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# RAPID ASSESSMENT OF PROTECTED AREA PRESSURES AND THREATS IN NIGERIA NATIONAL PARKS

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## ABSTRACT

Regular evaluation of protected area operations can enable policy makers develop strategic responses to pervasive management problems. Pressures and threats in seven National Parks of the National Park Service (NPS) were therefore assessed using the Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Area Management (RAPPAM) methodology. The parks were Cross River National Park (CRNP), Okomu National Park (ONP), Old Oyo National Park (OONP), Gashaka –Gumti National Park (GGNP), Kainji Lake National Park (KLNP), Chad Basin National Park (CBNP) and Kamuku National Park (KNP). Quantitative data was collected from 207 rangers and 49 senior staff including park records. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman correlation. The parks had professionals (1.06%), technical staff 33 (2.19%), rangers 1094 (72.55%), and administrative staff 266 (17.64%). Personnel cost (19.6%), administrative operations (36.9%) and conservation of park resources (3.4%) were significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) different. The greatest threats facing the parks were Grazing (57.76%), Hunting (24.17%), Logging (6.17%) and Fishing (5.06%). Threats and pressures were positively and significantly correlated ( $r = 0.75$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) with vulnerability. The staff profile and inappropriate budgetary allocation to conservation activities might be responsible for the overall pressures and threats recorded in the parks during the study.

**KEYWORDS:** Threats, Pressures, Protected Areas, National Park, Management

## INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have recorded serious global biodiversity decline due to loss of species, habitat and major alterations of ecosystems. This has given rise to profound species extinction crises (Heywood 1995, Primm *et al* 1995, Whitemore 1997). Consequently, much of tropical biodiversity is unlikely to survive without effective protection (Primm *et al* 1995, Meyers *et al* 2000). To address these problems, protected areas of various categories have been established across the country. Some studies have further demonstrated that protected areas can be a basic mechanism likely to guide against unsustainable utilization of natural resources. However, these areas most often appear to lack adequate manpower to address a host of myriad and threats within their borders (Brunner *et al* 2001, Putz *et al* 2001, Ervin 2003 a, b). Consequently, increasing levels of environmental degradation are now common features in protected areas all over the world. Out of 201 National Parks surveyed in 16 tropical countries, 70% are being affected by poaching, encroachment and logging (Van Schaik *et al* 1997). Consequently, a major environmental concern of conservation practitioners all over the world is to improve and optimize management strategies that will assess the threat status of protected areas and measure the management effectiveness of their conservation efforts (Margolis and Salafsky 1999, Hockings *et al*

2000, Salafsky *et al* 2002). These assessments are seriously considered as integral components of systematic conservation planning processes (Margules and Pressey 2000).

A number of studies have also examined the level of exploitation of Nigeria's natural resources. Poaching of wildlife resources constitutes the greatest problem to conservation of wildlife in the National Parks and Game Reserves (Alarape, 2002). Though the country has shown increasing concern over the preservation of her indigenous resources in the past, the goals of managing its wildlife resources sustainably has remained unrealized. The major problems of managing wildlife in Nigeria are loss of wildlife habitats, poaching including overhunting, collection of NTFP'S, logging and grazing. This study therefore assessed the level of pressures and threats in the seven National Parks that are presently under the Nigeria National Park Service.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study Area:** The assessment covered the seven National Parks presently under the NPS with the following areas: ONP (197km<sup>2</sup>) GGNP (6731km<sup>2</sup>), KLNP (5340.13km<sup>2</sup>), CRNP (4000km<sup>2</sup>), OONP (2512km<sup>2</sup>), CBNP (2258km<sup>2</sup>), and KNP (1121km<sup>2</sup>). These Parks cut across various ecological zones including forest, grassland, savanna and montane forest

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