

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Socio-Economic Development of Member States: Implications for Nigeria and Benin Republic

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Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a sub-regional international organisation of fifteen West African countries, established on 28 May, 1975 to promote economic integration among its members (Bassey, 2015). Its origin stems from a call made by President William Tubman of Liberia in 1964 for the integration of West African markets and trade. ECOWAS formally took off when fifteen West African countries signed the Lagos treaty for an Economic Community of West African States on the 28 May, 1975 (Bassey, 2015). To translate the vision of socio-economic integration and sustainable development of the West African sub-region through the ECOWAS into reality, a protocol was created in Lagos, Nigeria in 1978. The Lagos Treaty recognises free movement of persons, right

of residence and establishment, liberal transport and telecommunication linkages amongst member states. Other thrusts of the ECOWAS protocol are trade liberalisation, monetary cooperation, synergy in the energy and power sector and the establishment of the ECOWAS Court of Justice (ECOWAS, Treaty, 1978). With the withdrawal of Mauritania in 2000, the remaining ECOWAS member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (Raji, 2015). Out of the above mentioned fifteen member countries of the ECOWAS, five are Anglophone (English speaking) while nine are Francophone (French speaking) and the remaining two are Lusophone (Portuguese speaking). The sub-region has a geographical areas of about

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6.5million kilometres with an estimated population of about 217 million people as of 2004 (Atlas, Map of Africa, 2005). However, Nigeria remains the core state in the ECOWAS and the West African sub-region in terms of population and economic size. With about 115 million people (Atlas Map of Africa, 2014) the country has the largest population and the largest market in the sub-region.

As indicated earlier, Nigeria and Benin Republic are members of the ECOWAS, and are neighboring countries that shares common borders, people and historical ties. Both countries rely on their closeness to create opportunities that could benefit them in the economic, social and the political sectors through the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development of member states. However, the extent to which the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of goods, persons and services has benefitted the two countries has not been adequately captured in the literature. This paper intends to fill the gap by assessing the extent to which the two countries have explored the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of persons, goods and services for mutual benefits. In the course of carrying out this task, the paper traces the origin of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol, discusses the main thrust of the protocol, and examines the extent to which the protocol has benefitted Nigeria and Benin Republic within the confines of their bilateral Relations. The methodology of the study tilts towards qualitative approach, thus, information for the study is sourced from written materials such as textbook, journals and unpublished materials on ECOWAS and other relevant materials.

Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms are operational in the paper:

ECOWAS

This is a regional economic development institution of fifteen West African countries with the mission of promoting economic integration across the sub-region.

Protocol

A document that describes the details of a treaty or formal agreement between countries. It implies the rules that explain the correct conduct within an organisation and procedures to be followed in formal relationship amongst participating countries towards the promotion and protection of goods and services for their socio-economic development.

Socio-Economic Development

This is a visible manifestation of improvement in income, wealth and modernisation of an entity. It is the presence of social, economic and political policies, which increase the quality of life.

Review of Related Literature

The ECOWAS Protocol revolves around three critical integrative efforts amongst member states, which borders on free movement of people, goods and services amongst ECOWAS citizens (Oyediran, 2002). The Protocol, which was adopted in phases, includes the 1979 Protocol relating to free movement of persons, residence and establishment and the 1986 Supplementary Protocol on the Second Phase that recognises right of residence by ECOWAS citizens in any member state. There is also the 1990

Supplementary Protocol on the Implementation of the Third Phase, which borders on the right of the citizens of the community to establish businesses in any country within the community (Raji, 2015). These protocols were intended to replicate the pre-colonial homogeneous society wherein, West Africans freely traversed the region without hindrances (Adepoju, 2002). The 1975 Treaty of ECOWAS as revised in 1993 removes all obstacles to the free movement of persons and grant the right of residence and establishment to citizens of ECOWAS in order to achieve one of the objectives of the revised treaty, which was the creation of a common market (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). As part of ECOWAS plans to achieve cohesiveness among societies, the in situation relies on legal instrumentation to create an enabling environment which would facilitate the free movement of persons within the region. As opined by Adepoju (2005), human mobility has been recognised as an inherent component for the development of societies around the world. Therefore, creating an enabling environment for the free movement of persons within the ECOWAS has not only enhanced cohesiveness but also aided the development of societies within the region.

Piano and Riggs (1967) opined that West Africa, as an underdeveloped sub-region suffers from chronic and mass poverty, its topography and climate limits its potentials, its uncontrolled population threatens to outstrip economic growth, its colonial background induces contemporary conflicts, its illiteracy is high, its competitive position in world trade is poor, and politically unstable. These human and environmental conditions reflect nothing but despair for the sub-region. The above negative developments indicators are however, counter balanced by the

overriding urge to develop through the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development.

On the issue of Socio-economic interaction between Nigeria and Benin Republic, Akapo (1991) posit that socio economic relation can be beneficial to both countries if economic interaction between them set the pace of co-operation by agreeing to declare their border areas as special economic cooperation zones, where mutually benefitting economic activities are promoted among the citizen of the both countries in border towns such as Illela, konni, Benin-Nigeria-Chad around Borno, amongst others. Such a policy, the author argues, will quickly create a climate of understanding based on mutual economic interest between the two countries. The effect of a growing official trade between Nigeria and Benin Republic could be replicated in other West African countries in order to reduce tension between them and eliminate cross border incursion by law enforcement agents of one country into the territory of others in pursuit of "law breaking trader", as often witness along Nigeria-Chad, Nigeria-Cameroun, Nigeria-Niger, Nigeria-Benin borders. Also, (Abioro, 1991) argued that for a mutually rewarding socio economic relations to be firmly rooted in Nigeria and Benin Republic, their governments need to experiment with a free trade along their common borders for at least one or two years, to see the extent to which, such economic policy would benefit both countries. The author argued further that if all stringent measures on entry into the two neighbouring countries are relaxed, smuggling would be reduced and revenue accruing to the two countries would increase.

Imobigbe (1991) advocates special cooperation arrangement amongst ECOWAS

member states along the international borders, with the aim of minimising conflicts between the affected States because most of security problems striding on national border are not easily amenable to unilateral individual State solution. The scholar concluded that despite the joint security collaboration between Nigeria and Benin to curtail crime, the problem of unabated smuggling activities, illicit trafficking in currency, hard drugs and arms as well as stolen vehicles persists across the borders of the two countries due to ethno-cultural linkages and high poverty rate amongst the inhabitants of both sides of the border, a negative development that has created the tendency to condone criminal activities by the border communities. Rather than being helpful to ensure that criminals are arrested, the border communities often connive with such criminals to work against the effort of security agents because of the financial inducement from the latter.

Idris (2008) argues that lack of adequate security collaboration is a source of concern for within Nigeria and Benin borders. The author affirms that optimal joint security patrols by the two countries could in no small measure promote the security of their borderlands. He pointed out that, where the problem lies, is on the lukewarm attitude of authorities in Benin Republic towards full compliance with the ECOWAS policy on outright ban on smuggling activities as they hardly check smugglers from Benin Republic as done in Nigeria. The bad state of roads network, inadequate communication equipment for the security operatives, lack of joint training, inter-marriages and socio-cultural and political activities among the borderlands communities all serve as frictional forces to the success of the joint security patrol within Nigeria and Benin borders.

An appraisal of the review of related literature clearly indicated that a lot of empirical researches actually exist with respect to ECOWAS protocol on movement of people, goods and services. However, only very little of these studies adequately focused on the ECOWAS Protocol on the socio-economic relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic. This study intends to bridge this gap by studying the extent to which Nigeria and Benin Republic has explored the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development for the mutual benefits of both countries.

Theoretical Framework

The Functionalist theory of development is adopted for this study. Functionalism focuses on areas of common interests shared by state and non-states actors in the process of integration amongst states within the international system. In this context the theory advocates functional cooperation amongst different entities, especially in the technical, or other related areas in order to facilitate development among nation-states (Sewell, 1966). The theory, thus, puts more emphasis on the need for collaboration amongst the parties in an integration process. Apart from the works of scholars like Emile Durkheim (Talcott Parsons, 1970) and (Robert R. Merton, 1996), functionalism was greatly influenced by the works of David Mitrany. As noted by Mitrany, through functional cooperation, the development of collaboration in one technical field could lead to cooperation and diversification to other areas of functional cooperation. Mitrany posits that functional collaboration in one sector results from a felt need, and generates the need for functional collaboration in other sectors. Thus, the effort to create a common

market, give rise to pressure for collaboration on pricing, transport, tax wage etc. Mitrany assumes that functional activity could re-orient international activity and contribute to world peace

The outbreak of the World War I and II made Mitrany conclude that nation state is lacking in its ability either to preserve peace or to improve the social and economic well-being of the citizens. Conflict and war according to him spring from the division of the world into separate and competing national units. As an alternative to conflict, Mitrany suggested "the gradual creation of a transnational web of economic and social organisation and the remoulding of attitudes and allegiances to make the masses of people more amenable to international integration through functional cooperation amongst nations (Dougherty and Pfalzraff, 1981).

The key element in functionalism is the belief that international conflict can be diminished by the establishment of international welfare agencies manned by experts who, it is presumed, would be devoted to achieving their tasks on the basis of expert criteria, rather than on the acquisition of power. Another basic premise of functionalism is that human beings are fundamentally rational and that they see the advantages of harmony over conflict in social relations and they can control their destiny through the evolutionary steps that will lead to a peaceful world.

The main assumption of functionalism according to Amonou (1981) is that economic self-interest has become more important than ideological commitment and had brought about economic ties across national boundaries. The above assumption is indeed a reality as Nigeria and Benin relate economically despite their different colonial

orientations. The theory also posited that peaceful change would come not through a shift of national boundaries but by means of action taken across them. Societies and nations depend on each other for some needs and services. This assumption is also related to this paper as Nigeria and Benin Republic depend on each other for certain needs and services. Another logical conclusion of the theory is that for society to be integrated, people within it must share basic beliefs and values and must belief in themselves as members of one country, which need the support of other countries for her socio-economic development. Such believes leads to co-operation, and socio-economic interdependence amongst nations. This assumption rightly align with the people of Nigeria and Benin Republic as they share similar belief system, value and cultural heritage and are therefore formally and informally integrated for the citizens of the two countries could benefit from.

Bilateral Relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic

Nigeria and Benin Republic have a long standing bilateral-relation despite the fact that the countries were ruled by different colonial powers. Apart from the fact that both countries are members of ECOWAS they also share many things in common such as extensive trade contacts and cultural relations between various people of the two countries stretching from old Oyo Empire to Dahomey even before the arrival of the colonial masters (Akhigbe, 1991). For example, in 1730, Agaja of Dahomey (now Benin Republic) sent one of his ambassadors with large presents of coral together with his handsome son to the Alafin of Oyo to learn Yoruba tradition. In return, the Alafin also sent one of his daughters as wife for Agaja as

an expression of good neighborliness (This Day, 1999). Nigeria and Benin had a long history of interaction, spanning all areas of human endeavour. The states trade with one another in farm produce and handcraft, inter-marriage was not uncommon while mutual participation in cultural festivals, religious ceremonies is an integral part of their relations (Oyeode, 1991). The Beninois people migrated from the Aja state of Southwest Nigeria in the 15th century and settled in Abomy and Porto-Novo (Oyeode, 1991). These people were originally of Yoruba stock. But on arrival, the settlers began to evolve a peculiar character and language. By 1625 a kingdom was formed out of the much chiefdom and was named Dahomey under king Dako.

Before the balkanisation of the African continent in 19th century, there were extensive contacts and cultural relations between various people within West Africa, stretching from the Old Oyo Empire westward, up to Ouagadugu in Burkina Faso (Akhigbe, 1991). The colonial arrangement that arose from the balkanisation gave sovereignty to nation-states to what used to be homogeneous physical, cultural and geographical entities. The Nigeria and Benin border demarcation was not an exception of this development. The present distribution of Yoruba groups on both sides of Nigeria-Benin states is the result of colonial partition of 1885 (Soumoni 1991). The partitioning exercise broke the Yoruba kingdoms and shared the communities between France and Britain, creating in the process, a border or barrier where one never existed. Thus, the Nigeria-Benin boundary; like many parts of Africa is a legacy of colonial imposition. Benin (formerly Dahomey) is one of Nigeria's contiguous neighbouring Francophone states. On attainment of independence of the two

countries in 1960s, the boundary became Nigeria-Dahomey international boundary and later Nigeria-Benin boundary. This artificial colonial demarcation divided people of same social and cultural background into two colonially created countries. The traditional rulers in both countries have always refused to accept their colonial balkanisation as a barrier for their socio-economic interactions. For instance in 1982, the Onisabe of Sabe and Alaketu of Ketu, all of Benin Republic were invited by the Ooni of Ife as the chairman of Oyo state council of Obas in Nigeria to deliberate on how to develop the Yoruba nation. Thus, the two Beninese traditional rulers were given opportunity to take part in council deliberations in the country other than theirs. Also in 1983, the Ooni paid a royal visit to Alaketu in Benin Republic on how to create unity amongst the Yoruba in Nigeria and Benin (Soumoni, 1991). It is a well known fact that Yoruba speaking people who are of Ogun and Oyo state in Nigeria are also found in border areas of Benin Republic (Omemben, 1991). The people of Badagry division are mainly the Egun-speaking people who have direct cultural affinity with the Aja-speaking people of Benin Republic. The language, culture and traditional administration of the people on either side of the border are identical. The people inter-marries and participate in the same cultural festivals while in some communities such as the Egun community, inhabitants live in Nigeria and their farms are in Benin Republic. And this makes identification of who is a Nigerian from a Beninoise almost impossible (Akhigbe, 1991).

The border communities in old Sokoto state such as Kamba, Argungu, amongst others, and their counterparts in Benin also have a common cultural heritage (Daku, 1991).

Their ties date back to the pre-colonial era. The cultural relation is also applicable when village heads and district heads are being installed as invitations are extended to the traditional rulers of both sides to witness the events. The following languages are spoken on both sides of the Nigeria-Benin borderlands: Egun, Yoruba, Baatonu (Bariba), Dendi, Busa (BOKO), Hausa, Fulfulde (Fulani) and Zarma. These trans-national languages are means of communication for socio-economic transaction by both countries. Except at the border post, the use of the European languages rather than the local languages in the local market is uncommon. The socio-cultural relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic are equally clearly evidenced by the behavior of the Gun people of Badagry who remained culturally conservative due to contiguous location with the original cultural area in Porto-Novo. The Gun people of Badagry and Port Novo shared common culture such as religion, language socio-political arrangement and even patterns of their settlement (Dioka, 1991). The Yoruba Gun and Bariba ethnic groups are found not only in Benin Republic but also in Nigeria. These groups relate more with each other than with other ethnic groups in their respective countries. For instance, the Alaketu in Republic of Benin is regarded as paramount ruler by all Ketus regardless of what part of the border they fall in. To demonstrate the extent of the socio-cultural ties between the two countries in 1978, the former Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo visited the Republic of Benin in his official capacity and addressed the audience in Yoruba language. The historical linkages between the two countries have over the years evolved and maintained as an informal system of cooperation to assist each other and their

citizens in different dimensions of socio-economic development.

The Economic Community of West African States protocol on Socio-Economic Development

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos on 28 May, 1975 (Adedeji, 1999). The economic institution was envisaged as a Community within the West African sub-region where the constituent member states would pursue common goals and objectives for mutual relevance, joint rewards, common responsiveness and a generalised loyalty for common good of all the Communities' citizens (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). ECOWAS headquarters is in Abuja, Nigeria. With the withdrawal of Mauritania in 2000, the remaining ECOWAS member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Five of the fifteen member countries of the ECOWAS are Anglophone (English speaking) while nine are Francophone (French speaking) and the remaining two are Lusophone (Portuguese speaking). The aims and Objectives of ECOWAS include the following:

- (a) To promote co-operation and development in all field of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial issues, social and cultural matters, for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its people and fostering relations among its members as well as contributing to

the progress and development of the African continent;

- (b) To eliminate custom duties and other charges in respect of the importation of goods between member countries;
- (c) To abolish administrative restrictions on trade among member states; to establish a common custom tariff and a common commercial policy towards third world countries;
- (d) To abolish all obstacles towards free movement of persons, goods, capital and services;
- (e) To harmonise the agricultural policies and the promotion of common projects within the members states, notably in the fields of marketing, research and agro allied industrial enterprises;
- (f) To implement schemes for the joint development of transport, communication, energy and other infrastructural facilities as well as the evolution of a common policy in these fields; and
- (g) To establish fund for co-operation, compensation and development among other objectives.

Since its creation in 1975, ECOWAS has made efforts to achieve integration in the political, economic, social, security and other areas. One of its notable efforts in this regard is the introduction of the protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services.

The Main thrust of the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development was designed to deal with the complex problem of linking the political economy of member

states for mutual benefits on socio-economic matters. The essential programmes that ECOWAS put in place to achieve the socio-economic development of the sub-region include free movement of persons, Right of residence and establishment, transport and Telecommunication. Others are Trade liberalisation, monetary cooperation, Conflict resolution, Energy and power and ECOWAS Court of Justice.

Article 2 of ECOWAS protocol states that "Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of member-states by giving a maximum transitional period of fifteen years to abolish all obstacles to free movement of persons and the right of residence and establishment. The programme was to be achieved in 3 phases:

- (a) Phase I - Right of entry and Abolition of visa.
- (b) Phase II - Right of Residence.
- (c) Phase III - Right of Establishment (ECOWAS, 2003).

In order to ease the movement of its citizens for the socio-economic development of the West African sub-region, ECOWAS introduced a common sub-regional passport in May 2000, though member-states have been very slow in the implementation of the ECOWAS passport as only the Republic of Benin, Senegal and Nigeria have introduced the programme.

Implications of the ECOWAS Protocol on Socio-Economic Development for Nigeria-Benin Republic Bilateral Relations

The ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development essentially focused on free movement of persons, goods and services

amongst member states. The implementation of this protocol over the years has benefitted both Nigeria and Benin republic. Apart from the traditional historical ties between them, both countries were foundation member of the ECOWAS who are signatories to the above protocol. The two trans-West African highway networks connecting Nigeria and Benin Republic along Mali and Burkina Faso that were proposed in 1978 have been completed, and these roads connect the two countries for easy movement of goods and persons. The ECOWAS Railways project connecting the cities and ports of Lagos and Cotonou along Lome and Accra allows for the movement of goods and services across the two countries. The two countries have been using ECOMARINE transport, which is a private shipping company in Ghana but in partnership with ECOWAS to facilitate easy movement of their citizens and goods. The Virgin Nigeria and Arik Airline are operating regular flights from Lagos to Benin Republic to facilitate quicker business engagement between Nigeria and Benin Republic. The INTELCOM has been established to link Nigeria and Cotonou directly for quicker ICTS connection between the two countries, thus making it possible to connect the two capitals by automatic telephone and telex links for quicker socio-economic interactions between the two countries. Citizens within Nigeria and Benin Republic do not need to route their telephone calls through Europe to get one another anymore, as was the case before.

There are about 25,000 Nigerians studying in Benin Republic who spends their weekend in Lagos because of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons (Raji, 2010). The manner at which the people flow or move freely makes the border demarcation

between the two countries by their erstwhile colonial masters ineffective. Citizens of the two countries conduct their social and economic activities without much restriction. In fact, people from one side of the border have their farms extended to the other side without any recourse to their formal colonial boundary. This brotherhood and cordial relations between the two states served as one of the stimulants of enhancing Nigeria-Benin relations, and by extension enhancing their socio-economic development.

The historical, socio-cultural and economic relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic have continued to serve as the main factors influencing interactions and cordial bilateral relationship between the two countries. Such functional interaction has also created socio-economic interdependency and as a morally binding force for the two countries to live in peace with each other. Such socio-cultural and economic ties have led to relative economic integration, one by-product of which the establishment of a joint sugar company by Nigeria and Benin Republic. Such functional economic ties have also enhanced creativity, free flow of goods and services, opportunity for employment, wider market access and wealth creation between the two countries. Intermarriages and cross border film making in Benin Republic; and vice versa, are other key socio-cultural factors that have accounted for the daily interaction, socio-cultural relations and links between the two countries and key factors that continues to keep the two states united. Thus, there is virtually no individual around the borderland in Nigeria or in Benin that is without a relation, friend or business partner across each other's border. People cross the border frequently from either side to attend social functions on regular basis. At the

Nigeria and Benin border post, it is easy to observe the movement of men, women and children in cars, on motorcycles and bicycles crossing their national boundary and blending with citizens of the other country due to shared socio-cultural ties and common language; Yoruba, between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Many security operatives in the area recognise most of the people who engaged in regular movement. This could easily be understood by the ways and manners in which people of the two countries and border officials cordially engage in friendly and familiar interaction without hitches. Many of those crossing the border in the area have no passport or pass; rather they are allowed to cross only at the discretion of the immigration officials because they feel it is difficult and futile to attend to break the socio-cultural ties amongst the citizens of the two countries.

Many local boundary markets exists amongst citizens of the two countries, including Badagry in Nigeria and Port-Novo, Ajara and Topa in the Republic of Benin. The Aja-speaking people of both countries and other citizens commonly patronise those border markets. (Bimbola, 2002). Another important socio-economic activity that serves as a central trust of the socio-economic relations between the two states is the legal and illegal importation of Tokumbo cars from Cotonou to Nigeria. A week does not pass without over one hundred cars coming in through Benin border to Nigeria (Custom Report, 2016). Transportation business is another means of enhancing the cross-border activities and socio-economic development between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Thus, both private and commercial transportation businesses, including motorcycles, cars and trucks commute people and goods on daily basis with virtual restriction. The commercial

movement of good and services across the Nigeria-Benin borders is more prominent on markets days. Local revenue collectors are stationed there for levying the goods coming in from Benin and vice-versa on market days. Non-ECOWAS country drivers collect border-pass before proceeding. Such pass contains detailed information from such driver, his/her direction of movement, among others. The Safe Sugar Company was incorporated as a bilateral business partnership between Nigeria and Benin Republic in July, 1975 with the sum of 30 million Dollars (ECOWAS, 2013). Benin has 49 percent of the share while Nigeria has 46 percent and the technical partners; ECOWAS Commission on Trade and Investment has 6 percent. The company is being administered by a Board of Directors which consists of members from Nigeria, Benin and the representative of the Technical partners (Adeyemi, 1991).

The second company jointly owned by Nigeria and Benin is the Onigbolo Cement Company, the contract which became effective in August, 1979. The business partners in company are Benin Republic with 51percent shares, Nigeria; 43 percent shares and the technical partners 5 percent. The company is also administered by a Board of Directors which is made up Beninoise, Nigerians and representatives of the technical partners (Adeyemi, 1991).

Also, in 1988, the two countries made move to privatise the sugar company as a result of poor management which makes it difficult for them to profit from the company. In line with the spirit of privatisation the management of the company was transferred to Olusegun Obasanjo and Bain Codjia of Benin Republic to facilitate the privatisation, process (*Punch*, 1988). In 2002, the two countries established a joint chamber of

commerce to formalise trade relations between the two countries as the trade between the two countries has been informal without any proper record (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2002). Also, in 2007, Nigeria and Benin Republic, along Togo signed memoranda of understanding on economic integration of the three countries to facilitate the economic development of the three countries which shared many things in common before their separation by colonial boundaries (*ThisDay*, 2007). All the above socio-economic ties between Nigeria and Benin Republic pointed to the fact that the people and governments of the two countries have use the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development to advance the national interests and foreign policy objectives of both countries. The border communities also share limited facilities provided by governments on the one side of the boundary by kinsmen from other side of the border. For instance, health centre at Imeko in Nigeria provide services for patients including those coming from Ketu and related settlements in Benin republic and vice-versa.

The above functional cooperation between Nigeria and Benin Republic demonstrates the commitment of not only the people but the leaders of both countries to the re-integration process of the people divided by colonial boundary. The ability of the people to tolerate each other in the use of facilities provided by the governments irrespective of which part of the state one belongs confirmed that the artificial countries created by the colonial masters did not completely erode the feeling of togetherness among the governments and citizens of Nigeria and Benin Republic.

Nigeria has over the years extended financial assistance to Benin Republic especially during her difficult times. In 1972, Nigeria

granted N2,000,000 interest free loans and a gift of \$2,5000.00 to Benin in 1989 for the country to pay her outstanding workers' salaries (Dahiru, 2003). In a nutshell, the economy of Benin is virtually tied to Nigeria.

The interaction between the two borderland communities helped in alleviation of poverty of the members of the two communities, as they are increasingly becoming engaged in trading they now visit different markets in Nigeria and Benin to purchase goods for onward distribution to consumers. The result of increase in interaction on socio-economic activities amongst the citizens of Nigeria and Benin Republic has complemented to some extent, the efforts of the two states at creating job for their citizens while also increasing the revenue capacity of both governments. The border communities also share limited facilities provided by governments on the one side of the boundary by kinsmen from other side of the border. For instance, health centre at Imeko in Nigeria provide services for patients including those coming from Ketu and related settlements in Benin republic and vice-versa.

From the above studies, it is obvious that Nigeria and Benin Republic enjoys good socio-economic relations, using the platform of the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development of member country. The platform has been used to create some measure of sustainable development in both countries. However the benefit in trade relationship between the two countries is mostly shifted towards the Benin Republic, this is because more goods from latter are brought into Nigeria more than Nigeria goods allowed into Benin Republic. Nigeria also bears much of the burden of making the bilateral relationship between the two countries functional because of her advantages

of having more human and financial resources than Benin Republic.

Apart from the positive implications of the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development for Nigeria-Benin Republic bilateral relations as stated above, the bilateral relations between the two countries also have their own negative implications for both countries. Smuggling across Nigeria - Benin border is the second-largest foreign earners for Benin apart from cotton (Asobebe, 2003). The illegal cross border activities between the two countries has contributed towards undermining the effort of Nigerian productive sectors, especially the agriculture sector owing to the inflows of foreign agricultural and industrial commodities from Benin Republic, which are highly subsidised than what is locally produced in Nigeria. For instance, over 100,000 bags of rice are imported on weekly basis from Benin Republic through Nigeria-Benin borders to Nigeria for onward transportation to other parts of the country (Jibola, 2014). The foreign rice is highly patronised by Nigerians because it is relatively cheaper and of high process and nutritional qualities. For instance, a bag of rice which costs around Eighteen thousand naira in Nigerian markets is just twelve thousand naira or less in Benin.

Many of the cars that cross the Benin-Nigeria border posts do not have Duty but were allowed to pass after compromising the custom officials, which allow such smugglers to pass, not only with their cars but also with some prohibited items such as rice and textiles materials. Smuggling activities in the Nigeria-Benin borders have not only weakened many local industries in Nigeria but have also made the country to lose huge amount of revenue earnings due to smuggling activities. The bilateral relations between the two countries

within the socio-economic development of the ECOWAS protocol have equally undermined the national and international securities of both countries. It is estimated that over 20,000 cars were snatched by criminals in Nigeria between 2001 and 2013 and freely driven across the border to Benin Republic. In most cases, public officials and security personnel are riding some of the snatched cars while many of the armed robbers operating in the South-western Nigeria are from Benin Republic (Security Watch, 2014).

Other negative implications of the Niger-Benin Republic bilateral relations under the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development of member states is the deliberate dumping of goods and farm produce, such as tooth pick, sanitary products, juices, food crops, amongst others, from Benin Republic to Nigeria with its far reaching implications for the latter's local industries. Despite the Nigeria government's ban on these luxury products from Benin Republic to encourage local production, Benin Republic has continue to make this effort a near futility by encouraging or tolerating smuggling and dumping of these banned goods into Nigeria. Nigeria-Benin Republic border is also characterised by smuggling of crude oil and other oil products from Nigeria to Benin Republic, thereby creating hardships on Nigerians as well causing hardship on the country (*The Punch*, 2013). Corruption at the border posts between the two countries poses serious challenges to the socio-economic development of both countries. Corrupt tendencies amongst security officers in the Nigeria-Benin Republic borders also serve as a threat to internal security in Nigeria as the security personnel of both countries sometimes connived with smugglers to import prohibited Arms Ammunition.

ECOWAS Protocol on Socio-economic Development and the Challenges of Bilateral Relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic

Despite the fact that Nigeria and Benin Republic enjoys relative cordial relationship under the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development, the relationship is also characterised by disagreement and disputes. The expulsion of illegal citizens of Benin Republic, along other foreigners from Nigeria in 1983 and 1984 hurt the government of Benin Republic whose citizens are doing businesses in Nigeria. The latter country retaliated by also deporting about 3,000 Nigerians from their countries in 1985. The first major strain relationship between Nigeria and Benin had earlier been recorded in 1966 when the then President Zinsus of Benin Republic collaborated with the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) to use Cotonu Airport and seaport as transits for lifting relief materials to Biafra secessionists. Nigeria saw this action as a support for Biafra (Dahiru, 2003).

Another problem area in Nigeria-Benin relations was caused by the illegal detention of about 40 Nigerian business men by Beninoise security agents in 1999 for allegedly entering the country without valid documents. Their action is against chapter IV, Article 27(1) of the (ECOWAS) protocol on freedom of movement and residence, which permit citizens of ECOWAS member countries a residence permit of up to three months in countries other than theirs. In March, 1981 troops from Benin Republic occupied Nigerian villages in Sokoto state, particular in the district of Illo. The troops did not only forcefully collect taxes from Nigerians but also refused Alhaji Shehu

Kangiwa, the then Governor of Sokoto state, entry into the villages (*ThisDay*, 1997).

Conclusion

The study revealed that the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development has impacted positively on the socio-economic development of Nigeria and Benin Republic. This positive impact included relative free movement of citizens, goods and services across the borders of both countries. The paper also found that the bond of friendly relations, which serve as the basis for economic, political and cultural interaction between the two countries still remain as strong as they were before the colonial creation of the artificial boundary between them. The joint and collaborative efforts of security agencies from both countries has reduced trans-border crimes, including the reduction in smuggling activities, thus improving revenue capacity of both countries. The ECOWAS protocol has also served as a means of advancing socio-cultural unity between Nigeria and Benin Republic through inter border marriages, cross border sporting activities and joint social outings. There are occasional disagreements and disputes between both countries in an attempt to maximise the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development to their advantage but such disputes are usually amicably resolved. The paper recommended further relaxation of Customs and other tariff rates, establishment of more border markets between the two countries and improved security collaboration to enhance their maximum benefits from the ECOWAS protocol on socio-economic development.

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Their ties date back to the pre-colonial era. The cultural relation is also applicable when village heads and district heads are being installed as invitations are extended to the traditional rulers of both sides to witness the events. The following languages are spoken on both sides of the Nigeria-Benin borderlands: Egun, Yoruba, Baatonu (Bariba), Dendi, Busa (BOKO), Hausa, Fulfulde (Fulani) and Zarma. These trans-national languages are means of communication for socio-economic transaction by both countries. Except at the border post, the use of the European languages rather than the local languages in the local market is uncommon. The socio-cultural relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic are equally clearly evidenced by the behavior of the Gun people of Badagry who remained culturally conservative due to contiguous location with the original cultural area in Porto-Novo. The Gun people of Badagry and Port Novo shared common culture such as religion, language socio-political arrangement and even patterns of their settlement (Dioka, 1991). The Yoruba Gun and Bariba ethnic groups are found not only in Benin Republic but also in Nigeria. These groups relate more with each other than with other ethnic groups in their respective countries. For instance, the Alaketu in Republic of Benin) is regarded as paramount ruler by all Ketus regardless of what part of the border they fall in. To demonstrate the extent of the socio-cultural ties between the two countries in 1978, the former Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo visited the Republic of Benin in his official capacity and addressed the audience in Yoruba language. The historical linkages between the two countries have over the years evolved and maintained as an informal system of cooperation to assist each other and their

citizens in different dimensions of socio-economic development.

The Economic Community of West African States protocol on Socio-Economic Development

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos on 28 May, 1975 (Adedeji, 1999). The economic institution was envisaged as a Community within the West African sub-region where the constituent member states would pursue common goals and objectives for mutual relevance, joint rewards, common responsiveness and a generalised loyalty for common good of all the Communities' citizens (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). ECOWAS headquarters is in Abuja, Nigeria. With the withdrawal of Mauritania in 2000, the remaining ECOWAS member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Five of the fifteen member countries of the ECOWAS are Anglophone (English speaking) while nine are Francophone (French speaking) and the remaining two are Lusophone (Portuguese speaking). The aims and Objectives of ECOWAS include the following:

- (a) To promote co-operation and development in all field of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial issues, social and cultural matters, for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its people and fostering relations among its members as well as contributing to