

Impact of the Abandoned Kaa-Ataba Road and Bridge Project on the Socio-Economic Life of the KHANA/ANDONI Communities in Rivers State

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Introduction

Though Nigeria is the self-acclaimed giant of Africa and has a lot of rich human and natural resources, many of its roads or highways are in terrible conditions, and they have become death traps and nightmares for citizens.

The main objective of this brief is to assess or determine the impacts of abandoned road construction projects in Nigeria using Kaa-Ataba road and Bridges in Khana and Andoni local government area in Rivers State as case study. Infrastructural development projects is known to be the primary and focal point on which the progress of any country rests. It is viewed as an instrument for the measurement of growth and development of a Nation.



The abandonment of road construction projects impacts negatively on of the socio-economic lives of the communities such as the Kaa-Ataba road and bridge which was awarded for purpose of linking the communities in Khana local government to communities of Andoni local government thereby encouraging economic activities between the two local governments. Delay in the completion of abandoned highway construction projects has been a recurring problem facing the country. It has led to costly, risky and undesirable consequences on projects' success in terms of time, cost, quality and safety.

According to the Auditor-General's Special Report on Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) 2013-2018, it was revealed that the management of the Commission did not comply with Public Procurement Act and Financial Regulations in the contract award (N3 billion) and revised contract (N10.9 billion). Auditors' physical visit to the project site in January 2019 also showed that the level of payment for the project was far higher than the milestones achieved by the contractor. While the total value of executed work on Interim Payment Certificate (IPC) 12 was 62% of the revised contract sum.

The physical level of completion as at the time of the audit visit was about 30%. The contractor had been overpaid to the tune of 3.5 billion. Despite the contractor being overpaid, the road and bridge project had been abandoned as also confirmed by PLSI's Value for Money reporters .

The contract for the construction Kaa-Ataba road and Bridge is a rural community development and people centered project. The completion of this project will not only increase economic growth of the two local government involved but will also help build human capabilities and development as both beneficiaries (Andoni and Khana) communities will be empowered to better their socio-economic lives. Development can only thrive in governance when there is investment in infrastructural projects and where governments and its agencies are responsive and accountable to their citizens. Grassroots projects such as the Kaa-Ataba road and Bridge is one of the reason NDDC was created as an interventionist agency, the Commission should by now have had footprints in villages and rural communities across the Nine Niger Delta States, working closely with State governments but unfortunately, the Commission has been associated with corruption since its creation.

In 2012 the Kaa-Ataba Road with bridges of about 5KM was re-awarded by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as part of its developmental plans for the Niger Delta region.. Kaa-Ataba water ways is about 15 minutes' drive with some deep Creeks. Ataba Kingdom as fondly called, is one of the capital City of Andoni (Obolo) but surrounded by waters and only accessible through speed boats. The road and bridges when completed would avail the Ataba

people in Obolo, Ogoni and other communities of Rivers State the opportunity to access Ataba by Land. Andoni and Khana are currently some of the few LGA's that are yet to be linked by roads in Rivers State. Khana and Andoni with a combined population of about 600,000 who are mostly into farming and fishing have been left without quality road network and opportunity to sell their farm produce.

The abandonment of this road project had hindered the growth and development of Oyorokoto, the largest fishing port/settlement in West Africa. On November 2019, the former Acting Managing Director of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Dr. Gbene Joi Nunieh who was also the Chairman of the Interim Management Committee visited the project site for inspection where she promised to fast track completion of the project with January 2020 as target. She stated that the project was awarded in 2009 by the NDDC but neglected by the contractors due to lack of funds. The contract was revised without authorization and contract sum varied without due process. Although payment of N10.9billion has been made to contractors, the project is yet to be completed 12 years after the first award. Projects like the Kaa-Ataba road and bridge that involves communities in marginalized areas of Niger Delta should have been prioritized and completed to empower beneficiaries and accelerate socio-economic development of the communities.

Conclusion

Abandonment of projects are caused by poor planning, inadequate finance, inflation, delayed payment and political factor, incompetent project management, wrong estimate, and corruption. Effects of abandonment of projects are disappointment of the populace/users, low living standard, unemployment, wastage of resources, decrease in tempo of economic activities and reduction in revenue to government. Delay in completing of the abandoned projects has been a major challenge with the NDDC.

Recommendations

- To drastically reduce the effects of project abandonment, The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) should undertake adequate planning for projects at inception.
- The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) should also put in place sufficient measures to reduce contract variation/inflation and ensure competent contractors with strong financial capacity are awarded projects.

Images of Abandoned Kaa-Ataba Road and Bridge Project KHANA?ANDONI Communities in Rivers State.

