

## **Problems of Developing Coastal Areas of Rivers State into a Tourist Destination in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study is aimed at examining the challenges of harnessing coastal tourism potentials in Rivers State in order to develop the State into Tourist destination. The survey design was adopted for the study. Bonny, Opobo and Port Harcourt Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from the 12 Local Government Areas that lie within 60km radius from the coast. The population of the study was 1,067,481. The sample size was 400, statistically determined using Taro Yamane formula. The instruments for data collection were observation checklist, questionnaire and interview guide. The instruments were validated by three experts in tourism. The researcher tested the instruments for content validity and reliability. Criterion sampling technique was employed to select the respondents to be interviewed. The researcher extracted information by interviewing key office holders, community leaders, heads or titled fellows in the communities hosting coastal tourism potentials with the aid of research assistant. Digital camera for visual field observation was employed in the study to carry out physical assessment of the environmental features of the sites to identify problems inherent for coastal tourism development. Photographs were taken with digital camera as an adjunct to direct observation. The data collected through qualitative research method were analyzed using ethnographic description method of analysis to answer the research questions. This method of analysis was employed in the study to interpret and describe data generated through in-depth interviews and observation. The challenges of tourism development in the State were apathy from government, pollution, illegal grazing, gas-flaring, bush burning, community conflict and poaching. The study revealed that Bonny water was very dense in appearance, dark brown in colour and is highly turbid. Governments should remove apathy and indifference by backing up their beautiful policies on tourism development with action programmes so that it will not appear that they are giving lip service to tourism development in the country. There should be equitable participation of tourism stakeholders in the planning development; and sharing of dividends from tourism in the state for stakeholders to be responsible and have sense of belonging*

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### **Introduction**

Despite the tourism potentials that abound in Rivers State, due attention has not been given to tourism development when compared with Asia, North America, Central Africa, East Africa, North Africa and other parts of the world where coastal tourism has flourished. Forests around the coasts in Rivers State have been cleared for fire wood, building materials, construction and export. Coasts and waters are polluted due to oil spills resulting from burst oil pipelines operational discharges, vandalism as well as pesticides, and fertilizers for agriculture. Air pollution due to gas flaring and fumes from automobile, ship, and flying boats, industries etc. are serious threat in the state.

There is also noise pollution from cars, buses, air planes, boats, power generating plants and motor bikes in *Onne*, Port Harcourt etc. Waste water and exhausts from some of these sources have polluted seas, rivers and lakes damaging flora and fauna. Sewage runoff has caused serious damage to coral reefs at sea shore in *Andoni*, *Gokana*, etc., thereby stimulating the growth of algae causing hypoxia (low oxygen). People living around the river banks and passengers travelling by sea have degraded the physical appearance of the water and shoreline with solid wastes, littering and human excreta in places like *Inter-woba*, Port Harcourt water side around Creek Road, *Borokiri*, *Khana/Kono*, *Gokana*, etc. There is deposit of sediments caused by absence of strong currents because of the small differential between high and low tides. Sand mining at the beaches in *Agbonichia-Elеме*, *Khana*, *Andoni*, *Gokana*, Port Harcourt, etc., in the state has led to coastal erosion. Local people have been disturbed and the landscape of *Okrika*, *Diobu*, *Olobiri*, *Rumomasi*, etc., has changed due to construction of buildings, infrastructure and facilities. Diverse animal, fish and plant species which are native to the area are now threatened with extinction due to very serious ecological degradation and pollution caused by over forty-five years crude oil exploration in the state.

The State is also vulnerable to terrorism because of militancy and restiveness by the youths against the expatriates. For this reason, militancy in the state has placed the safety and security of tourists in doubt for fear of being killed or abducted. More so, dry land is created in fresh water and brackish water eco-zones due to reclamation for urban expansion in *Elеме*, Port Harcourt, and *Ikwere*. The presence of brackish water eco-zones are impossible to live in while the level of biodiversity is reduced due to loss of mangrove habitat as a result of reclamation.

This study is anchored on environmental theories stated which see the environmental systems as public goods which can be enjoyed or used freely by many individuals, including tourists and host communities of a destination (Lesser, Dodds, and Zerba, 1997 in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006) According to them these environmental systems include clean air, clean water, diverse species or healthy forests. A public good is either pure or impure. According to Hankey, Shogren, and White (2001 in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006) a pure public good is a good whose consumption by one individual does not reduce the amount of it available for other consumers and no one is excluded from its provision. Air quality and biodiversity are examples of pure public goods. Common property and community goods like rivers, groves local parks and beaches are impure public goods because non-members can be excluded from the benefits enjoyed by the groups that own them (Mihalic in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006). Tourism destinations provide natural goods like nature reserves, nice climate, clean and spring water, among others. These resources can be supplied by private or governmental bodies and open to use by all interested tourism users (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006). These natural goods refer to the local public good which benefits more or less all the parties of a given area – developers, tourists and the host community (Mihanlic in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

These local public goods need to be protected and preserved by the beneficiaries. If for whatever reasons the beneficiaries fail to maintain or contribute towards the preservation of these natural goods, the quality of the environment gets worse. This results in low returns and loss in long term economic benefits. It should be noted that tourism industry is not only an indirect seller of public goods; it also depends on a quality natural environment for continued survival. Some of the proceeds from nature should be injected into environmental

preservation and protection to ensure its sustainability (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006). Igbo and Okpoko (2006) noted that some of the environmental public goods mentioned above may lose their public character as a result of private ownership and exclusion. For instance, private beaches or parks can be restrictive in addition to being attached some prices. Another important environmental policy problem arises if too many visitors are allowed in a destination say, beaches or parks and if they crowded the street or highways. The activities of such visitors may bring undue pressure on both the destination and the municipal services (Mihalic, n.d in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

In handling environmental problems and tourism, certain techniques and concepts are considered, important. For instance, the concept of carrying capacity is used in tourism planning to determine the upper limits of development and visit or use and the optimum utilization of tourism resources (Inskeep, 1991 in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006). These limits include physical capacity, environmental capacity, economic capacity, social capacity, cultural capacity etc. Similarly, the environmental impact assessment technique (EIA) which assesses the likely effects of proposed development projects on the society, economy, and natural environment is applicable. This is useful for ensuring that the environmental impacts of proposed projects are taken into consideration and preventive actions taken (Inskeep, 1991 in Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

The law of diminishing destination yield is another technique used in setting development limits. The law of diminishing destination yields is vital in two major respects. First it provides the enabling instruments for calculating and reducing congestion in destination areas. Second, it helps to prolong the tourism season by encouraging more regular and constant distribution of tourism demand throughout the whole year (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006). The challenge faced by tourism developers, managers, planners, researchers and other stakeholders is to find ways to develop tourism as an industry which provide travel experiences that are rewarding and sustainable for all the stakeholders. The problems and challenges, facing tourism development are usually caused by the human activities and pressures on the coastal zone and have made impacts on tourism development. Tourism, probably more than any other industry is dependent on a healthy environment. There are a number of environmental challenges facing coastal tourism. They include; deforestation, agricultural practices, environmental pollution, destructive fishing practices, climatic change, and inappropriate development pattern.

**Deforestation:** The mangroves are threatened in their existence by several causes. The main sources of these threats are induced by humans. The clear cutting of the mangrove trees (deforestation) for their hardwood and for building dikes. The wood is an important export product for building constructions. The wood can also be used as charcoal and fuel wood. The cutting of the tree forms ponds with anoxic water as well as causes unstable condition (UNEP, 2004). Deforestation is one of the causes of biodiversity depletion in the ecosystem in tropical rain forest zone, particularly, Nigeria and Africa in general. Though, Rivers State is among the states within the Niger Delta zone that is well endowed with the highest concentration of biodiversity, much of this biodiversity has been depleted due to human activities on them.

Because local people within this area depend on mangrove forest as their major source of firewood, they cut mangrove tree almost on daily basis for firewood. In Southern part of Nigeria, it is equally a common practice to burn bush for hunting and farming. This seasonal

bush fires for farming and incessant bush burning for hunting have done serious damage to vegetation. This practice reduces the vegetative cover for wild animals thereby exposing them to danger of being killed by hunters or predators. It is also common in southern Nigeria to see local people cut forest trees to build houses or to sell the timber for money, and occasionally, the woods are used for building bridges in small rivers. Other places, the trees are cut for use as an electrical poles after treatment for high tension cables. The clearing of forest land for agricultural usage is another cause of deforestation in southern Nigeria. According to Daniel and Edward, 1990, land clearing for agriculture is one of the principal causes of biodiversity depletion in Nigeria. Gabriel and Ayuba (2006) added that much forest land is being cleared without replacement due to overgrowing industrialization in Nigeria and Africa. It has been observed that the worst case scenario is not the depletion of forest in southern Nigeria but it is the fear that deforestation is still going on in areas where forests are left, without effective efforts on the part of governments and other stakeholders to control this menace. This means that in the near future, so many species of plant trees will go extinct, and it will not be pleasant to the environment. Gabriel and Ayuba (2006) asserted that deforestation is severe in the tropics due to high human population growth, especially in Nigeria. Daniel and Edward (1998) expressed their fear that the major effect of this loss is that the cutting of forest in one country affects other countries because forests are global resources, and if the trend continues, little or no forest land will remain in the country.

**Agricultural Practices:** Agriculture is another human practice that has become a threat to the environment. Fertilizers runoff from farms is a huge problem for coastal areas. The extra nutrients cause eutrophication - flourishing of algal blooms that deplete the water's dissolved oxygen and suffocate other marine life. Eutrophication has created enormous dead zones in several parts of the world including the Gulf of Mexico and the Baltic Sea (WWF, 2011b). Another negative impact is the use of pesticides. This product that is used in the upstream agriculture ends up in the water around the mangroves. This also causes an increase in nutrient concentration, oxygen depletion and promotes the growth of algae like that of the use of fertilizers for agriculture. As a result the ecosystem will no longer be in equilibrium. A similar effect as with the added fertilizers and pesticides is the use of mangroves in wastewater treatment. Nutrients are added into the water and the equilibrium in the food web is disturbed. Mangroves no longer can survive in this environment and die off. Soil reclamation for building, agriculture and aquaculture reduce the regional levels of biodiversity due to loss of mangrove habitats. Apart from loss of mangrove habitats, coastal wet lands reclamation for agriculture and building cause changes in sedimentations pattern, changes in water circulation and increases water-borne diseases. The effects of these environmental changes due to land reclamation include killing of fish, reduction of fish yield, increasing of storm damage and coastal erosion, Though, pesticides and fertilizers play important role in increasing crop yields, some serious questions have been raised concerning their negative effects on human health and environment. Pesticides and fertilizers are the most highly published environmental pollutants. They spread to every part of the environment, they are found in soil, sediments, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, beaches, groundwater, ocean and even the air. Besides, the destruction of mangrove forests, the use of agricultural pesticides and fertilizers on the coastal wet lands results in killing of fish as well as reducing fish yields due to toxic pollution of water and estuaries. Even the potential human consumption of such toxic fish has health implication. Another aspect of agricultural practices that have negative impact on the coastal watershed are grazing and over cropping. These usually cover beaches and corals with sediments and cause obstruction of navigation

channels with sediments. Intensive agricultural activities may result in water pollution through run off of agricultural chemicals. The closer the use of agro-chemicals to the coastal area, the higher the risk of it having a negative impact on coastal ecosystems (FAO, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative to make laws that will prohibit agricultural activities around the coastal wetlands to conserve coastal resources in order to ensure sustainability of the fragile resources.

**Environmental Pollution:** Coastal pollution and its impacts have resulted in a number of environmental issues including the enrichment of enclosed waters with organic matter leading to eutrophication pollution by chemicals such as oil and sedimentation due to land based activities.

Environment can be polluted when the pollutants present in the environment are in such a quantity that the environment is no longer habitable. In other words, when the water environment is un-conducive to aquatic lives, the water is said to be polluted. Okafor (1985 in Ekpo 2010) stated that aquatic pollution can occur when the self-purifying powers of water are unable to remove the materials added to it. According to Ekpo (2010), problems of water pollution range from biological, physical to geological effects. The problems include public health hazards caused by pathogenic organism and toxic chemicals (Ekpo, 2010). Also, amenities like beaches and harbours become polluted with solid waste, oil and other chemical (Anon, 1990 in Ekpo, 2010). Meanwhile, oil spills in water bodies get the water bodies polluted thereby reducing its agricultural, industrial, domestic, and recreational and leisure uses. The major concern of aquatic oil spillage is the effect on fish and fisheries, abandonment of fishing grounds and associated livelihood pursuits (Powell, 1986). The pouring of oil into the environment is the greatest single environmental problems associated with on-shore and off-shore exploration of petroleum in Nigeria. Awobajo (1981) listed oil spillage sources as rupture of oil pipelines corrosion, hose failures, oil well blow-out and sabotage. Oil spillage has a major impact on the ecosystem in the Niger Delta. Much of mangrove forests in the area which are sensitive to oil have been destroyed. This slow and continual poisoning of the water and destruction of the vegetation in the Niger Delta since exploration of oil began is not a good development for tourism development. Unfortunately, since the production of oil in Nigeria, there has never been an effective effort on the part of the government, let alone the oil operator to control environmental problems associated with the oil industry.

Water pollution tends to result from poor waste water treatment, solid waste disposal, toxic chemical management, discharge of industrial effluents and sewage, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2001). The risk of offshore oil spills from wells terminal and tankers is a serious threat (UNEP, 1999; UNEP, 2002). WWF believes that the threat posed by oil development – the oil and gas industry’s track record is often failing to protect the environment adequately – makes such development too big a risk to be allowed near or in MPAs (WWF, 2011c). Solid garbage also makes its way to the ocean. Plastic bags, balloons, glass bottles shoes, packaging materials, if not disposed of correctly, almost can reach the sea. Plastic garbage which decomposes very slowly is often mistaken for food by marine animals. High concentration of plastic materials, particularly plastic bags, have been found blocking the breathing passages and stomachs of many marine species, including whales, dolphins, seals, puffins and turtles. Plastic pack rings used for packing bottled drinks can also choke marine animals. This garbage can also come back to shore, where it pollutes beaches and other coastal habitats, (WWF, 2011b). Construction of hotels, recreation and

other facilities often leads to increased pressure on sewage disposal facilities in particular because many destinations have several times more inhabitants in the high season than in the low season. Waste water facilities are often not built to cope with the dramatic rise in the volume of waste water. Waste water has polluted seas and lakes surrounding tourist attractions damaging flora and fauna. Air pollution is another environmental challenge against coastal tourism. Transport by air, road and rail is continuously increasing along with the rising number of tourists and their greater mobility. Gas flaring is another serious environmental challenge in Nigeria, particularly, in the Niger Delta. Gas flaring has environmental impact such as atmosphere pollution, human illness and production of acid rain (NEST, 1991, OMPADEC, 1993). Release of methane which has global warming potential and greenhouse effect is noted with gas flaring. Tell News (2008 in Ekpo, 2010) revealed that gas flaring is known for its particulate matter emissions which led to premature deaths, respiratory illness, asthma attacks, and cancer. OMPADEC, (1993) also reported the case of deterioration of buildings in Iko and Oil producing town in Akwa Ibom State. Recently, they have been a public outcry on the harm of acid rain to houses and vegetation due to gas flaring in Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Apart from gas flaring, it has been observed that the use of traditional method of waste management through incineration have become one of the major causes of air pollution in Nigeria. It is common to find people burn waste from their homes or offices. This waste management practice is not environmental friendly but has a serious environmental impact in the atmosphere. Another source of air and noise pollution in Nigeria is the use of fireworks during Christmas and New Year Eve. This practice is common among youths who are in an exuberant mood to celebrate Christmas and New Year. The use of cannons (large guns) planted on the ground during ceremonies such as burials, coronations, festivals and other special events in the Eastern parts of Nigeria is a source of environmental challenge. All these practices that emit gas, smell and noise within the environment have greenhouse effect and health hazards. Noise pollution from airplanes, cars, motorbikes, boats, buses as well as recreational vehicles such as snowmobiles and jet skies is an ever growing problem of tourism, causing annoyance, stress and even hearing loss.

All motorized forms of road, sea and air transport can intrude on the calm of a resort by raising noise levels, whether in rural surroundings or in residential rural area. For instance, air craft taking off and landing at busy airports severely disturb local residents and tourists alike (Holloway, 2006). Noise from water borne vessels in most notable port along coast and in a tranquil rural area where boats are used can disturb the peace of the night when travelling along rivers and canals. New water-borne vehicles like jet bikes and water bikes that are often used off-shore at popular beach resorts are noisy (Holloway, 2006).

In Nigeria, it is not unusual to hear in the air from neighbourhood the sound of music played by marketers of musical records. These marketers with their electronic gadgets, loudspeakers and horn speakers mounted outside usually blare out music thereby disturb the peace and calmness of the residents living in the immediate environs. It is equally difficult to believe that even local authorities have not made concerted and effective efforts to control their noise. This uncontrollable noise from them has caused serious public nuisance.

The use of generators which is now rampant due to unsteady electric power supply has become a major source of noise in Nigeria. These generators popularly called in the local parlance, "I rich pass my neighbour" which are competitively used both in the cities and in

rural areas have been an issue of serious concern in our environment. Because of erratic supply of electricity in Nigeria, almost every household in Nigeria uses generator as a more reliable source of power to their homes and offices both in the urban and rural areas. For example, you will discover that in a building of four flats, occupied by four families (households), four separate generators are used in that house. The noise produced by using generators in such a house will surely have multiplied by four – multiplier effects. This does not cause only noise pollution but also causes air pollution.

Aesthetic pollution is another environmental problem facing coastal tourism. In some locations, conventional tourism has been accused of failing to integrate its structures with the natural features and indigenous architecture of the destination. Large dominating resorts can look out of place in any natural environment and may clash with the indigenous structural design. Also, in areas with high concentrations of tourist activities and appealing natural attractions, waste disposal is a serious problem; improper disposal can be a major despoiler of the natural environment. Lack of planning control is often the cause of aesthetic pollution. Most times, developers prefer to build cheaply, resulting in high-rise concrete hotels, lacking character and out of keeping with the surrounding architecture. It was observed British towns were losing their local character, as builders chose to build in ubiquitous (but cheap) London brick rather than the materials available locally. As a result, planning authorities took stricter measures against this practice (Holloway, 2006). In seaside resorts around the world, the concrete skyscraper hotels have become the norm and from Waikiki in Hawaii to Benidorm in Spain, the tourist is confronted with conformity of architecture which owes nothing to the culture and traditions of the country in which it is built (Holloway, 2006).

It is not different in Nigeria from what is in vogue in many parts of the world. The architecture of seaside resorts and hotels found in Nigeria do not depict the culture and tradition of the people, it has become a fashion for buildings of luxury hotels and resorts in Nigeria to be found tall. For example, a trip to Sheraton or Nicon Hilton Abuja or to any five star hotels in cities like Lagos, *Owerri*, Port Harcourt, Enugu etc will reveal to you that hotel buildings do not conform to the local designs. Holloway (2006) has revealed that some far-seeing authorities have recognized the potential damage done by this practice and brought in controls to limit it. He reported that some have insisted that hotels must be built in local materials or conform to “vernacular” architecture (i.e. styles indigenous to the region). Others require that buildings should not exceed certain heights. For example, Tunisia requires that new hotel developments in tourism resorts should be no higher than the palm trees which will surround them. Mauritius has imposed constraints on both the architectural style and the materials employed in hotel building. Such legislation clearly must apply to all buildings, not just those for tourism (Holloway, 2006).

Another aspect of aesthetic pollution is that which resulted from improper disposing of solid wastes which usually deface the environment. Many streets, roads and drainage systems are found blocked by solid wastes. Lawal, Aniab, Uche and Animashaun (1995) have defined solid wastes as unwanted or discarded materials from houses, streets, commercial, industrial and agricultural operations. These solid wastes which are found to deface the environment can be in various forms such as pieces of wood, plastics, empty cans, metals, food wastes, broken glasses, papers, leaves, clothing materials (discarded), mattresses, etc.

**Climatic Change:** Climate change is contributing to ocean, and coastal disasters are affecting tourist destinations globally. For instance, the hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and the US Gulf coast in 2005, and the disasters of tsunami at far East at the end of 2014 (Holloway, 2006) and DG Environment News Alert Service (ENAS, 2010).

Changes in climate can manifest themselves as changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level, inundation, flooding, erosion, salt water intrusion and loss of biodiversity (Ehler, Cicin-Sani, Knecht, Sout, and Weiher, (1997) and DG Environment News Alert Service (2010). Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to altered climate conditions, low-lying delta and barrier coasts, low-elevation reef islands and coral atolls are especially sensitive to sea level rise as well as changes in rainfall storm frequency and intensity. All these changes can have negative impacts on fisheries, agriculture, human settlements, financial services and human health but they can also largely affect tourists' decisions on destination selection and eventually tourists flow in general (Markovic, 2009). United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2008) reported that changes in climate conditions call for the adaptive management of the tourism sector in order to sustain socio-economic benefits for the local communities while ensuring quality experience for tourists. The intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPG, 2007) declared that it is very likely that hot extremes heat waves and heavy precipitation will become more frequent and give a probable projected range in temperature increase of 1.8-4°C and in sea level rise of 0.28-0.48 meters. According to UNWTO, UNEP and WMO (2008), emissions from tourism (including transports, accommodation and activities) account for about 5% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (but may reach up to 14% if measured as radiative forcing, i.e. the warming caused by CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse emissions. More so, there is great variation in emissions across tourism sectors and within different types of transportation. For instance, trips by coach and rail account for 34% of all trips, but for only 13% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. At the same time long haul travel accounts for 2.7% of all tourist trips but contributes 17% to global tourist emissions. In 2005 tourism's contribution to global warming was estimated to contribute between 5% and 14% to the overall warming caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases (Simpson, Gossling, Scott, Hall, and Gladin, 2008).

The tourism sector has a duty to ensure the responsible use of natural resources, reducing harmful gas emissions to the atmosphere and supporting the protection of biodiversity. Minimizing tourism impacts on the natural environment can sustain important natural barriers to climate impacts (such as reefs and Mangroves) and therefore contribute to the natural resilience of ecosystems (UNWTO, 2008). Simpson et al (2008) gave probable projections of tourism contribution to climate change. 'By 2035, tourism's contribution to climate change may have grown considerably. Publications indicate that in terms of the number of trips made, global tourism will grow by 179% while guest nights will grow by 156%, passengers kilometers travelled will rise by 222%, while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will increase at somewhat lower levels 152% due to efficiency improvements. The share of aviation-related emissions will grow from 40% in 2005 to 52% by 2035. Tourism contribution to global warming including all greenhouse gases will be even larger, with an expected increase in radiative forces up to 188%, most of this caused by aviation. The development of emissions from tourism and their contribution to global warming is thus in contrast to the international community's climate change mitigation goals for the coming decades (UNWTO, NEP and WMO (2008) in Markovic *et al* (2009). Also, medical professionals' have been giving warning about the dangers of skin cancer due to the threat of global warming. Considering the impact of climate change in our environment, Nigeria is not left out of it. Changes in



climate have manifested in Nigeria in form of rise in temperature and sea level, flooding and erosion. In recent times, some places in Nigeria that have obviously witnessed the menace of flood include Lagos, Oyo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Anambra, Imo, among others. In addition to flood, erosion has caused serious damage in places like Imo, Enugu, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi etc.

**Inappropriate Development Pattern:** Over development for tourism has the same problems as other coastal tourism development problems, but often has a greater impact on the tourism developments that are located at or near fragile marine ecosystems. For example; Mangrove forests and sea grass have been removed to create open beaches. Nesting sites for endangered marine turtles have been destroyed and disturbed by large number of tourists on beaches. Land development adjacent to the beach is the largest threat to the beach stability as beaches need room to move. If beaches are not given adequate room to move, erosion and property damage occur (Sullivan *et al* 1995) and Clark (1992).

Industrial development has altered, disturbed and destroyed coastal ecosystems, including sensitive habitats. Many important industrial centres are situated on estuaries and in the vicinity of urban activities affecting coastal areas include smelting and processing, chemical, petrochemical (oil and gas storage and refining), paper mills, vehicles, factories, ship building, power plants (coal, oil gas, nuclear energy), and food processing (including fish). The threat from industry and tourism infrastructure on the ecosystem around the coastal areas is acute (Cook, 1996).

On the other hand dredging causes physical disturbance and may result in the redistribution of contamination through release from the sediment. The contaminants might be re-suspended and remobilized from sediments and create new entries in food webs (Cook, 1996). It is well known that changes in substrate quality are synonymous to changes in the structure of benthic communities. The bulk of material eligible for dumping at sea comes from dredging operations from navigation channels, materials removed in coastal engineering projects, beach nourishment, and reclamation and coastal marsh preservation. Sewage sludge dumping increases the fallout of organic materials and associated contaminants to seafloor. It can contribute to eutrophication in naturally nutrient rich coastal waters (Cook, 1996).

Moreover, much of African's coastal zone is vulnerable to physical shoreline change, in some places from accretion and mostly from erosion. Most of the change is due to or exacerbated by human activities. Locally, it is caused by coastal engineering such as Port development interrupting the alongshore transport or protective beach sediment. It is also due to the retention (by damming) of river borne sediments, formerly discharged at the coast (World Commission on Dams-WCD, 2000), Crossland, Kremer, Lindeboom, Marshal, Crossland, and LeTissier (2005) and Hamerlynck, (1999). Coastal erosion by wave action has long been an important issue on the high-energy coasts of Western Africa (UNEP, 1999).

It is the recognition of the contribution of tourism to the national economy and the problems challenging the development and efficient use of tourism resources around coastal areas despite the prospects of coastal tourism globally that aroused the researcher's interest to delve into researching on the problems of developing coastal areas of Rivers State into a tourism destination. Hence, the question is, 'What are the problems militating coastal tourism potentials in Rivers State from being harnessed to develop the state into tourist destination in Nigeria? The study is aimed at examining the challenges of harnessing coastal tourism potentials in Rivers State in order to develop the State into Tourist destination.

## Methodology

The study was focused on Opobo, Bonny and Port Harcourt and qualitative technique for data collection was employed. The instruments used in the study were interview schedule, questionnaire, observation checklist and digital camera to supplement. The questionnaire was used to ascertain the perception of local residents on the problems of developing coastal areas of Rivers State. The in-depth interview was aimed at identifying the problems of developing coastal tourism in Rivers State and the researcher was guided by interview schedule. Criterion sampling technique was employed to select the respondents to be interviewed from the three selected sites under study on the challenges of tourism development. For the local respondents that will be interviewed to qualify for selection, he or she must be a community leader, head, titled fellow or office holder.

The researcher extracted information by interviewing key office holders, community leaders, heads or titled fellows in the communities hosting coastal tourism potentials with the aid of research assistant. Digital camera for visual field observation was employed. Field observation was embarked upon in the study to carry out physical assessment of the environmental features of the sites to identify problems inherent for coastal tourism development. Photographs were taken with digital camera as an adjunct to direct observation. In validation of the instrument, the researcher sent the interview guide to three experts in tourism to judge at the face value the appropriateness of the measuring instruments – face validity. These three experts were sourced from Archaeology and Tourism Department, University of Nigeria *Nsukka*, and Hotel Management and Tourism Department, Michael *Okpara* University of Agriculture, *Umudike*. This enabled the researcher to ascertain if the measuring instruments were suitable for measuring the features or qualities to be measured. Also, the researcher tested the instruments for content validity. To do this, the researcher sent the instruments to five experts in tourism to validate the instrument. These five experts were drawn two from the University of Nigeria, *Nsukka*; two from Michael *Okpara* University of Agriculture, *Umudike*; and one from Imo State University, *Owerri*. The researcher made available the research questions for them. The researcher asked them to check if the instrument – interview guide and questionnaire contained all the aspects of the subject that should be included in them. The data collected through qualitative research method were analyzed using ethnographic description method of analysis to answer the research questions. This method of analysis was employed in the study to interpret and describe data generated through in-depth interviews and observation.

## Results and Discussion

The study revealed the following challenges of developing coastal areas of selected sites in Rivers State into tourism destination.

**Deforestation:** The study revealed that some mangrove forests in Opobo have been destroyed. The local people depended much on mangrove forest for local boat construction, local basket weaving, mortar and pestle construction, fish rackets for drying of fish, masquerade head construction. The local residents cut on daily basis trees from mangrove for fire wood, as they believe that food cooked with fire wood gives better taste than those cooked with stove or gas. It was found from the study that mangroves in Opobo have suffered depletion through agricultural practices of the local farmers. The agricultural practices of the local farmers have posed great threat on mangrove. As some mangroves have been cleared by these farmers where they cultivate vegetables and other crops, especially

during dry season. For them farming is their occupation and so it is difficult to stop them from such practices.

In Bonny, the belief of the local residents on the use of firewood for cooking was not different from what was discovered in Opobo. Almost on daily basis, forest trees were cut down for firewood as cooking fuel. The local farmers from Bonny have placed much pressure on “*Ngala*” mangrove forest by encroaching on part of it for their farm work. Similarly, *Ngala* mangrove forest has suffered threat due to deforestation through the activities of the local residents who engaged in construction of platforms for firewood, fish, drying and basket weaving and masks construction, poles and timber harvesting.

**Table 1: Challenges Confronting Development of Tourism in the Study Area**

| S/No | Challenges                             | P/H | Bonny | Opobo |
|------|--|-----|-------|-------|
| 1    | Deforestation                          |     |       |       |
| 2    | Swamp                                  |     |       |       |
| 3    | Apathy from government                 |     |       |       |
| 4    | Erosion                                |     |       |       |
| 5    | Flood                                  |     |       |       |
| 6    | Bush burning                           |     |       |       |
| 7    | Illegal grazing                        |     |       |       |
| 8    | Pollution                              |     |       |       |
| 9    | Scarcity of land                       |     |       |       |
| 10   | Insecurity                             |     |       |       |
| 11   | Absence of good natural drinking water |     |       |       |
| 12   | Community conflict                     |     |       |       |

**Source: Field survey, 2017**

**Key:** ( ) Where a specific challenge was identified

( ) Where a specific challenge was not identified

In Port Harcourt study site, the study showed that “*Oke-ohia Agala*” mangrove has suffered threat and depletion. The local residents of *Nkpogu, Budu, Elekahia, Oroada Borokiri, Orochiri, Eligi* and *Oroabali* that bordered the mangrove have depended on the mangrove for charcoal and firewood for their cooking and wood for building. The greatest challenge on the forest is urbanization due to industries, institutions, roads, estates and markets that are springing up yearly in the area (Plate 1).



**Swamp:** The study revealed that swamp was another threat that will militate the development of tourism in the study area. From the study it was discovered that Bonny site among others faced this challenge most. It was observed that Bonny appeared to be the worst hit due to its location. It is located very close to the coast and bordered in the North by the Atlantic Ocean.

Its mangrove forest was predominantly covered with swamp (plate 2). It was discovered that for any construction of tourism to take place in the swamp areas the engineers will first of all do sand filling to cover the swamp which makes it cost intensive to develop tourism in the area. The swamp area has become a home for breeding mosquitoes and rattle snakes and produces rotten smell due to the decomposition of vegetation.

The study has revealed that *Gbalaja-woji* and Eagle Island Agip are among the swampy areas in Port Harcourt study site. For one to build house or do any form of construction in the swamp places, huge sum of money would be spent to do sand filling (plate 3). This will no doubt make development of tourism in such places capital intensive which subsequently affects the time for return on investment.



**Plate 2: Swamp**



**Plate 3: Sand filling**

**Air Pollution:** Air pollution has been identified to be another challenge to coastal tourism development. The study revealed that gas flaring (Plate 4) was a major contributor to air pollution in the three study areas due to oil exploration in the state. Residents in the area complained with bitterness the level of damage the emission of gas has caused their houses and plants.

It was observed that the continuous flaring of gas in Bonny was responsible for the frequent acid rain on the island that corroded almost all the roofing sheets in Bonny. The study revealed areas where gas flaring has caused corrosion on their roofing sheets as *Orisikiro*, Green Village, *Ayama*, *Polo Nkwere*, *Ikuba*, *Aganya*, *Otobie*, *Polo Nwafor*, *Cable road*, *Ayambo*, Light house.

Apart from the damage on the vegetation and houses, the health of residents in the area is in jeopardy, as the residents are prone to cancer, asthma and other respiratory diseases. This finding was supported by NEST (1991) and OMPADEC (1993) that stated that gas flaring has environmental impact such as atmospheric pollution, human illness and production of acid rain.



**Noise Pollution:** The study has revealed that movement of cars, buses and motor bikes as a source of noise pollution within the study sites particularly in the major cities like Port Harcourt, Bonny and Opobo towns. These can pose a threat to the development of tourism in these places contrary to quiet environment that will be conducive and cherished by tourists. Other sources of noise pollution discovered by the study were traffic congestion (Plate 5) and the use of fireworks by youths and children during festival such as carnival, Christmas and New year. Also the use of cannons (large guns) planted on the ground during burial, coronation and any special events. All these contribute to noise in the environment.



**Water Pollution:** Another challenge to tourism development as the study had shown was the pollution of water particularly Bonny study site. It was observed that most of the rivers around Port Harcourt and Opobo areas were equally polluted. The major pollutants as revealed at the study sites were oil spills; solid garbage such as bottles, foot wears, cans, plastics, bags and other disposables. These pollutants might cause harm to aquatic lives; and they can equally flow into the beaches through the movement of the water thereby getting the beaches polluted (Plate 6).



**Bush Burning:** Bush burning was equally revealed by the study as another major problem against tourism development in the state. It was discovered that many a time school children set fire in the bush during dry season. Hunters and farmers alike have been found to be agents of bush burning in the three study sites. This militating problem reduces the vegetation cover for wildlife thereby exposing them to predators. Bush burning has led to loss

of soil fertility and its consequences of lean harvest because of the destruction of useful bacteria and removal of organic matter contents.

Several plant and animal species have been lost within the environment due to habitat destruction as a result of bush burning. Apart from clearing of vegetation, destruction of useful bacteria and removal of organic matters, bush burning has contributed adversely to environmental pollution (Plate 7).



**Poaching:** The study has revealed that poaching is a problem facing conservation and tourism development in Opobo, Bonny and Port Harcourt. Due to the fact that hunting and fishing are the occupations of some of the local residents in the three study sites. The study revealed that many of the local residents depended on this practice for their meat and fish consumption. Responses from the people showed that they prefer bush meat to domestic and fish from rivers to those from ponds. According to them bush meat and fish from rivers have better taste than domestic ones. Some of the weapons used for killing of games include shot guns, rifles, sticks, traps and shovels and diggers for animals that live in holes. The instruments used for illegal fishing were nets and hooks. With such weapons hunters and fishers have killed off some species of animals and fishes.

**Apathy from Government:** Government at all levels have made some good policies that favour tourism development; but have failed to carry out tourism development projects that will bring reality unto limelight particularly in Bonny and Opobo. The study also showed that tourism development projects are not in the priority list of Government. Government is only giving lip service to it through their bogus policies devoid of implementations or action programmes. Governments have not provided needed funds for tourism development projects.

**Flood:** The study revealed flood disaster as another challenge that will militate against development of tourism. One of the respondents who was interviewed complained bitterly his ordeals as a result of flood in Rumu-ibekwe Port Harcourt, Rivers State which destroyed a lot of property and rendering many families homeless. During the flood incident, many houses were submerged as they were covered with water. Another respondent said that for five days she was scooping water from her house and she did not go to work because of this menace. When she was asked the cause of the drainage, she stated that it was due to the blockage of the drainage system which has not allowed flood water to flow. One of the major challenges of developing tourism in Bonny area was flooding. Almost all the respondents interviewed expressed their experiences on the problem of flood.

The study identified some areas in Bonny as flood prone areas according to the experience the respondents had in the past. Some of the communities as discovered through the respondents in Bonny study site were *Perekunle Iwoama, Aganya Community, Macaulay* and

*Ayambo*. Other areas were *Orosikiri* local beach, sand-fill, *Dappa Posia*, *Igoni polo*, *Manila Pepple* compound, *Aligon* compound and cable road. It was discovered that the geographical location of Bonny has made it to be prone to flood disaster. Bonny is a land surrounded by water and this has made it so vulnerable to flood.

Opobo was not left out in the flood incidence. It was discovered that properties worth millions of naira were damaged in the year 2010 following a heavy rain in Opobo. One of the respondents stated that the areas affected most by this flood were Brown compound, Pombe area and some buildings close to Opobo New layout. Another respondent interviewed was a victim of the flood who described the disaster as unprecedented. However incidence of flood has been discovered by the study as a perennial occurrence in Opobo.

**Illegal Grazing:** The study revealed that the practice of taking cattle from place to place by cattle Fulani nomads was another problem that will face tourism development. This practice was identified to be common in Port Harcourt. It was also discovered that some residents of the local communities equally graze their animals (sheep and goats) on the vegetation in Opobo and Bonny. The grazing of animals has affected wildlife, especially grasses, insects, ants and rodents. The practice reduces vegetation cover which provides protection for some wildlife. Many plant and animal species have been lost in nature due to habitat destruction resulting from grazing animals (plate 8).



**Scarcity of Land:** Availability of land is essential for tourism development. Unfortunately the study showed that the three study sites were facing the problem of land scarcity. For instance, in Port Harcourt a plot of land is sold within the range of 1.5M to 50M. Also, due to scarcity of land, some swamps have to be reclaimed for buildings and other constructions. The description of costs of plots of land in Port Harcourt was revealed by study as follows: old, GRA – ₦ 50M/₦40m; Ada George road between ₦10M – ₦22M; Agip Estate between ₦10M - ₦15m; GRA (II) between ₦25M – ₦45M; Location Road between ₦6M - ₦10M; Rumuigbo between ₦4.5M - ₦5M; Elekahia between ₦2.5M - ₦10M; Trans-Amadi between ₦10M - ₦20M and Borokiri Sand Field between ₦6M - ₦10M.

In Bonny, the study revealed that the people do not sell their land to others except their family members. While the price of a plot of land was sold at 1.5M in Bonny town the swamp areas sold at ₦1M. A Plot of land in the rural areas was sold at a range of ₦800,000 to ₦900,000. When the respondents were interviewed on why they do not sell land to people outside. The responses from them pointed to the fact that the people of Bonny did not have sufficient land because of much water surrounding Bonny. Similarly it was discovered from the study that the people of Opobo faced similar problem of scarcity of land. The people don't sell land. Instead of selling their land portions they prefer that their relations build for

them in exchange for their portion of land. According to the respondents many indigenes of Opobo do not have enough land to build and cultivate let alone the one to sell.

**Insecurity:** The history of Rivers State has been characterized with insecurity. During the military era precisely from 1983 to 1999 militancy was the main issue in Rivers State. Even democracy in the state has had its challenges with incessant politically motivated killings across the state had posed security challenges to lives, properties and democracy in state. In fact at the last concluded general election there were records of killings in the state. It was reported that All Progressive Congress (APC) youth leader, Mr. Clever Orukwuowu was murdered on the day of the governorship election in the state. In *Obrikom* in *Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni* LGA, a former *Chairman* of the council, Late Chief Christopher *Adube* was killed with his children, driver and cousin in April, 2015. Other victims of attack were Mr. Blessing Nwuchigbo and Onuwa (Mr) who escaped death from gunmen but have their family houses burnt down. The insecurity in the State worsened when it was reported that police killed 26 cultists in a forest around *Obesemini* community in *Egi*. Also it was revealed that cult related violence had taken over most parts of Rivers State as a result of failure of governance in the state. The insecurity in Rivers State is not investment friendly for tourism development in the state. However the Rivers state Governor Barrister Nyesom Wike who was sworn-in on May 29th, 2015 as the governor of the state has promised international investors of an investment friendly environment. He promised to improve on the security of lives and property across the state and ensured that kidnapping shall become a thing of the past.

**Absence of good natural drinking water:** It was discovered from the study that the three study sites lack good natural drinking water. In the three study sites it was discovered that drinking water quality was impaired by run-off discharges, organic and inorganic matters. The rivers and streams which used to be sources of drinking water have been damaged with industrial pollutants and oil spills. River water, creek water, lake water and streams have been polluted with the discharge of wastewater effluents by industries. Even rain water which should have been a source of good drinking water was discovered from the study as unsafe for human consumption due to gas flaring effects on the roofing sheets used for rain water collection. The people complained bitterly on the damage the impact of oil exploration, gas flaring and industrialization have created on their streams and rivers which used to be their sources of drinking water. According to the researcher's informants from the three study sites, the only sources of drinking water in their communities were primarily community boreholes provided by NDDC, Shell, Agip and Chevron, individual household boreholes and pipe-borne water supplied by the state water board. However, to ascertain the quality of water from Opobo, Port Harcourt and Bonny to determine their suitability for human consumption, the study evaluated some of the physico-chemical parameters and microbiological status.

**Community conflict:** The study revealed that the three study sites have witnessed community conflicts at one time or the other. The responses from the locals showed that the conflicts were due to ethnic pluralism, diverse cultures, and boundary dispute between communities. It was discovered from the study that the community conflict has spread to different dimensions with socio-economic consequences which ranges from incessant communal conflict to destruction of towns and villages, killings and maiming of people, sabotage of oil and gas facilities, kidnapping, hostage taking and other crimes.



Table 2 showed the Perceptions of Local Residents on the problems facing communities under study in Rivers State towards coastal tourism development. The results revealed that majority of the average respondents were of the opinion that the biggest challenge facing their Communities regarding tourism development was apathy from government (98.95%) for which Opobo was 100%, Port Harcourt showed 100% positive responses and Bonny indicated 96.84% responses. The next challenging problem as revealed by their responses was scarcity of land with average responses of 70.46% where Opobo was 85.07%, Port Harcourt was 100% and Bonny was 26.32%. Another problem as revealed by their responses was pollution with average responses of 69.05%, where Opobo, Port Harcourt and Bonny were 46.27%, 90.34% and 70.53% respectively. Then followed by absence of good drinking water with average responses of 63.32% where Opobo was 67.16%, Port Harcourt was 70.17% and Bonny was 52.63%.

**Table 2: Perceptions of Local Residents on the problems facing the Communities**

| Variables                      | Opobo (%) | Port Harcourt (%) | Bonny (%) | Average score (%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Apathy from government         | 67(100.0) | 238(100.0)        | 92(96.84) | 132(98.95)        |
| Erosion                        | 21(31.34) | 96(40.34)         | 09(9.47)  | 42(27.05)         |
| Flood                          | 18(26.87) | 166(69.75)        | 56(58.95) | 80(61.86)         |
| Swamp                          | 23(34.33) | 119(50.0)         | 32(33.68) | 58(39.34)         |
| Bush burning                   | 6(8.96)   | 70(29.41)         | 9(9.47)   | 28(15.95)         |
| Deforestation                  | 32(47.76) | 145(60.92)        | 18(18.95) | 65(42.54)         |
| Illegal grazing                | 0(0%)     | 75(31.51)         | 0(0.0)    | 25(10.50)         |
| Pollution                      | 31(46.27) | 215(90.34)        | 67(70.53) | 104(69.05)        |
| Illegal fishing                | 12(17.91) | 90(37.83)         | 10(10.53) | 34(20.09)         |
| Scarcity of land               | 57(85.07) | 238(100.00)       | 25(26.32) | 107(70.46)        |
| Insecurity                     | 8(11.94)  | 150(63.03)        | 10(10.53) | 55(28.49)         |
| Absence of good drinking water | 45(67.16) | 167(70.17)        | 50(52.63) | 87(63.32)         |
| Community conflict             | 8(11.94)  | 88(36.97)         | 0(0.0)    | 32(16.30)         |

**Source: Field survey, 2017**

The study also revealed flood as another challenging problem with Opobo, Port Harcourt and Bonny indicating 26.87%, 69.75% and 58.95% responses respectively where the average response was 61.86%. The least respondents received on the problems confronting the communities were illegal grazing 10.50%, bush burning 15.95%, community conflict 16.30% and illegal fishing 20.09%. For illegal grazing, Port Harcourt showed 31.51% responses while Bonny and Opobo showed 0% response. Also, responses for Opobo, Port Harcourt, and Bonny were 8.96%, 29.41% and 9.47% respectively for bush burning, while community conflict revealed 11.94% for Opobo, 36.97% for Port Harcourt and 0% for Bonny. Finally, the responses for illegal fishing indicated 17.91% for Opobo, 37.82% for Port Harcourt and 10.53% for Bonny study sites. Therefore, it can be deduced from the study that the major problems confronting the communities which can hamper tourism development as lack of political will, scarcity of land, pollution, absence of good drinking water, flood and deforestation, etc. It was observed that the major sources of noise and air pollution were gas flaring, and emissions from vehicles, motor bikes and generator sets due to unstable power supply especially in the major cities and towns like Port Harcourt and Bonny towns. While the sources of water pollution were discharges from boats, solid wastes from passengers,

faeces and wastes discharges by some industries such as oil and petrochemical industry, fertilizer industry, textile industry, fabrication industry etc.

Government apathy, erosion, flood, swamp, bush burning, deforestation, illegal grazing, pollution, poaching (illegal fishing and hunting), and scarcity of land, insecurity community conflict and absence of good drinking water were the major challenges facing development of tourism. The result showed that 98.95% of the respondents were of the opinion that governments (federal, state and local) apathy to develop the state into tourism destination was the greatest challenge. The next challenging problem was scarcity of land which revealed 70.46% average responses, 85.07% responses in Opobo, 100% responses in Port Harcourt and 26.32% responses in Bonny. This was followed by pollution with average responses of 69.05%. The determination that is backed up with action programme by the governments to develop tourism sector was missing in government programmes. Nigeria government had made beautiful policies to promote tourism without action programmes for the policy implementation. This result agreed with Ngoka and Ogu (2011) who were of the opinion that tourism development has not attracted the serious attention of the government in terms of actions needed in a similar study on *Azumini* Blue River.

The study revealed that local residents cut down trees from mangrove forest for fire wood, boat construction, basket weaving, timber, fish rackets and for cultivation of their crops and vegetables. The findings was supported by Daniel and Edward (1990) who stated that land clearing for agriculture is one of the principal causes of biodiversity depletion in Nigeria. The views of Ijeomah, Dagba and Aju (2007) and Ijeomah, Adedapo, Abimbola and Abadeen (2009) were in line with result which revealed that deforestation in rain tropical forest was a serious environmental problem facing coastal areas of Rivers State.

Bush burning was revealed as one major problem facing tourism development in the state. Often times school children, hunters and farmers set fire in the bush during dry season thereby reducing the population of flora and fauna in a given area. This has adversely affected the environment and the development of tourism in the state. This result collaborated with similar studies by Salihu (2002), Egbu (1990) and Obinwanne (2009) on Yankari National Park which reported that flora and fauna in the park have been depleted due to incessant bush fires set by the local people. In the same vein (Obinwanne, 2009) was of the view that bush burning reduces the vegetation cover for wildlife thereby exposing wild animals to predators.

The practice of Fulani nomads who illegally move their cattle from place to place to graze them was identified as a big challenge facing tourism development in Rivers State. The grazing of goats and sheep by some residents within the local communities together with the Fulani nomads had equally contributed to the loss of plants, vegetation, insects, ants and rodents. The problem is difficult to control because both the Fulani nomads and the local communities believe that they have the right to graze their animals anywhere they like which sometimes results into fight, loss of property or lives when farmers resist them. This is in line with Kamweti, Osiro and Mwiturubani (2009) that described illegal grazing as the major cause of conflict between famers and pastoralists.

Flood is another militating problem facing development of tourism which has rendered many people homeless and property worth millions of naira destroyed. The flood and erosion was as a result of blockage and poor drainage system that obstructed the free flow of erosion water. Some communities which were victims of flood incidence were Rumu-Ibekwe,

Aganya community, Sand field, Igoni polo and Orosikiri. The result agreed with Ebuzoeme (2015) and Agbonkhese, Agbonkhese, Aka, Joe-Abaya, Ocholi and Adekunle (2014) that flood and erosion menace pose a serious threat to the environment. They described in their report the causal factors of flood in Nigeria as indiscriminate dumping of refuse on drainage channel, poor drainage system and land use pattern. It is true that flood is a natural occurrence, but human activities most often have led to disastrous consequences. For tourism to be developed and sustained in the area, effective control measures must be put in place to checkmate human activities and the menace of flood and erosion to save lives and property. According to the report of UN-Water (2011) there has been rapid growth in number of people killed or seriously impacted by flood disasters globally. Flood has been reported to be the cause of about half of the disaster cases world-wide and 84% of deaths caused by disaster incidents in the world were attributed to flood (UN-Water, 2011). Flooding has become a serious threat in the coastal area of Rivers State because of the number of interconnecting rivers in the state. Hence, adequate attention must be given to this menace by all stakeholders for tourism to thrive if developed in the area.

Also, various forms of pollution such as air pollution due to gas flaring and emission, water pollution and noise pollution were identified as problems confronting tourism development in the state. This finding was in agreement with NEST (1991) which stated that gas flaring has environmental impact such as atmosphere pollution, human illness and production of acid rain. The result revealed that gas flaring was responsible for the persistent acid rain that had corroded roofing sheets in Bonny causing damage on vegetation and other parts of the state that put the health of residents in jeopardy. Pollution of water as a result of oil spills, solid wastes such as bottles, foot wears, damaged bags and sewage and industrial discharges was another environmental challenge. This finding agreed with Ekpo (2010), Awobajo (1981), UNEP (1999), UNEP (2002) and (WWF, 2011b) that described various pollutants that cause water pollution as solid waste disposal, oil spillage, waste water and industrial discharges which have polluted seas, beaches, lakes and other water bodies.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

It was found that the major problems confronting the communities under study which can hamper tourism development were apathy from government, scarcity of land, absence of good drinking water, flood, deforestation, illegal grazing, bush burning, swamp, pollution, community conflict and insecurity. Governments should remove apathy and indifference by backing up their beautiful policies on tourism development with action programmes so that it will not appear that they are giving lip service to tourism development in the country. There should be equitable participation of tourism stakeholders in the planning development; and sharing of dividends from tourism in the state for stakeholders to be responsible and have sense of belonging. This will enable the host communities to be actively involved to avoid conflict and destruction of property and the attraction after developing the place. The study revealed that Bonny water was very dense in appearance, dark brown in colour and is highly turbid. This implies that Bonny water was hazardous and so not safe for human consumption. Hence, water pollution has been found as one of the major challenges confronting development of tourism in Bonny.

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