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POPULATION, POVERTY AND RESOURCES UTILIZATION AMONGST ETHNIC GROUPS IN FUFORE AREA OF ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences in ethnic groups' characteristics, access to, use and management of various forms and sources of capital to determine inter-groups livelihoods and well-being. Multiple data generating techniques were explored to develop a Comprehensive Rural Appraisal Instrument (CRAI) that captured data from household level to natural resources inventorying and socio-political issues. The data generated were analyzed to profile the two communities studied; Dulo Bwatiye and Dulo Fulani of Fufore Local Government Area of Adamawa State Nigeria, in terms of their environmental and cultural settings, livelihood activities and well-being. The study revealed that relative location, ethnicity, religion and historical disparities in access to land and power are varyingly influencing rural communities' access to social services, perception of deprivation, development and/or well-being/poverty. Political power relations among and between the elites and the rural communities need to be re-oriented and be made more cooperative, integrative and holistic to reduce intergroup suspicion, tension and inequality.

KEYWORDS: Ethnic groups, Bwatiye, Fulani, Fufore, Resources, Poverty

INTRODUCTION

Impact of increased population growth and pressure on natural resources and its attendant consequences on human survival and environmental sustainability is one of the oldest theses on man-environment relationships. Increase in population has long been thought to lead to increase in demand for natural resources (land, pasture, water etc) that may inadvertently lead to over-use and inexorable degradation of the environment (Edwards and Dornall, 2010). This will, in turn, impact negatively on human options for survival, necessarily resulting to reduced quality of life and the setting in of a vicious circle; perpetuating environmental degradation and entrenching poverty among the populace (Erenstein, Hellen and Chandna, 2010). Of course, a number of alternative theses that see increased population as catalyst to development of sound resources management, sustained societal growth and development have also been advanced. The debate on the link and relationships between population, poverty and environmental and other resources management however continued to open new frontiers with more variables (historical, socio-cultural, political etc) being introduced to challenge existing scenarios especially in the less developed and largely rural settings of Sub-Saharan Africa (Lauber, Decker and Knuth, 2008). In the Nigerian rural environments in particular various ethnic groups continue to depend largely on an apparently fast deteriorating natural environment but with varying types and extent of capital; including access to institutional support, services, regulation and control. Coupled to these are the facts that cultural and occupational differences, changing political power relations and reduced environmental services seem to be creating more competitiveness, animosity if not out-right conflict among many hitherto peaceful communities bound by common interest. Thus, while it is easily noticeable that increase in population is engendering more exploitation of natural resources in most of Nigeria's rural environment little is understood of the extent to which various ethnic groups' livelihood is affected and/or the way each group responds to changing conditions. Furthermore, while it is generally accepted that poverty and environmental sustainability need to be addressed jointly (Schroth and Mcneely, 2011) the extent to which they reinforce one another among different ethnic

groups is not well appreciated; given that different access to information, ideas and institutional support will impact differently on groups' livelihood earning capacity and activities. Indeed these are factors that, Nath *et al* (2010) argued, will improve community's capacity to better manage natural resources, develop assets and enhance livability. In the Nigerian rural environment in general, and the very plural and highly heterogeneous communities of Adamawa State in particular, the levels of rural populace' poverty, degree and types of dependence on natural environment (cultivation, herding, fishing, wood harvest etc) need to be understood if any transformation or modifications to achieve sustainability are to be identified, promoted and implemented. This rather challenging though necessary endeavor to the understanding of the link between specific resource (asset) use and management practices on the one hand and poverty and inequality on the other could be approached by:

- Assessing and comparing population characteristics and economic activities of ethnic groups
- Identifying relative assets and motivations of groups in resource exploitation and management
- Determining whether there is equitable treatment of settlements/ethnic groups in the distribution of social services (water, health education etc facilities) by government and development agencies
- Analyzing how i – iii above influence inter-ethnic groups and/or settlement's relations, resource use management practices and impact on livelihood.

The diversity of the Adamawa environment, ethnic and religious plurality, settlement and occupational dynamics provide a fertile ground for the understanding of cooperation and compromises; conflict and crisis; development and differences among ethnic groups.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Fufore Local Government Area (LGA) of Adamawa State, Nigeria. Fufore is one of the large, predominantly rural, ethnically diverse and physically dissected/in-accessible (having substantial land mass on both sides of rivers Benue and Ine) LGAs of Adamawa. Fufore is actually the second largest LGA (5,169 sq km) in terms of landmass and it has the highest population (207,287 – National Population Commission, 2006). It is an area of numerous settlements of different historical origin, occupational practices and, like most other parts of the country, witnessing steady increase in population, rapid expansion of farmlands, intensification of grazing, increase in fishing activities and heavy deforestation. These activities are being carried out by various ethnic groups with varying intensity and management practices.

Two settlements of same name, differentiated by the major ethnic group inhabiting each, were chosen for this study. The two, Dulo Fulani and Dulo Bwatiye, are settlements that are only seven and half (7.5) kilometers apart with same administrative status (headquarters of their respective village areas) and similar history. Dulo Fulani is occupied mainly by the Fulani (appropriately; Fulbe, *plural* and Pullo - *singular*) ethnic group who are largely Muslims and cattle herders, while Dulo Bwatiye is inhabited mainly by Batta who are mostly Christians and farmers/fishermen. To the Fulbe, Dulo means Orion (associated with abundance, guidance) while to the Bwatiye it means being tired of horse riding (having moved from previous locations where horse riding was in vogue to the current location). The Fulbe have been the dominant ethnic group in terms of hold on power and authority since the establishment of the Fombina(later Adamawa) Emirate by Modibbo Adama. The Adamawa front of the early 19th Century revolutionary wars known as Jihad that enveloped the Northern part of Nigeria was actually spearheaded by Modibbo Adama; who while leaving Gurin for Ribadu in 1831 stopped at Dulo Fulani and leased the area to one of his warriors, kaigama Tagima (Bobboyi and Abba, 2009). The

strategies of Jihad adopted by Modibbo Adama led to various forms of adjustment and response by other ethnic groups who were hitherto politically non centralized; hence the Bwatiye's strategic location in Dulo Bwatiye (see Fig. 1).Bwatiye is actually the collective name for the Batta and Bachama ethnic groups, who among the indigenous people with whom the Fulbe came into contact with were the most culturally and numerically significant (Mohammed 1999).

Data for the study were generated through structured interview schedule, focus group discussion and participant observation over a period of one year (to capture seasonal variations in the natural setting and of residents' activities, feelings, motivations etc). A Comprehensive Rural Appraisal Instrument (CRAI) was developed to inventory rural resources and livelihood support systems specifically focusing on the capture of basic demographic, land/ecological, income/assets, services/facilities, political/administrative indicators and dimensions within the study settlements (Nath, Inoue and Pretty 2010; Ridrigues et al 2011 and Schroth and Mcneely, 2011). The participant-observers, who also administered the interview schedule and moderated the focus group discussions, were from the two ethnic groups.

Table 1: Determinant of Poverty and Inequality (Summary Structure of the CRAI)

S/No	Indicators/Dimensions	Field Measurements/Data
1.	Human Capital	Size, age, sex, ethnicity, skills, health, education etc.
2.	Financial/Physical Assets	Net income, diversity of sources, tools & equipment, vehicles, livestock, housing etc.
3.	Natural Resources	Land, water, forest, pasture
4.	Social/political Capital	Community organization, kinship system, power relations, link to institutions, political participation, etc.

Considering the number and size of settlements within the two village areas, 69 and 117 heads of households were administered the structured interview schedule in Dulo Fulani and Dulo Bwatiye respectively.The total of 186 interviewees is about 5% of the combined population of the two settlements (village areas). The data generated through the three techniques were subjected to comparative analysis to characterize the two settlements (representing the two ethnic groups). Computation of indicators and dimensions of rural livelihoods characteristics (poverty and inequality) were done to assess the effect of ethnic membership on various social, resources related matters and poverty/inequality or well-being.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fufore Local Government Area (LGA) as already mentioned has the highest population in Adamawa State although given its large landmass it is not the most densely settled. The Dulos axis however have had a fairly long history of settlement, control and contest for land use much more than other parts of the LGA. Since the leasing of Dulo area to kaigama Tagima by Modibbo Adama in 1831 and subsequent settlement of immigrants, the area has witnessed the influx of large families and clans. Thus while Dulo Fulani, located at relatively higher elevation of better drained soils, has several other nearby settlements Dulo Bwatiye is isolated and in the rainy season becomes really an island that can only be reached by canoe. The two Dulos are almost of equal distance although with different ease of access to Ribadu (one time headquarter of Modibbo Adama's Jihad Movement) and Fufore the LGA's headquarter. The 1991 Census which provided details up to village level showed that the two settlements had more males than females and the trend seem to have continued till date where each of the two settlements have 3% more males than females. The two settlements showed similar pattern in number of children per wife though Dulo Bwatiye had 2% edge (above the mean) while an isolated case

of more than 11 children per wife was noted in Dulo Fulani. Dulo Bwatiye is, generally, a fairly large and well-populated settlement by rural standards and, locked between river Benue and marsh lands, lacks space for expansion.

Table 2: Population and Characteristics of Households

Characteristics	Settlements	
	Dulo Bwatiye	Dulo Fulani
Population+	2,344	1,380
Households with modern roofing	35%	15%
Households with more than one wife	69%	25%
Adult literacy	4%	15%
Children in school as % of population*	8.5%	12.7%

+ Computed from 2006 Census data using 1991 Census figures and 2010 Voters' Register

*Data from schools Registers

Source: Field survey 2011/2012 and National Population Commission (1991/2006)

Paradoxically, however, it is in the predominantly Christian Bwatiye settlement that 69% of respondents have two to four wives as against the Muslim dominated Fulbe settlement in which only 25% of respondents reported having two or three wives. Explanation provided and supported by field observation is that women are asset in farm operations among the Bwatiye. Children are also a means of production and together with women they provide the bulk of the labour force, thus from cultivation to sale of fish and vegetables women and children in Dulo Bwatiye are the major players. This is very much in line with general economic models of agrarian economy of particularly African countries (Kraxberger, 2005). This, however, is not the case in Dulo Fulani where culture and religion do not encourage active participation of women in farm activities though children are engaged in livestock herding. While it is generally reasoned, by the rural folks, that children will contribute to household income and take-care of parents at old age several references have been made to reduced marginal benefits as a result of more children. In the course of focused group discussion with both the Bwatiye and the Fulbe groups, rising cost of food, health, housing and education were associated with more number of children. In fact the very poor transition rates (less than 10% in both settlements) from primary to secondary and tertiary institutions were largely attributed to lack of finance. Analysis of completion rates however indicate better results as most of those who enroll into any of the levels of education were able to complete although, in the case of secondary school students, many will fail to write the final examinations that may qualify them for admission into tertiary institutions of learning; again as a result of incapacity to pay for the examinations. The summary implications of the population characteristics are increased agricultural intensification, land fragmentation, reduced yield and income. The combined effect of all these is to contribute to the complications of a poverty trap, though to varying degrees in the two settlements.

Income, in form of cash, savings or readily convertible assets, and its significance in reducing poverty and improving livelihood is weighed highly among the two ethnic groups. Engagement in activities that will generate income and investment of such income in improving asset base and livelihood are tied not only to the immediate environmental conditions but also cultural and social considerations (Rodrigues, 2010). Hence, buying of cattle, motor cycles, land and building of modern houses are variously seen as forms of investment.

The main sources of income (money) to meet the basic needs of the people in the two settlements are their various occupational/production systems; farming and fishing by the Bwatiye and farming/cattle rearing and purchase of land by the Fulbe. Mat making, wood carving and calabash decorations are other subsidiary income generating activities. These activities are carried out in different ways with varied degrees of intensity and success.

Table 3: Categories of Annual Income as Reported by Respondents

S/No.	Level of Income	Dulo Bwatiye	Dulo Fulani
1.	Very Low(<$1 per day)	23%	8%
2.	Low ($1.4 - $2.5 per day)	63%	68%
3.	Medium ($3 per day)	14%	12%
4.	High ($4 and More per day)	-	12%

Field Survey 2011/2012 (*conversion rate: 160 Naira to one US Dollar*)

The income categorization as presented in Table 3 largely typifies the sources and extent of income generating activities the two ethnic groups are engaged in; which can simply be aggregated as crop, livestock and fish income. Fishing is exclusively carried out by the Bwatiye, who keep mainly goats and chickens while cattle's rearing is practiced mainly in the Fulbe settlement who also keep sheep and chickens. Cultivation is more diverse in the Dulo Bwatiye area where in addition to grains (maize, rice and guinea corn) production, vegetables and legumes are also cultivated. Thus, while in Dulo Fulani rain-fed grains cultivation is the only form in practice; irrigation farming forms 26% of the agricultural activities of the Bwatiye. Dulo Fulani, however, has better access to modern farm implements and integrated its livestock management with crop production. Only 27% of the Bwatiye farmers use tractors, ox-ploughs, and/or herbicides as against the 93% of the Fulbe who use such implements/in-puts. The Fulbe not only have the bulls that can draw the ox-plough but can also generate the bulk sum required to purchase ploughs and tractors or to hire them.

The type of production systems engaged in by the two ethnic groups also epitomizes the nature of their immediate environmental conditions; land and water availability and characteristics. It has been earlier noted that the Fulbe are in a relatively higher and better drained lands ideal for cattle rearing while the Bwatiye are close to the River Benue and surrounded by marsh lands and ponds/lakes suitable for fishing and irrigation. Historical circumstances, population pressure and income combined to dictate access to, ownership and utilization of land and water resources. While major water sources (rivers and lakes) are generally communally owned and are of open access, lands (farms) are individually owned. Given the glaring differences in population of the two settlements and with over 90% of both the Bwatiye and Fulbe reporting that they obtained their farmlands through inheritance, it is not surprising that most Bwatiye farmers testified having smaller farms. Leasing and sale of land is more commonly practiced in Dulo Fulani and land/land use related conflicts are more frequent with 85% of respondents reporting witnessing conflicts among land users. In Dulo Bwatiye the conflicts are more in land ownership with 57% of the respondents having experienced land ownership conflicts. In most cases conflicts are resolved through community-based reconciliations and where the community fails the case gets to the District level or end in courts.

Table 4: Farm Sizes in the Two Settlements (Ethnic Groups)

S/no.	Category of Farm Size	Dulo Bwatiye	Dulo Fulani
1.	Small (less than a Hectare)	32%	20%
2.	Medium (1-3 Hectares)	45%	58%
3.	Large (4-6 Hectares)	15%	15%
4.	Very Large (7 or more hectares)	8%	7%

Source: Field Survey 2011/2012

It should be emphasized that Fulbe are actually more of cattle owners than their being farmers, farming is in fact a relatively recent occupational engagement of the Fulbe while the Bwatiye rely on farming as a means of livelihood. The gradual integration of farming with livestock management gives the Fulbe advantage over other ethnic groups and the Bwatiye in particular in the case of the Dulos. Historically, the Fulbe normally wait for harvest period to salea cow or two to purchase grains that could last the household till the next harvest; hence getting involved in cultivation is a form of

diversification although some Fulbe purists still see direct involvement in cultivation as doing the work of ethnic minorities. Land leasing was noticed only among the Bwatiye while purchase of land was noticed among the Fulbe. The marshy areas of the Bwatiye allow for multiple cropping in a season while the integrative crop-livestock management and larger farm sizes of the Fulbe give higher yields. Annual floods experienced in and around Dulo Bwatiye are both a curse and a blessing; enhancing fertility but often burying crops; and reducing or even preventing harvest completely.

Irrigation farming and fishing are however areas of advantage for the Bwatiye as marketing of vegetables and fish are the major contributing activities to currency circulation within the community. Land and land resources related challenges in these communities include conflicts arising from use of water (14% and 27% in the Bwatiye and Fulani settlements respectively) and prevalence of pest and diseases, reported as major concern by 64% of Bwatiye and 69% of the Fulani settlements. A significant number (21%) of the Bwatiye complaint against the encroachment into their lands by Fulbe herdsmen.

Access to water points by the Fulbe herders, especially during the dry season, is easily possible through the Bwatiye area. Other location-based challenges faced by these communities are that of transportation within and between settlements for commercial, health, political and social engagements. Distance and poor accessibility, especially in the rainy season when roads become water logged, are the major determinants of rates charged by transporters. The Bwatiye, generally, pay much higher to travel from one point to another irrespective of the mode of transport and have to use canoes in rainy season.

Social and political capital as expressed in kinship ties, reciprocity and collective action, political participation, link to traditional and governmental institutions are increasingly being recognized and relied upon to enhance ethnic groups' access to resources and social services. This is very much manifest in communities with actual and perceived historical domination and/or marginalization by a dominant ethnic group either through numerical strength or political/administrative advantage over ethnic minorities (Douma, 2006). In the case of Adamawa and the study area in particular Modibbo Adama's Jihad and subsequent establishment of Fombina (Adamawa) Emirate gave the Fulbe advantage in terms of control of administrative structures and resources. Thus, in the case of Dulo Fulani the leasing of the area to kaigama Tagima in 1831 and gradual selective settling of immigrants there on the recommendation of the authorities in Yola was the beginning of Fulbe domination of resource allocation and utilization.

The Batta (Bwatiye) community was however never attacked by Modibbo Adama; indeed it was seen as a friendly community, though regarded as a force to be kept in check. Thus, Mohammed (1999) argued that the Batta and their kindred formed a good example of pre-Jihad model of Fulbe and non Fulbe interaction. Gradual changes in power structures and power relations and with the advent of electoral democracy most communities seized on their numerical strength to begin to struggle for political inclusiveness. Hence, as noted elsewhere*, individuals and groups began to realize that strong networks between public institutions and organized communities can be mutually supportive tools for development* (Nath, Inoue and pretty; 2010, p. 106).

Communities' realization that information, access to institutional support and ethnic identity could, much more than other forms of capital support and enhance livelihood and alleviate poverty led to new forms of social/political contract.

Elite groups and constituent ethnic groups therefore began to cultivate one another in a symbiotic partnership. Thus, the Bwatiye and Fulani settlements ascribe some of the social services they have or do not have to certain individuals and decisions within political circles where they are represented or not.

Table 5: Social Services Infrastructure in the Two Settlements

S/No.	Type of Social Service/Facility	Availability/Year of Establishment	
		Dulo Bwatiye	Dulo Fulani
1	Primary School	1974	1967
2	Health Dispensary	1992	1985
3	Bore Hole (Hand Pump)	1997	1997
4	Secondary School	2010	-
5	Maternity Clinic	2011	-
6	Bore Hole (Motorized)	2011	-

Field Survey 2011/2012

The provision of social services by various agencies of government does not follow any established criteria that will ensure equity, based on spatial spread or population. All the social services in Dulo Fulani were provided by the local government while those in Dulo Bwatiye were provided by the state government and an agency supported by the World Bank. Thus, ninety per cent of residents of Dulo Fulani were not satisfied with their water supply situation while 75% of the Bwatiye were satisfied. In all cases, however, the principal actors who decided on the provision of those services were of same ethnic stock or religion with those provided with the services. This has continued to influence political association and voting behavior of the various communities, of course with varying degree of consistency and uniformity. There are, however, instances where political affiliation may hold sway and inter-ethnic cooperation and placation dictate the provision of services on basis of equity and future alliances. Historical animosities and apprehensions remain really difficult to eliminate especially in the face of subtle and diabolic exploitation of perceived differences among ethnic groups by the elite class.

Table 6: Pattern of Political Participation and the 2012 Gubernatorial Elections

S/No.	Settlements	Registered Voters	Total Votes Cast	Votes cast for the major Political Parties		
				Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	People's Democratic Party (PDP)
1.	Dulo Bwatiye	888	281 (32%)	211(75%)	34 (12%)	33 (12%)
2.	Dulo Fulani	522	182 (35%)	10 (5.5%)	30 (16.5%)	140 (77%)

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, Yola Office (2012)

The two ethnic groups showed almost equal number of voter registration and voter turnout relative to their total population. The 2012 gubernatorial elections in Adamawa State were keenly contested between the ACN candidate (a Christian from one of the minority ethnic groups in the state, strongly supported by two leading stalwarts of Bwatiye) and the PDP candidate (a Muslim Pullo with strong support from two prominent community leaders from Dulo Fulani in particular and Fufore LGA in general). While the Bwatiye are voting to end what they perceive as political oppression and marginalization (their relatively better social services facilities not withstanding), the Fulbe are voting for security and sustainability of the status quo.

Fears, apprehensions and animosity among ethnic groups as regards access to resources and social services at the local level are linked to who is at the helms of affairs at state level.

The powers of the governor are not restricted to appointing individuals to political offices but also influencing who gets elected at the local level; hence the direct association of security and protection of self (from harassment and oppression) and resources (land, social services) to who (ethnic/religion) is in position of authority. Confidence, self-

esteem and buoyancy can be stimulated among a community by simply being associated with the person in authority whether or not it brings tangible dividends.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has pointed the fact that increase in rural population densities is gradually leading to fragmentation of farm plots and intensification of cultivation though without commensurate development of appropriate management practices or significant increase in income. While communal fields still exist, especially in the Bwatiye area, incursion into and acquisition of large farm lands by urban-based absentee farmers may further compound inequalities and poverty in the area studied as has happened in other parts of the state. There is the urgent need for deliberate efforts to address increasing population challenges especially in the areas of health, education, water and sanitation as preludes to the introduction and management of improved ways of production and over all environmental development.

The need has also been noted for the improvement of non-farm income generating activities and diversification of production systems to enhance rural income and investment opportunities. Thus, fishing and irrigation practices, particularly in the Bwatiye area and livestock improvement in the Fulbe area can be complementarily developed. The two communities should be mobilized to realize the long term imperatives in specialization and cooperation. Hence, embarking on joint projects of common interest such as roads construction between the two communities could help foster unity, reduce perceived marginalization and reduce cultural exclusivity.

Most importantly, however, is the need for the elites of the respective ethnic groups to realize the long term consequences of promoting democratic conditions that call to ethnic exclusivity. Ethnic groups must be encouraged to see wisdom in collectively addressing the objective conditions impacting on their livelihoods and engage in dialogue towards improving region-wide social services and amenities.

Governments at all levels, however, must lead the way by providing services that cut across ethnic interest as a way of reducing/redressing perceived domination and/or inequality. Thus, by developing objective criteria and guidelines in engaging rural communities in service delivery, government can reduce group grievances, inter-group animosity and conflict.

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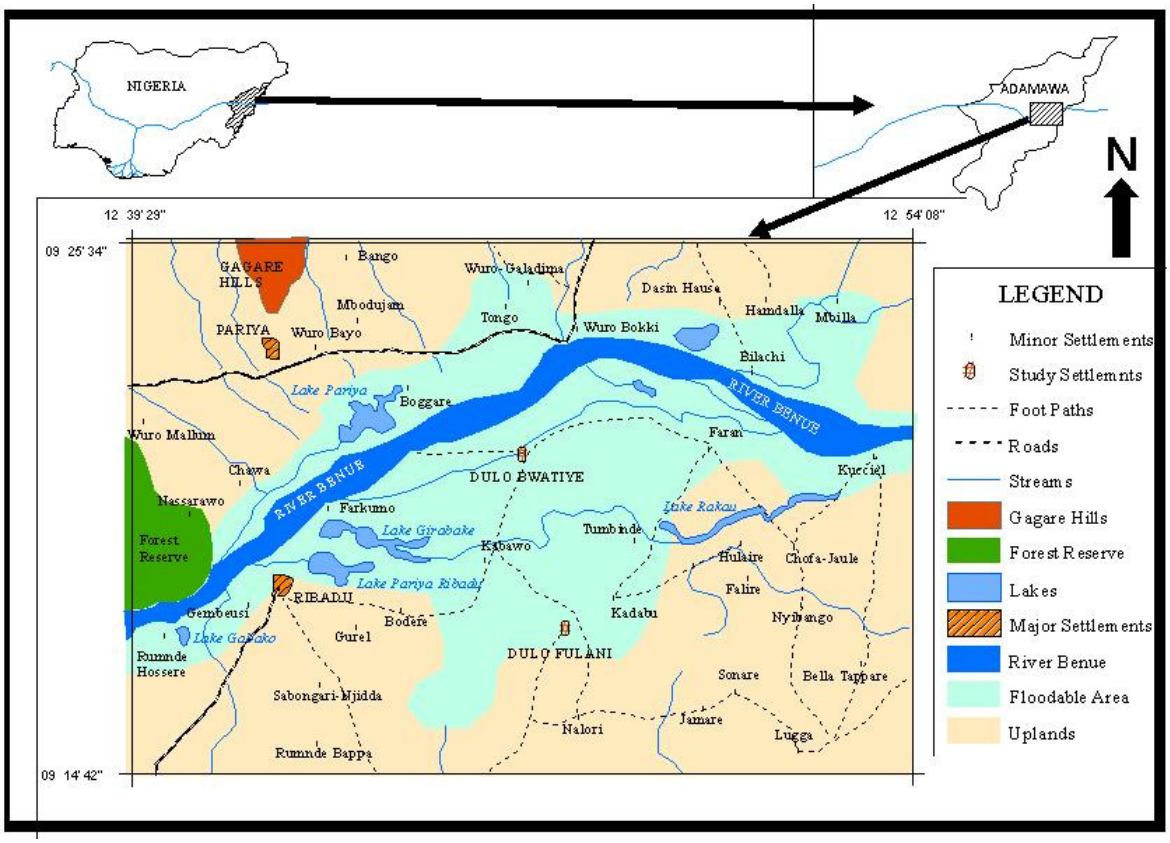

Figure 1: Location of Study Area