



## MAINSTREAMING BORDERLAND COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*For decades, emphasis in Nigeria is placed on formal borderland governance structures activities of intra-agency, inter-agency and international collaborations with little attention paid to the local patterns of mainstreaming borderland communities in managing borderlands. The paper examines the efficacy of mainstreaming borderland communities for sustainable borderland policies and governance in Nigeria. Secondary data, official documents such as Federal Constitution of Nigeria, 1999 as amended; Border Communities Development Agency Act, 2003; African Union Border Programme, 2017; International Organisation for Migration, 2017; UN-World Bank Report, 2018; National Border Management Strategy, 2019, were analysed descriptively and provided basis for discussion. The paper found out that, the dilemma with Nigeria's borderland policies had its root in the ratification of the principle of respecting all borderlands as carved by the colonists enshrined in the Resolution AHG/Res. 16(I) of the OAU Charter of July 1964. Till date, the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) did not practically address the vacuum created by non-mainstreaming of borderland communities in borderland management system in the country. This distorts the historic borderland communities' internal autonomy and local patterns of managing their borderland, escalating the rate of disintegration and perpetual instability in the management of borderland communities. It is suggested that the policy direction should recognise the 263 borderland communities as the most important stakeholder towards a more sustainable, secure and safe borderland management. Also, an appropriate institutional framework for mainstreaming borderland communities should focus on borderland governance structures that will implement the policy. More importantly, the active leadership of the main agencies responsible for borderland management should intensify efforts to harmonise their operations with that of mainstreamed borderland communities.*

**Keywords:** Borderland communities, Mainstreaming, Governance, Management



## **1. Introduction**

The efficacy of borderland management lies with the government putting in place all the appropriate policies and governance structures that ensures safe and secured borderland management in the country. Regrettably, from the colonial era to the most recent National Border Management Strategy (NBMS) and Action of 2019, Nigeria's borderland policies and governance structures (Borderland Control Agencies) have not properly mainstreamed borderland communities. Recent and earlier efforts especially the UN-World Bank report (2018) "*The Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*"; African Union Border Programme (AUBP, 2017); Collaborative Border Management Approach (UNDP, 2011); Declarations of the African Union Border Programme (2007, 2010 and 2012); ECOWAS 1996 Local Borderland Committee, among others, brought to fore, the sacrosanct of mainstreaming borderland communities to attain sustainable borderland management.

In the past for example, borderland communities in Africa had once enjoyed full autonomy in managing their borderlands that ensured an enduring intra-regional trade, migration of people, goods, services, capital and so on, dating back to the famous trans-Saharan trade. This could not have been achieved without an ingenious borderland management system. This autonomy covers local patterns of management among local communities living along the borderland, covering their vital daily activities of defense, migration, merchandise, land and forest management, town planning, hunting, fishing, gathering of firewood and management of other natural resources.

However, the partitioning of the African borderland communities in 1885 disrupted the established local patterns and affected borderland community as socio-cultural activities netted with their festivals, initiatory, customary and land rituals, confessional events, matrimonial and christening, lineage exchanges and communal works (Cisse, 2007). The effect of this is the distortion of the historic borderland communities' internal autonomy and local patterns of managing their borderland, escalating the rate of disintegration and perpetual instability in resolving issues of borderland management. As indicated by African Union Border Programme (AUBP, 2017), 80% of borderland in Africa were arbitrarily imposed by British and French colonial powers, with 42% drawn by parallels, meridians and equidistant lines. This entirely negates Africans' highly structured self-participatory borderland policies and governance structures, their perfect foreknowledge of the terrain and borderland conflicts resolution mechanisms.

In Nigeria, borderland management is an exclusive function of the Federal government as requirement of national sovereignty that safeguards its territorial integrity and citizens (Federal Constitution, 1999, as amended). The Federal government through the Ministry of Interior solely maintains the nation's internal security, territorial integrity of 923, 769 square kilometres landmass. Strategically situated in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria has 853-kms coastlines and 4,047-kms of borderland. In the west, it shares borderland of 773 kms with Benin, 1,497 kms with Niger in the north, 87 kms with Chad in the northeast and 1,690 km with Cameroon in the southeast along 21 landlocked states (Scott-Villiers, 2015). For decades,



emphasis in Nigeria is placed on formal borderland governance structures activities of intra-agency, inter-agency and international collaborations with little attention paid to the local patterns of borderland management.

Accordingly, the persistent failures of borderland policies direction had compelled series of trials. As observed by Otaru (2016) in one of such trails, the Federal government of Nigeria established through an Act of the National Assembly, the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) Act, 2003 (amended by 2006 Act). The agency is mandated (as a borderland community development-oriented agency) to ensure the sustainable social, economic and infrastructural development of all borderland communities as a panacea for sustainable borderland management in Nigeria. Despite the existence of BCDA for over one-and-half decade, its performance impact is still minimal, as evidenced by the increased outcry of both borderland communities, members of the National Assembly and other concerned citizens alike.

Arising from the above, this paper draws its main thrust from the current research interests for analysing the natures, dynamics and forms of patterns of managing borderland issues drawing lessons from African context. The paper, therefore intends to conceptually examine the efficacy of mainstreaming borderland communities as imperative for sustainable borderland policies and governance structures in Nigeria. Structurally, the paper is divided into four sub-sections. Section one is the introductory which captures problem in context, section two covers conceptual and empirical issues and theoretical framework whilst section three deals with methodology and discussion which provides basis for drawing major findings and the last section deals with policy recommendations and concludes the paper.

## **2. Literature review**

### *Conceptual and Empirical Issues*

Although borderland as demarcating lines between states is as old as the human civilisation, it however became more prominent with the emergence of the modern state in 1648. Hansen (1984) describes borderland as sub-national geographical space that is well-defined, whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to the international borderland communities. However, contrary to Hansen's definition, most borderlands in Africa are not well-defined. Zartman (2010) remarks that, borderland runs across land but essentially through people's settlements. It therefore becomes imperative to always alienated borderland communities in all aspects of borderland management. Goodhand (2014) conceives borderland as institutions that can be made use of as fields of opportunities for inhabitants whose optimal concern lies therein.

Borderland communities consist of the people who live in the area by inheritance and by birth as custodians of the land. Traditionally, the land is communally owned and managed by them. They are considered as first-line stakeholders with legitimate interest and direct stake that should not be compromised in the overall management of their land. They consist of traditional, business, opinion and religious leaders, local government and elected officials, professional associations,



youth and women's movements, economic interest groupings like traders, farmers, pastoralists, hunters, fishermen, other locals (Bersin, 2012). They inhabit the borderland locality as area for living, working and source of livelihood all their life. Most importantly, they are highly sensitive to all borderland policies and activities of borderland governance structures. An attempt to alter the existing pattern of borderland management directly affects their daily lives and developed local patterns and informal "rules" of borderland management is considered very essential to security, immigration; trade and intelligence requirements for open, but safe and secured borderland management (Ahmed, 2016).

Mainstreaming entails the placement of borderland communities with specific authorities and responsibilities in borderland sectoral planning, policy making and review process and involvement in the operations of governance structures. Specifically, African Union Border Programme (AUBP, 2017) conceives mainstreaming as granting borderland communities a statutory pillar in the overall borderland policies and governance structures, especially in Africa where communities recognised borderland as their natural habitat. Therefore, any borderland management taken will be doomed to fail if not backed by these first line stakeholders. This also concurs with Zartman (2010) opinion that borderlands are not simply 'lines in the sand or territorial demarcations', but sites of human settlement whose interest in borderland management remained sacrosanct.

Borderland governance reflects institutions premised on the principles and practices of modern borderland management of delegate/plenipotentiary with borderland communities in enforcing and discharging their duties (Deppisch, 2012). It is a process that involves several stakeholders with interests in borderland management over time. Globally, effective manning of borderland is achieved through borderland governance structures (Peter, 2016). Functionally, these have affected the agencies' ability to effectively man the 1,500 both legal and illegal borderland routes into the country. For example, Ekpemedede (2016) observes that only the 100 official routes are manned, while about 1400 routes remained unmanned due to shortage of manpower. Transforming the Nigerian borderland control agencies to borderland governance structures will fortify the dearth of personnel and weak presence at the 1,400 unmanned routes.

Mainstreaming borderland communities took varied approaches globally. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all strategy may be less likely successful. Rather, approaches that account for communities and their peculiarities must be factored in mainstreaming borderland communities into borderland management. Seda (2015) in her work "*Border Governance in Mozambique*" reviewed how Ressano Garcia borderland communities and borderland control officials put up a collaborative initiative that promoted a joint borderland management resolution mechanism. A local leader in the Ressano Garcia community expresses the view that "we acted as advisory councils in which we raised our opinions and influence decisions about borderland management". What this exemplifies is that Mozambique had explored better borderland management initiatives between people whose daily lives resolves around the borderland and government.



Similar pattern of mainstreaming was also studied by Saibou (2007) among the Chad-Cameroon borderland communities, tagged as “*Borderland Modes of Policing*”. These are forums of borderland vigilantes organised by borderland security agencies on borderland management related issues and core worries. Borderland security agencies agreed to collaborate specific with vigilantes to secure the borderland area. Operationally, with an initial logistics support of 500 Cfa, the joint borderland vigilantes and security agencies patrol was able to controlled the cattle rustling and other livestock related crises. This was equally replicated in Bissau-Guinean villages of Bonco and Fajonquito, where many cattle rustlers and forest plunderers were tracked-down and arrested.

Within the West African sub-region, the works of Anderson, O’Dowd and Wilson (2003); Saibou and Cisse (2007), highlighted “*How mainstreaming of traditional techniques of peace-making and socio-cultural solidarities in the reinforcement of social bonds and integration of Fulani Communities*”. The Bobofing borderland communities on the Mali-Burkina Faso Sikasso area, Gambia-Senegal borderland communities and that of Guinea Bissau borderland communities had attained sustainable borderland management, respectively. The study considered traditional nobilities, customary chiefs, religious authorities and other patriarchal bodies as determinants to borderland management. Local councillors, civil societies and so on, served as mediators and facilitators in the mainstreaming process. The resultant effects were control on drug trafficking, illegal exploitation and trafficking of persons and forest products and most importantly, fraudulent trades. As Senegalese Gendarmerie Commander puts it, it has enhanced “cooperation on law and order, keeping trade and traffic control, criminality, and judiciary coordination of some investigations, and most of the time we meet our ends”.

Nigeria’s neighbour Niger launched Borderland Community Engagement, a Border Management Mechanism of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2017) strategy funded by the United States with USD 990,000. This supported the Government of Niger in developing the collaborative capacities of national police and borderland security forces with borderland communities of Diffa and Zinder situated near Niger’s southern border with Chad and Nigeria respectively. Predominantly rural and extremely vulnerable to borderland insecurity due to climate change and insurgencies, the strategy contributed immensely to better collaboration, cooperation and coordination in response to borderland management crises between borderland communities and borderland law enforcement agencies. In recent times, the government of Niger sees these communities as key actors in borderland management, and believes that an efficient coordination between all parties is essential for overall security, stability and peace in Niger. “Security at the borderland is key in Niger. This strategy had reinforced the preparedness of key actors and their coordination,” said Loprete, (2017), Chief of Mission of IOM Niger.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

This paper is underpinned by the Functionalist theory propounded by Jones (1967) as a reaction to the failure of the structuralism (traditional) approach to borderland management. Functionalism is premised on the fact all aspects of a society- institutions, roles, norms, *etc* serve



a purpose and that all are indispensable for the long-term survival of the society. Functionalism also postulates that all cultural or social phenomena have a positive function and that all are indispensable. However, any process or set of conditions that does not contribute to the maintenance or development of the system is said to be dysfunctional. In particular, there is a focus on the conditions of stability, integration, management and effectiveness of the social system. The relevance of this theory to the paper lies on its applicability to borderland management practices as borderland communities still adopt their indigenous management structures as indispensable for the survival of the communities. A scenario viewed by the functionalists as continuity of a “culturally bounded borderland activities” a permanent non-state system for coordinating their borderland management activities.

Putting functionalist theory into perspective indicates that a social system is assumed to have a functional unity in which all parts of the system work together with some degree of internal consistency where mutual inclusiveness is promoted. Jones (1967) maintains that, this approach is principally concerned with what happens around the borderland itself and how this affects borderland management. Reckoning with the sociological and anthropological antecedence of the borderland community practices provides the institutional framework for mainstreaming the informal but relevant indigenous activities into borderland management. The suitability of the functionalist approach to this paper lies in the perspective that up-bottom approach had failed, the ignored bottom-up, local functional practices are options that can be employed and resulted to (mainstreamed) proving a more sustainable mechanism for borderland management.

### **3. Methodology**

The nature of subject matter of this paper necessitates the use of secondary data where scholarly expositions and official documents such as Federal Constitution of Nigeria, 1999 as amended; Border Communities Development Agency Act, 2003; African Union Border Programme, 2017; International Organisation for Migration, 2017; UN-World Bank Report, 2018; National Border Management Strategy, 2019 are correlated, synthesized and presented in a logical sequence. This enabled us to analyse descriptively, the contentious nature of borderland management system.

### **4. Result**

#### *Discussion*

Chronicling of the Nigeria’s quest for sustainable borderland management depicts a three-stage of borderland management cycle- the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial eras, respectively. The pre-colonial stage had native borderland communities with local patterns autonomy of managing their borderland. This indigenous borderland management consisted of their intimate knowledge of the terrain and its geographical dispositions, farming, fishing, trading including also criminal gangs’ routes and movements (Bersin, 2012). These facilitated sustainable borderland management that guaranteed the famous trans-Saharan trade. However, as Nugent (1996) explains, the effects of the Berlin Conference (1884/85) “*Scramble for Africa*” distorted borderlands in Africa, generally. Borderland communities spliced apart ethnic and social groups and the existing local patterns of autonomy altered significantly. The emerged



borderland became manageable and source of crises between communities and borderland control agencies which metamorphoses into an ideological war forming a motion of binary distinctions of “here” and “there”, “us” and “them”, the “included” and the “excluded”. Borderland communities as first-line stakeholders who should be included were excluded, while those who should be excluded were included. A scenario that even after independence continued by the rectification and adoption of the principle of respecting all borderland as carved by the colonists, enshrined in the Resolution AHG/Res. 16 (I) of the OAU Charter of July 1964.

The report of Justice Aniagolu Tribunal of Inquiry into the 1980 *Maitatsine* violent riots that erupted in Kano and some other parts of northern Nigeria was among the earlier attempts by the federal government to take serious action on *Maitatsine* saga. The report attributed the uprising to the seemingly unmanned and poorly secured expansive and extensive area of the nation’s borderland. The tribunal recommended the creation of a Border Patrol Unit (BPU) in the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), (a unit hitherto not existing) and be well-equipped and funded, to ensure enhanced borderland security. The government issued a 'White Paper' that eventually created the BPU in 1983; to man 4,047 km borderland (Ekpemede, 2016). Similarly, despite waiting for twenty-three years to make a conscious attempt, the BPU have grossly underperformed in manning the expansive and extensive nation’s borderland system.

As envisaged by Gerstein, Atler, Davenport, Grill, Kadlec and Young (2018), the policy dilemma is that the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) does not practically address the vacuum created by non-mainstreaming of borderland communities in borderland management. Reviewing of BCDA 2006 Act, Part I, Section 1; the composition and establishment of the 28-member governing board responsible for the general policy guidelines and day-to-day administration of the Agency had no borderland communities’ representation. From the Vice-President of the Federation, who heads the Agency as the Chairman down to six members representing each of the six geo-political zones. Also, Part II, Section 3(d) titled the Functions and Powers of the Agency, conspicuously buttressed the weak collaboration between the Agency and borderland communities but emphatically encouraging stronger collaboration with National Boundary Commission (NBC) (Olujimi, 2010).

In the same vein, the recent 2019 National Border Management Strategy and Action, which aims at among others, enhancing national borderland security; ensures protection of citizens; further boost NIS’ effectiveness and efficiency in the nation’s borderland management; address the changing realities and new challenges of borderland policies and governance structures in Nigeria. There exists no formal framework for mainstreaming borderland communities into borderland management, despite the Reinforcing Social Harmony Clause Part II, Sub-section (3):

*NIS’ approach to border management will positively contribute to social harmony by: Continually strengthening the credibility of NIS with contiguous cross-border communities; deepening community contributions to managing borders in their home areas; further engaging cross-border cooperation; and*



*diminishing fears of migrants and backlash against them through highly competent and transparent approaches to border management.*

Though, the strategy was an outcome of wider consultations and deliberations of approximately 100 officials drawn from relevant ministries, departments, and agencies of government, non-state actors, stakeholders and civil society organisations working on border management in Nigeria (NIS, 2019). Majority of the participants were drawn from the public sector representing the government, only a fraction represented the non-state actors, civil society organisations and borderland communities. The lack of any formal framework to actualize the Reinforcing Social Harmony Clause clearly buttresses the fact that borderland community's presence and inputs were not only grossly insignificant but also immaterial.

Besides, there have been increased agitations and criticism of government and its borderland control agencies of non-mainstreaming borderland communities in borderland management (UN, 2018). This is in addition to the already compounded dearth of basic social amenities, infrastructures development, and lack of job opportunities for its teeming population by the borderland communities. This is despite the federal government attempt at addressing these agitations and criticisms by establishing through an Act of the National Assembly, the Borderland Communities Development Agency (BCDA) Act, 2003 (as amended by BCDA Act, 2006). In the words of the then Executive Secretary Numoipte Wills, the Agency is mandated to prepare and execute a comprehensive policy, projects, programmes of action for the development of the borderland communities, coordinate and monitor the activities of all relevant Ministries involved in implementations, among others. The Agency's mission is to work with State Border Commission's representatives from Nigeria's 21 borderland states. This developmental perspective was hopefully seen to ease pressure on government and its borderland control agencies as mentioned above (Otaru, 2016). Unfortunately, this effort remains passive and not delivering the desired effect, as it has not curtailed or lessened the agitations and criticisms of both developmental and non-mainstreaming perspectives.

Clearly, what is left for the 263 non-mainstreamed borderland communities, just like all other communities in Nigeria is the Community Policing of the Nigeria Police (NP). Ojukwu (2006) provides the initial insights on the concept of community policing as a cooperative framework between the NP and communities which have assisted in the war against criminals in Nigeria. A collaborative platform by the NP that recognised the traditional security institutions and the involvement of opinion leaders to win the battle against crime and criminality; an approach currently institutionalised by the National Assembly and assented to by the President in 2020. However, the 263 Nigerian borderland communities are unique and different with other non-borderland communities that have in place community policing.

In the views of Jańczak (2013), borderland communities over time have developed nuances for borderland management, that include responsibilities of each member relating to cross-border trade and movements, smuggling and smuggling routes, trafficking in persons and illicit goods, conflict resolution mechanisms, relationship between borderland communities and other entities





especially borderland control agencies. Despite being non-mainstreamed, borderland communities still continue to adopt their indigenous management in surmounting the disruptive impact of both the colonial and post-colonial dilemmas of borderland policies and governance structures (Adiwaju, 1984). A scenario viewed by the functionalists as continuity of a “culturally bounded borderland activities” a permanent non-state system for coordinating their borderland management activities (Olujimi, 2010).

Constitutionally, the borderland governance structures of Nigerian Immigration Service (a frontline agency with roles in borderland management as pertains to the movement of persons across the borderland); Nigeria Customs Service (NCS); Nigeria Police (NP Border Patrol); Department of State Security (DSS); National Agency for the Prohibitions of Traffic in Person and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP); National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA); National Agency on Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); National Boundary Commission (NBC) and so on, are saddled with the sole responsibility of borderland management in Nigeria (NIS, 2019). Inter alia, these agencies are to ensure the full implementation of all borderland management policies, regardless of the substance and quality of the policies in question. However, these institutions cannot go beyond their enabling policy hence, these institutions are underpinned by the non-mainstreaming (traditional) of borderland communities’ policies.

Besides been relics of colonial institutions, constitutionally; these instructions operate strictly with no realm of limping decentralisation reflecting the non-mainstreaming posture of the Exclusive List. This however, does not constitute the ideal global borderland governance structures which refer to the whole system of discharging functions within the framework of institutional culture of collaborating with civil societies and other non-state actors (Peter, 2016). This, as set out in the AU Constitutive Act (Articles 3-4) incorporates sets of shared values that stipulate the principles of democratic governance, democratic culture and popular participation, transcending mere management of the borderland to include rights and participations of borderland communities.

#### *Findings*

Based on discussions drawn mainly from secondary data, this paper found that, the dilemma with Nigeria’s borderland policies had its root in the ratification of the principle of respecting all borderlands as carved by the colonists enshrined in the Resolution AHG/Res. 16(I) of the OAU Charter of July 1964. Till date, the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) did not practically address the vacuum created by non-mainstreaming of borderland communities in borderland management system in the country. The effect of this is the distortion of the historic borderland communities’ internal autonomy and local patterns of managing their borderland, escalating the rate of disintegration and perpetual instability in the management of borderland communities.



## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the discussions and empirical evidences highlighted in the paper, we submit that a one-size-fits-all strategy of mainstreaming borderland communities may be less likely successful. Rather, approaches that account for the communities and their peculiarities must be factored in mainstreaming borderland communities into borderland management. However, a critical review of borderland management in Nigeria catalyses the imperative of mainstreaming borderland communities and the need for reshaping borderland policies and governance structures for attaining sustainable borderland management in the country.

Principally, the policy direction should recognise the 263 borderland communities as the most important stakeholder towards a more sustainable, secure and safe borderland management. This could make borderland management more cooperative, collaborative and enduring. Also, an appropriate institutional framework for mainstreaming borderland communities should focus on borderland governance structures that will implement the policy. Fundamentally, mainstreaming borderland communities will also require amending the constitutional provisions on borderland management by the National Assembly and for it to succeed, the National Assembly must establish the normative, institutional, operational, collaborative, financial, and control frameworks for mainstreaming borderland communities. The normative framework should incorporate all the broad-base issues for mainstreaming borderland communities in the vision, strategic goals and defining action plans as similarly captured in the Community Policing framework.

More importantly, the active leadership of the main agencies responsible for borderland management should intensify efforts to harmonise their operations with that of mainstreamed borderland communities. The agencies should conduct the necessary analyses and review of borderland issues in ensuring that the vision and priorities are well-defined at the policy initiation level; effectively planned, implemented and monitored to ensure strict compliance.

### *Limitations of the Findings and Guides for Future Study*

Although the findings of the paper appear more generic than specific, comparative studies should be undertaken by future researches to demystify the imperatives for mainstreaming the borderland communities and identify how other African countries achieved sustainable borderland management. Such comparative studies should exemplify how borderland communities' power brokers such as political, administrative, opinion, traditional, religious, business, and the vigilante groups are involved in formulating, implementing and evaluating the entire policy, programme and projects cycle of borderland management.

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