rate is generally less than one all through the year, but often exceeds two persons during Christmas vacations when many persons from the various households visit home to celebrate with their kits and kins. The houses are generally arranged in clusters with closely related persons living close to one another. However, in Okpuno, Ugwuoba and their neighborhood, many of the houses are lineally arranged. Some of the houses are usually fenced with block walls. The table below shows other available infrastructures and their providers.

Table 9: Available Infrastructure and their Providers

Facility	Government Frequency (%)	Community Frequency (%)	Others Frequency (%)
Tarred roads	56 (67.4)	8 (9.6)	19 (22.9)
Electricity	42 (42.4)	24 (24.2)	34 (34.3)
Portable water	-	15 (48.4)	16 (51.6)
Markets	13 (21.3)	33 (54.1)	15 (24.6)
Primary schools	46 (46.5)	27 (27.3)	26 (26.2)
Secondary schools	35 (46.1)	28 (36.8)	13 (17.1)
Town Hall	-	60 (82.1)	13 (17.8)
Health Centres/Hospitals	35 (42.2)	28 (33.7)	20 (24.0)
Police Station	33 (76.7)	8 (18.6)	2 (4.7)
Waste disposal system	-	2 (28.6)	5 (71.4)

As can be seen from the table, the commonest facility in the communities is town hall, 82.1% of which was provided by the communities themselves, while the remaining 17.8% was provided by age grades. Tarred roads particularly Trunk B roads provided by state governments follow with 67.4%. Tarred roads are currently being given priority attention by the governments of Anambra, Enugu and Abia States. Most of the communities studied are accessible by major motor able roads. However, the feeder roads are yet to be taken good care of. Ugwuoba and Imezi Owa are classic examples of communities whose feeder roads are deplorable. The sandy and undulating topography of the communities when coupled with soil erosion make vehicular movement difficult. The next highest infrastructural facility available is school (primary and secondary schools); followed by electricity. About forty two percent (42.4%) of this was said to have been supplied by government, 24.2% by community and 34.3% by others including age grades, private individuals, missions and associations. What actually happens with respect to the provision of electricity in the study area is that government links each community to the main power source, which in turn, distributes it to all its constituent villages. Following the erratic power supply in the country generally and the communities particularly, private generators are commonly used for power generation. Other available facilities are health centers/ hospitals and police station (mainly provided by government), markets, waste disposal facility etc.

4.9 Travel Activities and Modes of Transportation

Research results reveal that the people travelled primarily to their places of work, trade and farming by foot, commercial buses and tri/motor cycle. They also occasionally travelled by these means to visit friends and relations and to engage in religious activities etc. The percentage distribution of the means of transportation to their primary and secondary places of visit is shown in table 10.

Table 10: Travel Activities and Modes of Transportation

Mode	Usual Destination	Percent	Secondary Place of Visit	Percent
By Foot	51	34.2	43	30.9
Private car	4	2.7	-	-
Tri/Motorcycle	23	15.4	56	37.6
Bus (commercial)	59	39.6	38	25.5
Bicycle	12	8.1	-	-
Total	149		139	

The table shows that bus (39.6%) and foot (34.2) are the predominant modes of transport to their usual places of work. Motorcycle (15.4%), popularly called *Okada*, and/or tricycle (Keke-Napep) is also commonly used to work places and/or farms. It represents the most commonly used means of transportation to secondary places of visit, with 37.6%; followed by foot (30.9%) and bus (25.5%).

4.10 Communication profile

Information collected from our study area reveals that both modern media of communication and traditional/indigenous communication are available in the region. However, the level of influence exerted by these two forms of communication on the residents differs, in terms of development (information) needs. While the modern media - radio, television, newspapers and magazines - are widely available, their utility value in the region appears to be very low, except for radio. Radio is popular amongst the people because it is readily available, portable to move around, relatively cheap to procure, flexible to use and transcends barriers of literacy.

Indigenous communication or traditional communication media as it is commonly called is "grounded in an indigenous culture produced and consumed by grassroots members of the society" (Okpoko, 2011:183). In Anambra basin, there are various channels and social institutions namely: church, market, town criers, meetings of various kinds like age grade, the town unions, traders' association, women association etc, used to disseminate messages of social importance or significance to the people. Such come through oral/ person to person communication and are delivered in the form of announcements, drama, group discussions, seminars and workshops, during meetings, social gathering, worship, and other such gatherings.

Religious gatherings (mainly churches) and meetings are veritable tools for disseminating intervention programmes and for securing the interests and responsibility of the host communities. Town union meetings and women association meetings, especially the Christian women associations are strong forces to be reckoned with in the study area. Development partners and /or change agents have generally used such meetings/ fora to address and discuss with members of the community so as to secure their buy-in for intended development initiatives. The different/peculiar names used to identify these unions have been delineated above; and membership is generally compulsory for all adults, their religious inclination notwithstanding. Furthermore, the women wing of the town unions along with Christian women organizations provide a platform for bringing women from all walks of life together to share common concern and solidarity. One of such important meetings organized by women is the popular August meetings that hold annually in the individual communities studied. During such meetings, seminars, workshops, talk shows etc. are used to enlighten members about interventions and other issues of common concern.

5. Development Needs of Study Communities

In order to determine and rank the development needs of the communities, questions were administered on both the oral informants and the respondents to the questionnaire. Information collected from oral interview shows that their development needs include electricity, road, market, school, employment, portable water and scholarship. Of these facilities, road appears to be the most needed. Almost all the informants mentioned it as the number one priority project. This is understandable especially when we remember the sorry state of their feeder roads. The next in order of importance is hospital, followed by school, employment and electricity etc. Data collated from the questionnaire gave a closely similar result. Table 10 presents the list and ranking of items considered by respondents as belonging to their development needs.

Table 10: Development Needs in Order of Importance

Item	Important Frequency (%)	Very important Frequency (%)	Most important Frequency (%)
Market	14 (9.5)	-	-
Road	8 (5.4)	24 (16.2)	51 (34.5)
Electricity	4 (2.7)	8 (5.4)	9 (6.1)
Hospital	18 (12.2)	34 (23.0)	24 (16.2)
School	44 (29.7)	14 (9.5)	38 (25.6)
Employment	32 (21.6)	38 (25.6)	16 (10.8)
Portable Water	12 (8.1)	14 (9.5)	3 (2.0)
Security	-	4 (2.7)	-
Waste facility	2 (1.4)	-	-
Industry	4 (2.7)	3 (2.0)	7 (4.7)
Scholarship	10 (6.8)	4 (2.7)	-
Capacity building	-	7 (4.7)	-
Total	148	148	148

As can be deduced from the above table, road (34.5%) is the most important development need of the communities. The reason for this response has earlier been indicated. This was followed by school, particularly tertiary institutions (25.6%) and hospital (16.2%). This appears to be at variance with data from oral sources, where hospital ranked second in their development needs. However, when corroborated with the pattern of distribution under the very *important mode*, which had 23% support for hospital and 9.5% for school, the placement of hospital in the second position will not be out of place. The next in order of importance is employment, particularly for the youth.

6. Discussion

Development planners are beginning to realize the intricate relationships between socio-cultural factors and development actions. This is explainable in the increasingly apparent demand by host communities that socio-cultural variables be considered within development contexts and to match these with available options so as to mitigate adverse effects while enhancing positive impacts. Social issues appear to be influencing oil exploitation in the Niger Delta lately; and we are inclined to believe that decision makers in Anambra Basin will toe a similar line of action. This study had tried to identify and describe the socio-cultural items that may influence and/or be affected by the development of New Awka Capital City and oil and gas production in the region. The essential aim is to ensure that they are considered in the planning and implementation of development programmes so as to elicit peoples support and ownership of project outcomes.

Research results reveal that there is a fairly equitable representation of the various age brackets, including youths in the communities studied. This is accounted for first, by the emerging urban nature of some of these communities where employment opportunities for youth are becoming increasingly available; and second, by their proximity to the cities, which also provide opportunities. Active young men are in the majority in these communities and this has obvious implications in development decisions namely, youth employment and empowerment, provision of necessary facilities and security etc. Furthermore, we noted that access to education, particularly primary and secondary education, is high. Each of the communities studied can boast of a sizeable number of primary schools and one or more secondary schools. Indeed, the literacy level is also high with a vast majority attaining the minimum level of education. As with other parts of the country, schools are managed by either the federal or state governments or the church or private sector. Some of these schools were built by the individual communities and subsequently handed them over to the government.

It suffices to say however that good quality administration and schooling in these communities have been constrained by poor funding and remuneration, poor infrastructural facilities and inadequate teaching aids, and low morale of instructors. Indeed, the near-absence of male teachers and the lower transition rate by males into Junior Secondary classes, especially in Anambra State are the resultant outcomes of these factors, particularly poor remuneration. Although the current Enugu and Anambra State governments are making some efforts to improve the quality of educational facilities in their respective states, the inability of the latter to positively address teachers' remuneration has made a mess of their own efforts. In actual fact, teachers and other public servants in the state were on a state-wide strike over poor remuneration during the course of this field work.

The average income of the respondents is generally higher than the national monthly minimum wage. Such income is derived mainly from trading, farming and paid employments. Given the very importance of farming in the region, land is highly esteemed by the people. Thus, land is seen not just as a natural heritage, but also as a sacred property. As Saro-

Wiwa (1992:12) aptly puts it: This "respect for land means that the forest are not mere collection of trees and the abode of animals but also, and more intrinsically, a sacred possession. Trees in the forest cannot therefore be cut indiscriminately without regard for their sacrosanctity and their influence on the well-being of the entire community...."

Thus, among the Igbo to which the study communities belong, the earth goddess referred to as *ani* or *ala* is the most prominent of all deities. Almost every town including Ugwuoba, Amansea and Isulo has its own deity (locally called *ajana* or *ajala*) in whose name laws are made and oaths sworn. "Certain conducts such as homicide, kidnapping, suicide, and stealing of yams are regarded as offences against *ani* and have to be ritually cleansed to avert disasters in the form of bad harvest and famine or premature deaths in the community" (Okpoko and Oguagha 1993:122). It is instructive that Christianity to which a great majority of the people professes is beginning to erode some of these values. Howbeit, every Igbo man still takes land matters very serious.

Of the communities in the area of study, Ugwuoba appears to be more endowed with forest resources. Many migrant hunters from far and near usually come to the community for hunting just before the commencement of farming in late March or early April. This is because of the many hunting grounds in the area. The people of Ugwuoba, Amansea and Isulo also engage in fishing both as a pastime and money yielding activity. Apart from fishing, bathing and other domestic uses, water bodies are also sacred and cultural possessions, which must not be desecrated. In the words of Saro-Wiwa (1992:12-13):

Streams and rivers do not only provide water for life – for bathing and drinking etc; they do not only provide fish for food, they are also sacred and are bound up intricately with the life of the community...; and erring human action can desecrate them and therefore bring disaster upon the people who are regarded as their custodians.

As with other social values in the region, Christianity has currently diminished the very significance of this heritage, as almost all the respondents are professed Christians. However, there are pockets of Christians and adherents to traditional religion in each community, many of who bear Christian names that will always resist the desecration of their valued heritage.

It must be noted here that the famous Igbo Ukwu archaeological sites which were dated to the 9th century A.D and the theocratic kingship at Nri (Eze Nri) also dated to the 9th century through a study of its genealogy fall within this culture area. Both communities have museums that cater for the cultural property obtained within the locality. The Odinani Museum, Nri established in the early 1970s by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, has been very valuable to social researchers. The museum at Igbo Ukwu was established recently by National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Abuja to collect and exhibit objects of historical importance in Igbo Ukwu and environs. Additionally, the Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization, Lagos has currently established a branch at Igbo Ukwu.

The need to communicate development programmes to appropriate stakeholders and subsequently enhance the appreciation of such programmes informed our decision to delineate the social communication profile of the study area. As Renshaw, et al (2001) rightly observed, "any major ... project that has the potential for significant direct or indirect impacts should include a social communication program." This view was re-echoed by Whitehead (2005:11) when he argued that communication is needed in any community social profile discussion. We found that the most popular avenue for communicating intervention programmes are the traditional media. They are in tandem with the way of life of the people and therefore easily appreciated as authentic sources of information. They are localized; they use intelligible language; there is personal touch in the manner the information is packaged and presented; and therefore credibility is generally assured. Indeed, traditional institutional structures have special influence on the local population and they can facilitate or inhibit expected development process.

Finally, by the development paradigm in Nigeria, remote communities are either underdeveloped or neglected, and basic amenities are usually inadequate or lacking. Electricity is available in the area but it is rarely in regular supply. Potable water is also hardly available particularly at dry seasons. Although water tankers are used as stop-gap measures in the process, the cost is generally out of the reach of an average paid employee. Transportation is usually by road, even though most feeder roads are generally in bad shape.

7. Conclusion

Like most open societies, the people of Anambra basin are not averse to development actions. In actual fact they are very enthusiastic and eagerly await the commencement of oil projects in the region. They are generally aware of the environmental hazards and socio-economic problems associated with oil operation and other development actions. But they are also aware of the economic and other benefits that accrue to the regions where oil and other development programmes take place. Further still, they believe and rightly too, that with the current improvement in technology and

procedural provisions, the benefits of oil exploitation and development interventions in the region will definitely out-match the environmental and socio-economic problems. Nevertheless, they generally believe that development interventions have better chances of succeeding if socio-cultural variables and other sensitivities of the host environment are considered in project planning and implementation.

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