ADVOCACY PLANNING IN RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES: A STUDY OF OLD AND NEW AWURU IN BURGU LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Air pollution and flood disasters is on the increase, oceans and water bodies fouled and solid waste piled up in enormous quantities just to name a few. It is the public that directly or indirectly bears the Burden of the adverse consequence of environmentally ill-conceived development projects. Every stake holder in the society who are affected by one developmental activities or the other have their own opinion of what an ideal environmental policy should be but lack the professional language and expertise to forward their grievances and the possible solution. This then calls for an advocacy planner who has the interest of the people at heart. The paper focused on the negative impact of Awuru resettlement scheme in Burgu local government of Niger state. The study finds out that the socio-economic life of the people is badly affected and socio ties grossly destroyed. The paper also contended that resettlement schemes without sound economic base and public participation is a mere human environmental distortion. And that advocacy planning is not anti-public planning but a complementary effort toward the attainment of rational comprehensive planning paradigm.

Keywords: Advocacy, resettlement, planning, grievances

Introduction

In the 1992 Earth summit in Riode Janeiro, Brazil which brought together the heads or senior officials of 179 governments in which they adopted a set of principles to guide future development which include among other things that: People are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature; environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concern citizens; nations shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making environment information widely available.

But the environmental policy makers seldom seek the opinions of the citizens before formulating a development proposal, and where they do so, they felt that their proposal is superior to the rest of the community due to their vantage position and political undertone.

The need to re-evaluate and assess the impact of Kainji Dam can not be over emphasized as in the episode of September 14, 1999 when the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Kainji Regional Headquarters sent an urgent message of warning to communities and establishments around Jebba, down stream of River Niger of the possible flooding of River Niger with damaging consequences. It was directed to the communities through the traditional rulers stating that: “most of the tributaries from the measurement of current inflow were already flooded. States like Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi experienced the effect of the flood despite the fact that the dam is not within the area”, Fred Pearce (2001). Inhabitants were warned rather too late to safeguard lives and properties. Before they could digest the message another letter came from the same source, given the same warning. But unfortunately most of them woke up the following day to see their houses and farmlands overtaken by the water. The dam has overflowed its banks as authorities of NEPA decided to open dams letting out torrents of water which in all overran many communities, killing over 1000 people, submerged 1,500 houses. 52 primary schools were rendered inhabitable, rendering thousands jobless and homeless in Niger, Kwara and Kogi States. NEPA took the action to save the Kainji dam from collapse (which could result in greater catastrophe), Fred Pearce, (2001).

From every indication, socio-economic impact studies were not carried out before the dam was cited, as stakeholders were not properly consulted during the project design, Fred Pearce, (2001).

The question of incessant flooding and its attendant effects has been one major factor pitching government and the NEPA against each other. One time chairman of Edati local government area, one of the areas worst hit by the flood (Adamu Mohammed Godoti) in an interview with Newswatch Magazine (October 25, 1999) said that most of the affected communities have no electricity. Edati Local government is one of such. It has ten wards; five of which were virtually submerged in the
flooding activities. It is traditional on the part of governments to send relief materials to flood victims but what obtains in Nigeria falls short of the international standard. It is more of an eye service and bonus for the implementing agents as most flood victims hardly get the meager relief (Atakpu, 1999)

Mawogi community for instance, was relocated in the middle of a forest, which was provided by Pategi Local Government. But their buildings were more of temporary structures made of thatches, while water proof nylon sheets were spread on top to forestall leakage during rainfall, the place is devoid of infrastructure, no portable water, no schools and the buildings are still inadequate. The villagers prefer to settle there and go to their old abode for fishing (their main occupation) because the floods, which use to come at intervals has now become a yearly occurrence.

Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP), thereafter decided to undertake a study of the problems of the dam communities so as to establish a firmer ground for conducting an advocacy around these problems. The major outcome of the study was a publication entitled ‘Damned by the Dam’ the story of Shiroro communities’, (CAPP, 1998). From 1999, the focus of the advocacy, which has now been embraced by other communities in the dam areas covering five states, has expanded to include the settling up of a Hydropower Producing Areas Development Commission (HPPADEC).

These and many more calls for a study like this to re-examine the effects of Kainji Lake and resettlement schemes on the surrounding communities as being canvassed for by the people of the lower Niger Basin. This paper therefore discusses the concept and the need for advocacy planning and pluralistic approach in environmental issues especially the aftermath effect of resettlement schemes as in Awuru case.

The concept of advocacy planning

Advocacy planning is a branch of planning profession engaged in pleading on behalf of a community's citizen on environmental issues that may otherwise have negative impact on the people. He acted as a mobilizer of people, arouse the interest of the people who might be indifferent to pertinent environmental problem and them co-ordinate them. While Advocate planners are peopling trained in planning and other disciplines often-divers discipline; they are people of broad interest and have ability to dramatize problems and inspire others. Whatever literature is produced is polemic, general, devoted to portray problems for the attention of a citizenry already perplexed and vexed by other matters.

Advocacy planning according to Davidoff (1965) is not to act in opposition to public planner but as a complementary effort toward a more comprehensive and functional decision making through multiple alternative course of action that is highly subjective.

The concept of advocacy as taken from legal practice implies the opposition of one of two contending viewpoints in an adversary proceeding. The legal advocate must plead for his own and his clients sense of legal propriety or justice. The planner will not only be a detailer, simulator of future condition, and analyst of trend but also be a proponent of specific solutions. Advocacy planning has many advantages.

The aim of this study is to examine aftermath effects of Awuru resettlement scheme and re-emphasize the need for public participation and Advocacy Planning in resettlement schemes so as to better the socio-economic life of the downstream communities.

Methodological approach of the study

Primary data collection for this study is basically through oral interview with the inhabitants of both old and new settlement. Personal observation with the use of hand-held Digital Cameral also played a major role as demonstrated in the later pages. Other secondary data were derived from books, Journals and periodicals that form the base for the study.

The geographical location and historical background of the study area

The Kainji hydroelectric dam is located in New Bussa town now headquarter of Borgu local government area of Niger State, Nigeria. The lake created behind the dam span between latitude 9° 8’ to 10° 7’ and between longitude 4° 5’ to 4° 7’ E with reference point 9.54 N and 4.38 E northwest of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT,Abuja). The lake is about 139 kilometres
long, 24 kilometers wide in its widest point and about 1,280 square kilometers in area, Wikipedia, (2003). While the actual study areas which are old and new Awuru two of the down stream settlements are located on 9° 39’ N, 4° 55’ E and 9° 48’ N, 4° 43’ E respectively. See fig. 1 for the location of the dam and the surrounding settlements.

The name Bussa town was coined from the word ‘Ma Bussa’ meaning ‘I am tired’ in Bussa language because the founder was said to have settled in this location after escaping from the oppressive religion of his people in the far northeastern part of Africa. The major ethnic groups in this area are the Bussawa with more concentration in Bussa and Wawa, the Boko in Babanna, Laru of Shagunu and the Kamberi in Wawa. Others include the Gungawas, Lopawas, Fulanis, Nupes, Ijaws, Bisan, Kamiban, Gunganoa, Lopanua, and Hausa. These were the original settlers in the entire area up and down stream of the dam and none indigene.

Kainji dam flood victims’ compensation and its effectiveness

Compensation for the affected villages actually started with cash payment before it was changed to the physical construction of structures, because it became impracticable for the people to build new homes so far away from where they were before and more so, many of the first batch of settlers who were paid cash compensation did not spend the money to the best ends, but spent it on frivolous living.

A total of 2349 people from 17 villages were resettled in 11 new villages between 1963 and 1965. The Resettlement Authority replaced the house on a room-for-room basis, the rooms are bigger and more airy than those in the old houses and unlike the former houses built of mud and thatched roof, and the resettlement houses were built with concrete blocks and roofed with asbestos, see Fig. 3 for a typical resettlement house. There was no food relief was provided because all the people were said to be resettled after harvesting their crops but before sowing time. Table 1 gives the summary of the population resettled.

Table 1: Summary of population resettled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Compounds</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORGU</td>
<td>11,138</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>1,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAURI</td>
<td>30,516</td>
<td>3,006</td>
<td>3,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY CASH</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>44,003</td>
<td>4,320</td>
<td>4,517</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: NEDECO Niger Dam project report vol. 11

The authority also paid the sum of £737,313 as compensation to farmers for farmland and economic trees that had been destroyed as a result of the creation of the lake, the Resettlement Scheme as a whole cost the Authority £10.7 million as at then. The compensation rates were as follows:

i) £7 per acre for dry season garden (onions)
ii) £6 per acre for rice
iii) £5 per acre for upland field (corn, millet, yam)

The effect on Awuru village settlement

The economic main stay of the Awuru people is fishing and they wholly depend on the Niger River for their livelihoods. But the resettlement schemes carried out before the impoundment of Kainji Dam Lake for all river side villages that are within the potentially floodable areas lead to the relocation of Old Awuru to what is been referred to as New Awuru about 5kms interval.
The major problem is that the fish market naturally remains at the old river side where the traders deal directly with the fishermen. But those people that settled at the new site were cut-off from the fish trade, although they are now living in relatively good houses with a primary school with little or no pupil in it makes life a little bit difficult for them. Farming activities that use to be their secondary occupation is now the primary mainstay of the people in the new site which highly affected their economic well being. Traders from all over the state and beyond pass bye New Awuru to Old Awuru for their trade with little or nothing to impact on the life of the people of New Awuru. This situation actually causes real hostility between the people of Old and New Awuru that defied all forms of reconciliation. At the end some of the aggrieved persons went ahead to burn up the only connecting 30m bridge to cut off the market and people of Old Awuru from the rest of the world after many years of the resettlement scheme.

The fact remains that, there was no proper pre-project planning and public consultation, things were rather done through paternalism in the Kainji hydro dam resettlement scheme, (Bose, 1983). Settlements in both Ethiopia and Somalia have also suffered from such lack of planning. Because most were conceived during a period of national emergency, the settlements tended to be created physically long before any social or economic planning could be carried out. Everything was done quickly, and unrealistically ambitious goals were set for achievement in far too short a time as also observed by Ayeni, et al (1992). In the United Republic of Tanzania, too, people were moved in a hurry without any proper planning, with the result that some of the villages are now overcrowded and there is no longer sufficient land for communal and individual plots within a reasonable walking distance. This has led to unrest, and was one of the major factors behind the mass exodus of displaced persons in 1978 (Bolaji, 1999).

Economically, Awuru village has lost its glory as a major fish market to other settlements around the lake that are even into mechanized fish farming. The road in the foreground of Fig. 5 was ones tarred in the 70s when things were going well but now a dead trap for one or two old vehicle that still risk the bridge for fish trade and other social ties. The farmers themselves are mere subsistence in nature and little or no community effort toward self help development programmes that can transform the life of the people as also pointed out by Lassailly (1996). At New Awuru, the low cost resettlement houses are already given way gradually without enough funds for the renovation by the occupants.

**Findings**

The foregoing discussion clearly reveals that the whole scheme lack detailed and comprehensive planning which is a major factor for the poor performance of the resettlement programme. Resettlement without empowerments is irrational. Those flooding disaster activities the resettlement scheme was trying to prevent re-occur after the dam construction leading to loss of life and properties downstream.

The socio-economic lives of the people of Awuru have been hampered inadvertent by the resettlement scheme, therefore requiring the service of an advocacy planning to professionally present their case to the appropriate authority.

There is an evidence of paternalistic policies approach in the Kainji resettlement scheme as in many land settlement schemes in Asia and Africa. Not only do such policies increase the costs of settlement, but they also discourage self-mobilisation and undermine the settlers’ commitment to self-reliance and development.

**Conclusion**

A city is its people, their practices, and their political, social, cultural and economic institutions as well as other things. But the public agency plans have expressed technical landuse alternatives rather than social, economic, or political value alternatives which deflate interests as also revealed by Olofin, (2000). The question that an advocacy planner tend to address are (who get what, when, where, why, and how) the basic political question which need to be raised about every allocation of public resources and project implementation. The questions for Awurus’ case are ‘who relocate what, for who, and where’ the major issues that call for attention if such will not be repeat else where and even worse.

**Recommendations**

Governments should cease to become the providers of ready-made solutions to environmental issues, but instead become enablers of a reconstruction and redevelopment process. Enabling strategies support the sustainable reconstruction and
development of communities, and could include such elements as appropriate standards, rotating funds, land supplies, information and training.

Socio-pressure groups and local setting in every locality should be fully analyzed and accord its rightful position to be come an instrument toward the attainment of success in every environmental development and redevelopments programmes.

Major governmental projects that involve the relocation of people should go along with programmes that continuously benefit the local communities that host the project, as in the case of oil producing communities in Delta State. Vulnerability is caused by several factors, the main one of which is poverty. Poor people very often cannot afford to build stronger and safer houses with infrastructure and so they should be treated as such.

Policy makers on the issues of resettlement programmes should see the need to involve the service of some socio-psychologist who can read into the actions displayed during the consultation forums.

Government should promote understanding among policy makers of the adverse consequences of unplanned settlements in environmentally vulnerable areas and of the appropriate national and local land-use and settlements policies required for this purpose. Pre-disaster planning should form an integral part of all human resettlement scheme in the local and national levels.

References

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