

## APPRAISAL OF PERSONNEL STRENGTH AND QUALITY IN CROSS RIVER STATE FORESTRY COMMISSION, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

Edet<sup>1</sup>, D. I., Nchor<sup>2</sup>, A. A. and Ekpe<sup>3</sup>, G. A.

### ABSTRACT

<sup>1</sup>Department of Forestry and Wildlife Technology, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria. <sup>2</sup>Department of Forestry and Wildlife Managements, University of Calabar, Nigeria. <sup>3</sup>Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management, Cross River University of Technology, Obubra Campus, Cross River State, Nigeria. E-mail: daniffer2003@yahoo.com

Despite the contribution of the forestry sub-sector to the socio-economic development of Cross River State, inadequate manpower and qualified personnel continue to be a bane in the sustainable management of forest resources of the State. An appraisal of staff strength of forestry personnel at the Cross River State Forestry Commission (CRSFC) was conducted in January 2016 to ascertain the level of manpower available to manage the forests estates of the state. Data were obtained from 2015 nominal roll, bulletins and other official documents obtained from the management of the CRSFC. Data obtained were analyzed with the frequency of counts, percentages and bar charts while the Food and Agricultural Organization staff ratio baseline for forest organizations was used to analyze the staff strength of the CRSFC. The manpower available showed that only 9.37% of the personnel constituted the present workforce. The manpower available for professional, technical, uniform and unskilled personnel was 37.70%, 45.37%, 13.91% and 3.18% respectively. Most personnel were males (75.23%) as against females (24.77%) while the majority (43.2%) of the staff was within 41 and 50 years. The rate of employment was low as only 109 personnel were employed between 2004 and 2015. The CRSFC is grossly understaffed and deficient in managing the forest estate of about 5,662.91km<sup>2</sup> due to insufficient professional, technical and uniform staff.

**Keywords:** Appraisal, CRSFC, personnel strength, professional, technical, uniform, unskilled

### INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and inadequate staffing have become a major problem in managing the various sectors of the Nigerian economy. The forestry sub-sector is not left out in this regard. Despite its overwhelming contributions, the sub-sector has manpower challenges in addressing the various problems of forest management in forest estates. At the passage of the forest laws in Nigeria in 1908 and the subsequent passage of other regional forest laws, certain forest areas were designated as forest reserves spanning through the mangrove, high rainforest to savannah. These areas (forest) remain the economic treasure house of the people who depend on these resources for their basic needs, commercial values and associated security (Falconer and Anold, 1989; Bada and Popoola, 2005).

The management of the forest estates (reserves) in Cross River State lies in the hands of forestry personnel at the Cross River State Forestry Commission (CRSFC). Forestry personnel are mandated to formulate and implement forest policies, enforce forest laws and develop forest resources. Other basic responsibilities of forestry personnel are to ensure efficient utilization of forest produce and services through guaranteeing economic viability and long-term social and environmental benefit, protection of forest biodiversity and associated values in forest management, ensure legal and customary rights of rural communities undertake forest assessment and monitoring as well as recognize timber certification requirement. Basically, the personnel of any given forestry establishment comprises professional, technical, uniform/vocational and support staff. The professional personnel are often the unit heads that carry out administrative duties. The technical personnel carry out specialized duties like surveys, demarcations, and inventories. The responsibilities of the uniform/vocational personnel include patrols, detection of offenses and prosecution of forest offenses in courts of laws. The support personnel perform unspecialized duties. Typical examples of support staff are clerical assistants, messengers, cleaners, labourers, drivers, etc.

The Cross River State Forestry Commission like most government establishments is faced with challenges probably orchestrated by unqualified forestry personnel placed in the position of forestry duties. In other instances, retired forestry staffs were not often replaced, and the taskforce on forestry was introduced, whose members usurped some of the functions of professional foresters in some aspects of log control and forest protection. Thus, taskforce members who are not professional foresters are having a challenging time understanding the impact of their activities on forest conservation. Rationalization of forest personnel, as well as other civil servants, has an appreciable impact on the working of forestry as this visualizes the extent of which the future of the forestry staff could be guaranteed. The situation changes the way in which people protect the forest estates, in some cases, attitudinal changes among the personnel have been introduced, replacing sustainable management with destructive harvesting through the connivance of illegal forest exploiters. In other instances, the increase in commercial values of forest products leads to their over exploitation (Falconer and Arnold, 1989).

Thus the shift towards a cash economy and quick way of making money have important implication in the way in which forest estates are managed.

Forestry establishments in most part of the developing world often suffer from inadequate staffing. In some instances where staffing is adequate, qualified manpower is always a problem. This scenario adversely affects forestry establishment by not meeting the basic duties of utilization, conservation, and restoration of the forest ecosystem. Thus, sustainable forest management becomes a failed dream in meeting the desires of the people. The existence of adequate number and qualified forestry staff in line with forest management objectives will ensure a smooth implementation of national forest policy. This will play a vital role in coordinating and monitoring forest programs as well as ensuring institutional development. The objectives of this study are therefore to evaluate the employment rate for the past twelve (12) years (2004-2015), determine the quality and number of staff as well as determine the gender and age of personnel in the Cross River State Forestry Commission. The findings of this study are expected to make important contributions to policy and planning issues because an understanding of staffing in combination with other factors is likely to address emerging challenges and opportunities in the forestry sub-sector. Furthermore, it could inspire other researchers to conduct further research on the issue as it shows how important staffing is to the development of forest estates.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was conducted at the Cross River State Forestry Commission (CRSFC), Calabar, as well as its operating zones in Cross River State. The state has a total land area of 23, 074 km<sup>2</sup> and lies approximately between latitude 05° 32' and 04° 27' North and longitude 07° 50' and 09° 28' East. The State is bounded to the West by Ebonyi and Abia States, to the East by Cameroon Republic and to the South by Akwa Ibom State and the Atlantic Ocean. The state has a rich and unique cultural heritage with an estimated population of about 2.89 million people according to the National Population Commission (2006). Cross River State lies within the tropical rainfall belt where rainfall is usually seasonal and at times very heavy. The climate of the State is humid tropical with an annual rainfall of between 1300-3000mm and mean annual temperature of 30°C, with an exception on the Obudu Plateau, where the climate is sub-temperate, with a temperature of 15 °C – 23 °C.

The vegetation of the area ranges from mangrove swamps, through the rainforest, to derived savannah, and montane parkland. Just as its rocks are diverse, so also are the mineral resource potentials of the State. There are sixteen (16) forest reserves in the state which cover a total area of 5662.91 km<sup>2</sup>. This area spreads through eighteen (18) Local Government Areas which constitute management units for the forest personnel, based on an individual area of jurisdiction. The management of the forest areas is the exclusive responsibility of the forestry establishment (FORMECU, 1999). The state owns all the forest reserves, formulate policy, manage the estate and figure ways to measure progress in forest activities. The communities within the reserves are entitled to a royalty from the accrued revenue from their area based on 1987 recommended sharing formula of 55%, 25% and 20% for state government, local council and forest regeneration fund (FAO, 1995). Secondary data was employed in the study to obtain information on staff strength of the personnel and trend of employment from the headquarters of the Cross River State Forestry Commission in Calabar. Records (nominal roll) and other documents on the management of forest estates were appropriately consulted during the data collection exercise.

Empirical norms of technical staff per management unit of forest reserve were developed by FAO (1970) as a common practice of estimating manpower requirement in forestry programmes and establishments. According to the norm, a staff ratio baseline of 3:12:48:120, for professional, technical, uniformed and unskilled/support staff respectively, is required to supervise a tropical forest reserve with an area of 300 km<sup>2</sup>. This implies that for a 100 km<sup>2</sup> of forest reserve, a ratio of 1:4:16:40 for professional, technical, uniformed/vocational and unskilled/support staff is needed for effective management of forest estates. Thus staff strength of the Cross River State Forestry Commission was compared with the staff ratio baseline of FAO (1970) as described by Kalu *et al.* (2009). Frequency and percentages of counts, as well as bar charts, were employed for data analysis.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Forest reserves under the supervision of the CRSFC**

There are sixteen forest reserves with a total area of 5,662.91 km<sup>2</sup> under the supervision of the Cross River State Forestry Commission. The expected number of staff categories in relation to each of the reserves is shown in Table 1. According to FAO (1970), one-hundred and eighty-three (183) personnel in the ratio of 3:12:48:120 for professional, technical, uniform and unskilled staff respectively are required to supervise a tropical forest reserve with an area of 300km<sup>2</sup>. Thus for 5662.91km<sup>2</sup> (protected forest estate of Cross River State), a total of 3458 personnel in a ratio of 61:227:906:2264 for professional, technical, uniform and unskilled staff respectively will be required to manage and protect the forest estates of Cross River State.

Table 1: List of forest reserves and their expected number of staff according to categories

Name of reserves	Degraded area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Forested area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Professional	Technical	Uniform / Vocational	Unskilled / Support	Total
Afi River FR (Boki LGA)	90.34	315.6	405.94	4	16	65	162	247
Agoi FR (Yakurr LGA)	28.5	15.88	44.38	1	2	7	18	28
Cross River North FR (Etung LGA)	89.93	56.12	146.05	1	6	23	58	88
Cross River South FR (Etung/Ikom LGA)	17.93	511.49	529.42	5	21	85	212	323
Ekinta FR (Akampka /Akpabuyo LGA)	102.49	9.39	111.88	1	4	18	45	68
Gabu FR (Yala LGA)	4.83	-	4.83	1	1	1	2	5
Ikrigon FR (Ikom LGA)	2.13	3.64	5.77	1	1	1	2	5
Lower Eyoung FR (Odukpani LGA)	20.89	-	20.89	1	1	3	8	13
Oban Block FR (Akamkpa LGA)	360.55	2513.68	2874.23	29	115	460	1150	1754
Ukpon FR (Obubra LGA)	75.15	205.72	280.87	3	11	45	112	171
Umon Ndealichi FR (Biase/Odukpani LGA)	77.78	24.53	102.31	1	4	16	41	62
Uwet Odot FR (Biase/Odukpani/Akamkpa LGA)	203.15	85.13	288.28	3	12	46	115	176
Yache FR (Yala LGA)	35.58	-	35.58	1	1	7	14	23
Okwangwo FR (Boki LGA)	16.94	454.62	471.56	5	19	75	189	288
Boshi FR (Boki LGA)	42.12	40.39	82.51	1	3	13	33	50
Calabar/Cross River Estuary FR (Akpabuyo/Bakassi/Calabar South LGAs)	12.41	246.0	258.41	3	10	41	103	157
Total	1180.72	4482.19	5662.91	61	227	906	2264	3458

## Staff strength and employment rate at the CRSFC

Table 2 shows the available and expected number of staff at the Cross River State Forestry Commission.

Table 2: Staff strength disposition at the CRSFC

Staff category	Strength (number) from present study	Expected Strength (number) according to FAO (1970)	Percentage (%) available
Political	7	-	-
Professional	23	61	37.70
Technical	103	227	45.37
Uniform/Vocational	126	906	13.91
Unskilled/Support	72	2264	3.18
Total (minus political staff)	324	3458	9.37

Source: CRSFC (2015)

It was revealed that professional cadre available was eighteen (23) instead of sixty-one (61), and this accounted for 37.70% of the expected number. In the case of technical cadre, one hundred and three (103) personnel were available accounting for 43.37% of the expected labour force. The uniform/vocational staff available was one hundred and thirty-three (126) personnel accounting for 13.91% of the expected number while unskilled/support personnel available was seventy-two (72) accounting for 3.18% of the expected number. On the whole, less than 10% (324 personnel) of the total number required (3458 personnel) is available, and this is grossly inadequate to manage the forest estates. Inadequate staffing in the forestry parastatal is not limited to Nigeria alone. Rao *et al.* (2002) found that one percent (1%) of Myanmar's Park had no staff at all, while forty percent (40%) had some staff but not enough to adequately perform management duties. Similarly, Singh (1999) reported that ten percent (10%) of India's National Park and thirteen percent (13%) of its wildlife sanctuaries did not have staff allocated to them. Inadequacy is, therefore, a widespread phenomenon in many forestry and wildlife establishments (Brandol *et al.*, 1998). The findings are also in consonance with the views of Adeyoju (2005) and Faleyimu *et al.* (2009) that the work force in the forestry sector in Nigeria is inadequate in size. This also has impact on weak institutional capacity as well as effective implementation of forest policy. For example, personnel of a forest service consist of all the staff whose primary duty is to ensure that forest estates are sustainably managed. These include professional, technical, uniform and other staff. The ability to manage forest estate hinges on the nature of human capital in terms of strength, full employment as well as relevant skills.

Seven political personnel were found on the nominal roll of the commission as shown in Table 2. The political personnel are just appointees or loyalists to the government in power. These appointees play a supervisory role and in most instances make use of task force that usurps the role of professional, technical and uniform staff. Political personnel or loyalists set up by government have been reported of aiding illegal forest tree fellers. According to Ehiagbonare (2008), the government can reverse the trend by making professionals head such bodies. In this way, forest conservation, effective monitoring, forest regeneration and environmental conservation can be appreciably handled. It is important to note that there has been no employment into the commission between 2010 and 2015 because of the embargo placed on employment by the Cross River State Government. This led to the total reduction of available staff. As shown in Fig. 1, there is reduction in overall staff strength of the Cross River State Forestry Commission from 420 personnel (FAO, 2003) to 324 recorded in this study. This was so because replacements were hardly made for personnel that retired, died, dismissed or transferred their services to other governmental ministries. However, the creation of the new "Green Police Unit" of the Forestry Commission by the Cross River State Government is expected to create more employment especially for the uniform cadre in the nearest future.

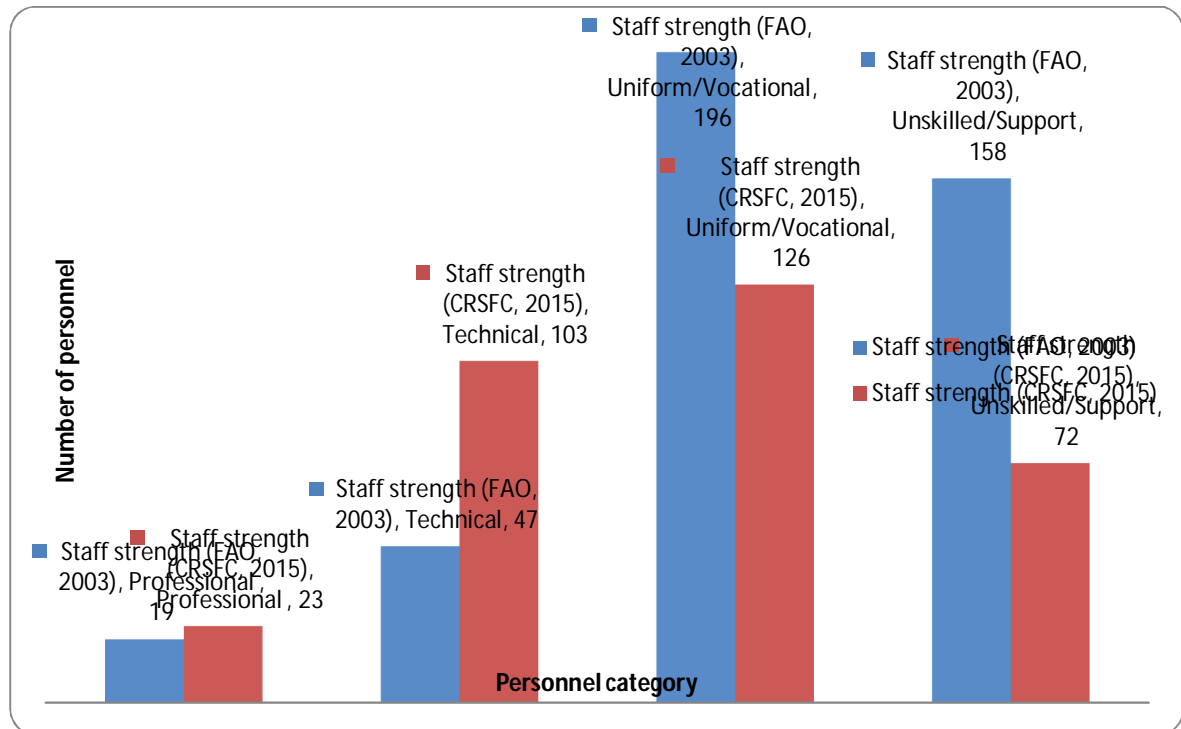


Fig. 1: Staff strength of CRSFC  
Source: CRSFC (2015) / FAO (2003)

Table 3: Employment rate for the past 12 years (2004-2015)

Years	Number of persons employed	Percentage (%) of total number of persons employed
2004-2006	50	45.87
2007-2009	59	54.13
2010-2012	-	-
2013-2015	-	-
Total	109	100.00
Average	9.08	8.33

CRSFC (2015)

Between 2004 and 2006, fifty (50) personnel were employed while fifty-nine (59) were employed between 2007 and 2009. This implies that for a period of twelve (12) years (2004-2015) only 109 personnel were employed. This gives an average of 9.08 (8.33%) personnel employed per year for that period. The highest number of employees (59) was recorded between 2007 and 2009, which accounted for 54.13% of the total number of personnel employed. The finding reveals an inadequate employment rate at the Cross River State Forestry

Commission. The reduction in manpower strength in the commission was due to retirements, deaths, dismissals and transfer of staff to other ministries and governmental agencies, and the resultant effect is reduction in manpower to carry out sustainable management of forest resources in and around forest estates.

#### Gender of personnel at the cross river state forestry commission

The staff strength of the Commission shows that there are more males than females (Table 4). Males accounted for 75.31% of the work force, while females accounted for 24.69% of staff strength at the Cross River State Forestry Commission. This gives a male / female ratio of 3:1, which is slightly below a ratio of 2:1 recorded by FAO (2003) for Cross River State. This implies that there is a decline in the number of females engaged in the forestry sub-sector to manage the government forestry estates in Cross River State between 2004 and 2015.

Table 4: Gender distribution of staff (excluding political staff) at the CRSFC

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	244	75.31
Female	80	24.69
Total	324	100.00

CRSFC (2015)

The implication is that women's role and representation in decision making that pertains to the forest sector are very limited in Cross River State. According to FAO (2006), thirty five percent (35%) of women income came from the forest compared to 22% of men's income. Thus more women are needed as forest managers to play advisory role that will cater for the forest needs of women in the area of study.

#### Age Distribution of Staff at the Cross River State Forestry Commission

Table 5 shows that age class 41-50 years which accounted for 44.14% dominated other age classes considered in the analysis. Age class of 61 and above was the least which accounted for 1.23% of the age classes considered.

Table 5: Age of Staff at the CRSFC

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21-30	22	6.79
31-40	91	28.09
41-50	143	44.14
51-60	64	19.75
≥ 61	4	1.23
Total	324	100.00

CRSFC (2015)

The average age of personnel in any given organization is directly proportional to productivity of that organization. Also, the age factor in any given organization is significant because of the wisdom that comes with age. As indicated in Table 3, 34.88% (6.79% + 28.09%) of the personnel are within the productive age range (21-40 years). This indicates that majority of the personnel of the Cross River State Forestry Commission are old and are not within the age bracket in which people are active at work, innovative and therefore cannot make meaningful contribution to forest resources management even if adequately motivated. According to Asiabaka (1998), only young, energetic and innovative people can contribute meaningfully to agricultural enterprises including forestry.

Number of personnel at the Cross River State Forestry Commission according to units

As shown in Table 6, the total number of personnel engaged in forest management, forest product utilization, agroforestry / extension services, forest conservation and wildlife conservation at the Cross River State Forestry Commission are 82, 58, 38, 118 and 28 representing 25.31%, 17.90%, 11.73%, 36.42% and 8.64% of total number of staff at the commission respectively.

Table 6: Number of Staff at the CRSFC according to units

Cadre	FM	FPU	AFE	FC	WC	Total
Professional	7 (30.43)	5 (21.74)	5 (21.74)	3 (13.04)	3 (13.04)	23 (100.00)
Technical	27 (26.21)	17 (16.50)	10 (9.71)	39 (37.86)	10 (9.71)	103 (100.00)
Uniform (vocational)	24 (19.05)	20 (15.87)	10 (7.94)	62 (49.21)	10 (7.94)	126 (100.00)
Others(Support)	24 (33.33)	16 (22.22)	13 (18.06)	14 (19.44)	5 (6.94)	72 (100.00)
Total	82 (25.31)	58 (17.90)	38 (11.73)	118 (36.42)	28 (8.64)	324 (100.00)

CRSFC (2015). Note: FM = Forest management, FPU = Forest product utilization, AFE = Agro-forestry and extension, FC = Forest conservation, WC = Wildlife conservation, Figures in parentheses ( ) are percentages

Thus the Cross River State Forestry Commission involves more of its personnel in forest conservation (36.42%) and forest management (25.31%) in the management of forest estates of Cross River State. These findings show that adequate participation in forest management has become an essential element in decision making that guides the survival of forest resources.

#### **Academic qualifications of personnel at the Cross River State Forestry Commission**

The academic background and experience of personnel is a critical factor for improving and maintaining the management effectiveness of the forest. Table 7 shows category of personnel by their academic qualification where 23 (4 M.Sc. + 19 B.Sc.), 103 (5 PGD + 58 HND + 39 OND + 1 NCE) and 198 (91 WASC/ GCE/ SSCE + 49 FG + 33 FSLC + 25 others) were recorded for professional, technical and Uniform/ Vocational/ other staff respectively.

Table 7: Manpower Disposition at CRSFC by Academic qualification

Category	Ph.D	M.Sc	B.Sc.	PGD	HND	OND	NCE	WASC/ GCE/ SSCE	FG	FSLC	Others	Total
Professional	-	4	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Technical	-	-	-	5	58	39	1	-	-	-	-	103
Uniform/ Vocational/ other staff	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	91	49	33	25	198
Political staff	1	1	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7

CRSFC (2015)

The implication is that there is low level of professionals compared to technical and Uniform/ Vocational/ other staff. This may be so because the institutions training professional staff in discipline of forestry in the state started graduating students from the year 2007. Some of the professional staff either read forestry or wildlife related courses (e.g. botany, zoology, environmental management, geography, etc) at the University of Calabar or read forestry in universities outside the state. Those who could not afford professional forestry education outside the state opted for technical and vocational forestry education at the Cross River State College of Agriculture, Iyamitet (later Ibrahim Babangida College of Agriculture, Ovonum) in Obubra Local Government Area of the State. This may be the major reason why 23 professionals, 103 technical staff and 198 uniform/vocational/other staff are on the nominal roll of the commission.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study revealed that the workforce in the Cross River State Forestry Commission was inadequate. It was observed that less than 10% of the personnel were available, indicating that the commission was grossly understaffed. The findings also showed that for every three males employed, only a female was employed at the Cross River State Forestry Commission. It was also observed that the age class 41-50 years dominated other age class in the personnel structure, indicating an over-aged workforce. However, it was also revealed that the Cross River State Forestry Commission from 2004 to 2015 employed 109 personnel. This is inadequate in carrying out sustainable management and conservation. The total land area of forest reserves in the state is about 5662.91km<sup>2</sup>, and the numbers of available staff are grossly inadequate to police this treasured estates.

The number of staff and their positions at the Cross River State Forestry Commission were grossly inadequate to perform and conduct critical management activities considering the rate of deforestation in the forest reserves. Therefore the following recommendations should be taken into consideration. To arrest the rate of deforestation and unsustainable management of the forest reserves, the Cross River State Government should ensure employment of adequate and qualified manpower at the Cross River State Forestry Commission. Considerable efforts could be made through training and job placement in both public and private sectors to enable more women to gain employments in the public sector and be effective forest managers and entrepreneurs as well as to enhance advocacy and depictive skills. There should be collaboration between the federal authorities, state, local government, and NGOs to develop realistic investment profile for private forestry. There was need for empowering the commission for effective operation, maintenance, management, and policy implementation through adequate funding.

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