



Politics of Hydroelectric Power Development in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Mambilla Hydroelectric Power Project

E. D. Oruonye

Department of Geography, Taraba State University, P.M.B. 1167, Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Despite Nigeria's huge endowment of hydro electric power potential, the country's present electricity supply is very disappointing. The Mambilla hydro electric power (HEP) project initiated 30years ago was supposed to change the story of energy supply in the country. Unfortunately the Mambilla HEP which is seen as the largest of its kind in the whole Africa is full of controversies. This paper examines the politics and controversies surrounding the Mambilla HEP project. Secondary desk review data was used in this study. Findings of the study show how power play and political interest have stalled the Mambilla HEP project. It also reveals the level of corruption that has characterized the project. The findings show that with recent economic down turn following decline in fuel prices and change in administration, the project may not be completed before year 2020. The study also raised some fundamental questions begging for answers. The study recommends the need for more proactive measures by the new administration if the project will see the light of the day.

Keywords: Development, Hydroelectric, Mambilla, Politics and Power

Introduction

Hydroelectric power is one of the clean and best ways to generate power. After the initial investment, it is the cheapest, most efficient and most environmentally friendly means of generating electricity. Nigeria is well endowed with abundant water resources whose potential is about 14,750MW (Adebayo and Yusuf, 2013). Of these potential about 1,980MW is explored for power at Kainji, Jebba and Shiroro hydropower stations leaving about 12,220 MW unexplored (Adebayo and Yusuf, 2013). This implies that only about 14% of the nation's hydropower potential is in use which makes 29% of the total installed grid connected electricity of the country (Manohar and Adeyanju, 2009). Nigeria's installed generating capacity is about 6,000 MW (Zarma, 2006). In 1999, only 19 of 79 generating units in Nigeria were operating (Sambo, 2008). Jimoh (ND) observed that Nigeria has just developed 23% of her feasible hydro power. This is very small when compared with other African countries such as Lesotho which has developed 50% of her hydro power potential, Burkina Faso developed 46%, while Kenya has developed 34% of her hydro power potential (Okpanefe and Owolabi, 2002; Zarma, 2006). The combined installed capacity of power stations in Nigeria is far below the country's electricity demand, resulting in epileptic supply of electricity (Jimoh, ND). The situation is compounded by the failure of the existing power stations to operate at its installed capacity (Jimoh, ND).

Nigerian's hydropower currently accounts for about 32% of the total installed commercial electric power capacity in the country (Al Amin, 2013). Hydropower potential sites are distributed in 12 States and in the four river basins. However, small hydroelectric power (SHP) potential sites exist in almost every parts of Nigeria. There are over 278 unexploited sites with total potentials of 734.3 MW (Al Amin, 2013). So far about eight (8) small hydropower stations with aggregate capacity of 37.0 MW have been installed in Nigeria by private company and the government (Al Amin, 2013). There are about 200 dams in Nigeria, about 20 dams large and small have been added since 1995. Most of the new dams being reported in press have only been 'commissioned' and not actually built (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007).

The National electricity grid presently consists of nine generating stations (3 hydro and 6 thermal) with a total installed generating capacity of 5906 MW (Zarma, 2006). The demand for electricity is estimated to be about 4500MW, while the present generation level is about 1500MW. There is about 2400 MW of self generation in the form of small diesel and petrol generating sets. The estimated percentage of Nigerians having access to electricity from NEPA is only 36% (PPD, ND). The estimated demand for power in 2005 is about 9780MW (PPD, ND). This will require a generating capacity of about 12700MW (PPD, ND). Based on low, medium and high growth scenarios, electricity demand is forecasted to grow from the base value of 3,420 MW to 19,920 MW, 33,000 MW and 73,940 MW, respectively (Sambo *et al.*, 2006). Thus it is necessary to fully rehabilitate the existing power stations (which will provide a maximum of 5400MW generating capacity) rehabilitate some critical transmission and distribution lines and their associated substations and add new generating, transmission and distribution capacity to the grid, in the immediate and foreseeable future to meet the increasing energy demand (PPD, ND).

The Mambilla HEP project which was conceived in 1982 has suffered neglect by successive military administration and under the democratic dispensation, it has featured on every presidential campaign promises of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidates, starting from Chief Olusegun Obasanjo 1999 and 2003 to the late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua in 2007, President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 and President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 (Terkula, 2014). Almost every discussion at academic, policy and government levels on energy generation in Nigeria feature Mambilla hydro electric power (HEP) project. The Mambilla HEP project is the largest hydro electric power potential in the country with a capacity of 3,050MW. The idea of the project which was conceived in the 1980s is full of controversies and contradictions. After over 30years of conception, there are so much doubt and conflicting reports about the Mambilla hydro power project. While government officials claimed that substantial progress has been made on the Mambilla power project by way of negotiations with the Chinese companies, feasibility surveys and design plan, many

people believed that the project has been delayed for too long. This paper examined the politics and controversies surrounding the Mambilla HEP. The paper queried the sincerity of the Nigerian government over the completion of the project by raising some fundamental questions.

Methods

The approach adopted in data collection for this study was secondary (desk) review to identify existing literatures on the Mambilla hydro electric power project in Taraba state. Additional information was generated from web-based generic search engines, using the snow ball to retrieve significant references. Emphasis was placed on papers by academics, government agencies and corporate organizations. Information relevant to the politics of the hydro electric power project in Nigeria and Mambilla plateau in particular were considered.

Description of the study area

The Mambilla plateau is located between latitude 5° 30' to 7° 18' N and longitude 10° 18' to 11° 37'E with a total land mass of 3,765.2km² forming the southernmost tip of the north eastern part of Nigeria (Tukur *et al*, 2005). The entire area of the plateau fall under the Sardauna local government area in Taraba State Nigeria. The major ethnic groups are the Mambilla and Fulani. Other smaller ethnic groups like Panso, Kambu and Kaka are also found. The Mambilla plateau consists of scattered settlements over a difficult to access but potentially rich terrain (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007). The Mambilla plateau is a resource frontier region, well endowed with abundant natural resources. This made Oruonye and Abbas (2011) to observe that if Taraba state is nature's gift to the nation, the Mambilla plateau/ Sardauna LGA is nature's gift to Taraba state. The plateau is an important tourist destination, while the region houses the largest National Park in West Africa (Gashaka-Gumti). The plateau is also an important grazing land for livestock in the country. The temperate climate of the plateau supports a wide range of biodiversity. The plateau is the watershed of many large rivers such as Rivers Benue, Taraba and Donga and has many waterfalls suitable for HEP development.

Germany successfully annexed and established colonial territory over the Mambilla plateau area in 1907 which included the present Sardauna, Kurmi and Gashaka LGAs (in Taraba State), Ganye, Jada, Mayo Nguli, Mubi north and south, Michika and Madagali LGAs (in Adamawa State) and Gwoza, Bama and Dikwa LGAs (in Borno State). The territory was handed over to Britain as a 'trust territory' by United Nation following the defeat of Germany in the First World War in 1916. The Trust Territory consists of the northern and southern parts (Lenshie and Gambo, 2014). The northern part of this territory was then referred to as the Northern Cameroon. During the first plebiscite in November 1959, serious campaign was made by both the Cameroonian and Nigerian Governments. Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the then Northern Premier and Sardauna of Sokoto was very prominent in this campaign. The northern part of the Trust territory was promised some degree of independence by way of separate Province by the Northern Nigerian Government led by the Premier. There was problem with the first plebiscite conducted in 1959 which led to its rejection by the International community (Oruonye and Abbas 2011).

A second plebiscite was conducted on 11th February, 1961 in which the Northern Trust Territory accepted to join Nigeria. A province was created for this region as promised. Following suggestion by native of the Mambilla area, the province was named after the Premier as Sardauna Province with headquarter at Mubi and therefore became the 13th Province in the country then. The present Sardauna LGA came under Gashaka-Mambilla Native Authority and in 1974, it was changed to Gashaka-Mambilla Local Authority. In 1976, there was a Local Government reform in the country, which changed the Local Authorities to Local Government Areas, and made it a third tier of government in the Federation. The present Sardauna LGA was created on 3rd February 1976 along side with the other LGAs in the defunct Gongola State.

Historical background of the Mambilla Hydro Electric Power Project

The idea of the Mambilla plateau was first conceived in 1982 during the time of President Shehu Shagari. The project was planned to consist of 2,600MW base load hydroelectric power to be implemented in 5 years. The first phase of the project was planned to span the period 1982 – 1985. It consisted of two stages, the pre-feasibility and feasibility stage. The Project was first awarded by the former President Shehu Shagari's administration in 1982. However, in the first stage the soil investigation was never completed and the whole project came to a halt for financial reasons and political changes (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007). The National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), now Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), had between 1982 and 1985 conducted feasibility study through Diyam Consultants in association with Bennie and Partners of London but was inconclusive due to no detailed design data, soil investigation and lack of access road to complete the work (Tashikalmah, 2008).

In 2005 former President Olusegun Obasanjo resuscitated the Mambilla hydro power project and placed it and the supervisory Ministry of Power under the Presidency so that it could be accelerated. A German company, Lahmeyer International was invited to review the previous work that had been carried out, which included the geotechnical work. After this, the company (Lahmeyer) was awarded a \$3.2 billion contract in 2005 to conduct feasibility studies on the multibillion naira Mambilla Hydroelectric Power Project (Punch Newspaper, 2014).

In 2006, the Chinese firms China Gezhouba Group and China Geo-Engineering Corporation (CGGC/CGC) was awarded the Lot 1 (or the civil aspect) of the project contract for \$1.4bn (Punch Newspaper, 2014 and Onwuemenyi, 2015). To demonstrate its seriousness, the government paid 15 per cent (about \$219 million) to the consortium as an advance. The contract was signed by May 2007 and few months later cancelled. This made the Chinese government to withhold its \$2.5 billion counterpart funding for the project (Punch Newspaper, 2014). This stalled the Mambilla HEP project till date.

Description of the Mambilla HEP Project

The Mambilla HEP project at inception was designed to the capacity of 2,600MW. In 2012, the project was reviewed and the capacity increased to 3,050 MW. The increase in the installed capacity was achieved by relocating the

original Gembu Dam to about 20km downstream to create a new Nya Dam thereby enlarging the catchment area and providing more water for irrigation and power generation (Daily Trust, 2014). The Mambilla hydro power dam was to be connected to three dam across the brownish River Donga (Terkula, 2014). This design would be modeled on the Three Gorge Dam in China. However, unlike the Three Gorge Dam in China, the Mambilla dam would consists of four dams; (i) Main dam (ii) Regulatory dam (iii) Operational dam (iv) Another regulatory dam, part of which will be situated underground (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007).

According to Coyne et Bellier, the Hydro division of Tractebel Engineering (France), the Mambilla HEP dam will involve a main, large rolled compact concrete (RCC) dam and reservoir (storing water and thus regulating river flow) at 1300 meter above sea level (m.a.s.l.)(Gembu Dam). The water will be diverted off the reservoir towards the western side of the plateau through 3 hydraulic tunnels totaling 33km intercepted by 2 smaller RCC dams, both at an elevation of 1250m (Sum Sum Dam and Nghu Dam). Beyond these dams, the tunnels lead into a 1000m drop shaft tunneled down through the rock to a massive underground powerhouse. Through a short tunnel, the water will then exit the base of the plateau and flow into a tributary river that rejoins the Donga River downstream of the plateau.

Other design considerations included positioning the reservoir areas and dam axes with a view to minimizing the impact of the project on the existing communities. This involved the reconfiguration of the tunnel, power house and dam reservoir as well as appurtenant works. The increase in the capacity design of the dam was necessitated by the need to take advantage of the hydrological potential of the project to include irrigation and agricultural farmland development. This will help in boosting the agricultural production area and achieving self-sufficiency for the nation. Significant economic benefits were incorporated to the original design of the project to include about 20,000 hectares of farmland over the design review period (Igali, 2013). This is expected to enhance the agricultural value chain in the Benue - Taraba corridor and generate significant employment opportunities thereby mitigating the security challenges of the area. The design review also included the provision of more corridors for the evacuation of power to major load centres across the country. When completed, Mambilla will become the largest single hydro power project in the country and the continent of Africa.

The 3050MW Mambilla hydroelectric plant is expected to cost the sum of about \$3.2 billion. Following the re-award of the contract, its construction structure was also reviewed and Sinohydro was awarded 70 per cent of the project while CGGC/CGC was asked to complete the remaining 30 per cent. With this arrangement, the project is expected to be financed by China Gezhouba Group Company and Synohydro on a Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) concession agreement with counterpart contributions of 15 per cent from the Nigerian government (Onwuemenyi, 2015). This proposed contracting structure for Mambilla HEP stipulates that Messrs Sinohydro will cover 70 per cent of the project while Messrs CGGC Limited (China Gezhouba Group Company) will cover 30 percent of the project scope. The Exim Bank of China will provide outstanding funding percentages required to construct the power projects which are also expected to yield returns for repayment of the concessionary loans (ThisDayLive, 2013). This arrangement was rejected by CGGC/CGC (ThisDayLive, 2014). The sudden contract cancellation was thus reported to the Chinese government by CGGC/CGC. This made the Chinese government, a major financier of the project to hold back the release of \$2.5 billion counterpart funds for the project. Thus, funding for Lot 2 and 3 cannot go on when Lot 1 is still in a mess. The question now is, how can the Nigerian government access the loan for the contract when it has allowed so many controversies to play out?

Progress so far made on the Mambilla Plateau HEP Project

In 2007, Adeleke and Oresajo (2007) reported that the location of the Mambilla dam site was marked by a plastic pipe serving as a beacon or cone and they were told that a second beacon had been placed on the opposite mountain, the other side of the valley. Haider (2009) later observed that despite significant and ongoing government expenditures, construction is yet to begin on the Mambilla hydroelectric power project. This was corroborated by Terkula (2014) report that the site of the Mambilla hydro power plant project remains barren after 32 years. Only broken beacons on the overhang of the River Donga was the only work done in the area. The same beacons were placed at the Sumsum and Nghu dam sites.

The Federal Ministry of Power indicated that a draft bankable Feasibility Report by Lahmeyer International has since been submitted to the Ministry but the finalisation of the study is currently constrained by the non-completion of the geotechnical investigation of some sections of the project site. The challenge in completing the study has been lack of access to the project area, particularly the proposed site of the underground power house (FMP Report, 2012). According to Terkula (2014), Lahmeyer did extensive engineering studies and came up with the project scoping and bill of quantities.

The completion of the report by Lahmeyer International on the detailed review of the feasibility study of the project is associated with the finalization of the following projects.

- i. Route Surveys for Transmission lines and sub-station
- ii. Geotechnical Investigation of the project site;
- iii. Orthophoto-mapping of the area, including the transmission corridor;
- iv. Environmental and social impact assessment.

Route Surveys for Transmission lines and sub-station

Essential studies towards the realization of the Mambilla project are the definition of the High Voltage (HV) transmission line for the evacuation of the generated power. The procurement process for the engagement of a consultant that would undertake the Line Route Survey of the transmission corridor line routing has been concluded (FMP Report, 2012). The report is expected to provide the base data for the design of the HV lines from the Abong power house to Abong and Makurdi (FMP Report, 2012).

Transmission Line Route Survey: Current status of the project

- i. Two Corridors for Transmission Lines (Corridor 1 – Abong to Makurdi, 4 x 500KV DC and Corridor 2 – Abong to Jalingo, 1 x 330KV DC)
- ii. Survey Exercise Completed December 2009.

Orthophoto Mapping

The Federal Government approved a contract for the detailed aerial mapping of the Mambilla Power Project footprint in favour of Messrs Maps Geosystems in December 2008 with a completion period of 9 months. The Contractor could not mobilize before the end of February 2009 due to delays in securing flight permits into one of the neighbouring countries. The aerial survey commenced in November 2009 and is scheduled to be completed by December 2011 (FMP Report, 2012).

Current status of the project

- i. Aerial photography completed in December 2009.
- ii. Results evaluated and accepted.
- iii. Ground survey exercise completed August 2010.
- iv. Production of Orthophotos, Digital Elevation Models in 3D and aerial triangulation in progress.
- v. Stereo Vision / editing takes time because of the thick layer of vegetation at the Power house area.
- vi. Expected submission date for report and maps is December, 2011 (FMP Report, 2012).

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (EIA): Current status of the project.

- i. The three EIA's are in advance stage of progress.
- ii. The draft final report for the main EIA has been submitted for regulatory review.
- iii. The EIAs for Transmission line routes are also on going. The 1st draft EIAs has been submitted for in-house review.
- iv. The final reports of all the EIAs after regulatory approval by Federal Ministry of Environment (FMENV) are expected in December 2011 (FMP Report, 2012).

Geotechnical and geodetic surveys: Current status of the project

- i. Geotechnical survey component Report submitted.
- ii. Field confirmation inspection carried out in August 2010.
- iii. Result required drilling at the POWER House to a depth of 350-400m and few other areas.
- iv. Outstanding Geotechnical Investigation to be carried out by selective procurement process.
- v. A "NO Objection" for procurement for the outstanding Geotechnical Investigation granted by Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) of either Trevi, Impregillo N. L or Fugro Nig. Ltd.
- vi. The procurement process and completion of the investigation would be about six months; and
- vii. RFP for the procurement at about 90% completion.

Review of Feasibility and preparation of Bankable Report

- i. Messrs Lahmeyer International has since 2006 reviewed the feasibility Study Report and has submitted a draft bankable Feasibility Report to the Ministry.
- ii. The finalization of the study is currently constrained by the non-completion of the geotechnical investigation of some areas of the project sites.

Preparation of the detailed design and Project management

- i. A project consultant has been procured for detail design, supervision and Project Management.
- ii. The contract sum is \$37, 220, 068.72.
- iii. The addendum to the contract is being finalized in the Ministry for signing

Between 2004 and 2006, tenders were placed and bids were received for Lot 1, which was the civic and hydraulic segment. In 2006, CGC/CGGC won the Lot 1 tenders which amount to US\$1.46billion. The contract was signed on 28th May, 2007 (Terkula, 2014). Although, the contract was executed, it was subsequently revoked by the Federal Government on the advice of the Ministry of Justice in 2009 (FMP Report, 2012). Between 2006 and 2007, Lot 3 was advertised by the Ministry of Power. Tenders were collected by early 2007 but was never evaluated (Terkula, 2014). The Lot 2 has the electro-mechanical segment, comprising turbines, pumps and generators and where there is a waterfall at Mtamdi.

From March 2011, a new project consultant, Coyne et Bellier, a hydro division of Tractebel Engineering of France was brought to replace Lahmeyer. The Federal Government awarded the contract for the detailed Engineering and Project Management of the Mambilla Hydroelectric Power project to Coyne et Bellier with a completion period of 63 months. The contract sum was US\$37,220,068.72. The Contract Agreement has already been executed by the Ministry and the contractor has already worked on the project. However, on account of a number of inaccuracies noted in the executed agreement, an Addendum to the contract is currently under consideration for the purpose of remedying the situation.

Since then, the project has been reviewed and re-scoped from the original concept by a new consultant firm that has the backing of the Vice President, Mohammad Namadi Sambo. It was gathered that the Vice President's group led by a Nigerian diplomat in China has been putting pressure on the Ministry of Power to hand over the whole project on a turnkey basis to Sinohydro, without going through the tender (Terkula, 2014). The French project consultant that was paid ₦2 billion insists that the project be awarded as a turnkey project (i.e. single project) and not in three Lots. On the other hand, the CGC/CGGC which is backed by the Chinese government is bent on restoring the sanctity of the first

contract of Lot 1 and threatened that there would be no funding from the Chinese government if the Nigerian government insist otherwise (Terkula, 2014).

Controversies over the Mambilla HEP Project

Adeleke and Oresajo (2007) observed that a degree of secrecy appears to have surrounded the proposed Mambilla hydroelectric project. They observed that there has been very little press coverage of the project. There has been scant analysis or evidence of civil society involvement in the policy development beyond government announcement and no evidence of environmental impact assessment (EIA) been carried out (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007). Past feasibility studies have cited improved infrastructure, job creation, development of new industries and irrigated agriculture as some of the accruable benefits from the proposed project. Adeleke and Oresajo (2007) observed that the proposed dam will mean the flooding of farmlands, loss of forests, settlements and possibility of new diseases. Government efforts at sensitizing the local people appeared to be on the surface in form of telling the people of the likely benefits without mentioning the dangers that could result from the project (Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007). The 2011 annual report of the Federal Ministry of Power shows that considerable progress has been made on most components of the feasibility study of the Mambilla hydro electric project. However, the project has been a subject of litigation instituted by one of the contracting firm since 2011 which has stalled work on the project.

Nurudeen (2013) reported that high-level intrigues and power- play by powerful interests in the Presidency are the cause of the unending delay in the Mambilla project. Part of the contract was earlier awarded to a Chinese firm but later cancelled and another Chinese consortium close to people in government is trying to influence the power ministry to handover the whole project on a turnkey basis to their company without a tender.

The Minister of power in a response to DailyTrust publication on the project, stated that the scope of works for Lahmeyer International was to prepare a Bankable Feasibility Report and the assignment has since been concluded while Messrs Coyne et Bellier, a division of Tracterbel Engineering was engaged by the Ministry for the detailed Engineering Design and Project Management of the Mambilla Hydroelectric power project. The completion of the detailed engineering work prior to award of contract is consistent with the Federal Government policy of ensuring that the risk of variation to contracts prices are minimized (Igali, 2013).

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was scheduled to travel to China in 2014 to sign the billion-dollar agreement with the Chinese builders, but had to put that off in the face of the economic onslaught brought about by declining global oil prices (Onwuemenyi, 2015). Sources from the Ministry of Power maintained that the inability to harmonize financial plans by the Ministry of power and Ministry of finance in 2014 was the major setback that affected the project. This is despite the marching orders by the President to the Ministry of power to ensure the flag off of the project before the end of 2014 (Onwuemenyi, 2015).

The timetable for the completion of the project has been shifted severally, just as the contract sum has been juggled endlessly. In June 2013, the Minister of Power, put the contract value at \$3.2 billion, while the deputy Minister of power stated in September of same year in Gombe state that it was \$7 billion. The fresh target of 2018 for the completion of the project will certainly not be achievable, as five years was the minimum period given by the builders for its execution. This is further compounded by the present change in administration.

A public hearing on the Mambilla HEP project revealed that a conflict between the contractor who had earlier submitted the proposal for the job on a Build, Operate and Transfer basis and the Chinese Consortium who subsequently got the go-ahead to implement the project had stalled the project. The Chinese conglomerate who was awarded the contract for \$1.46billion first package of the project, was yet to be paid for the job (Tashikalmah, 2008). A representative of the company said that their company was "faithful" to the contractual agreement, but he blamed another company, whose name he did not mention, for failing to undertake the geo-technical assessment for the project. Meanwhile, \$3.2bn was taken from the local governments and states share of the excess crude account to finance the project (Tashikalmah, 2008). The report of Vetiva Equity Research (2009) also observed that in the 2007, and 2008 budgets, budgetary provisions were made for the construction of the Mambilla Hydro-Electric Power Plant.

The outcome of Elumelu Committee on Power and Steel in Nigeria shows that over \$10 billion was embezzled under President Obasanjo administration in the name of power sector reforms with nothing to show for it (Okurounmu, 2008). This prompted the Federal House of Representative to investigate the report. Their report shows that the actual amount of money siphoned from the treasury under the pretext of improving the power sector was \$16billion (Okurounmu, 2008). The Federal House of Representative report reveals that as many as 34 companies to which these contracts were awarded were not even registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission in the country. The contracts were awarded without following the due process. The companies prepared the terms of their own contract agreements and simply gave it to the government to sign. The Obasanjo administration drew illegally from the excess crude account of the federation to the tune of over US\$3.5billion (Okurounmu, 2008). Most of the companies were paid up front, some full payment, while others as much as 90% before the commencement of work. Some of them never visited the site, while others did not execute up to 10% of the work paid for.

The project was initially scheduled to be completed by 2012. However, Sunrise Power and Transmission Ltd, a bidder shortlisted on bidding for the project, initiated legal action against the Federal government in 2007, which stalled the project (AEI, 2013). The federal government insisted on finishing the project by the end of the president's administration in 2015, which the contractors openly contested as impossible. The issue in dispute is a claim by the plaintiffs that a subsisting contract for the construction of the Mambilla Hydroelectric Power Project on the basis of a BOT concession exists in their favour. However, the former Vice President, Namadi Sambo constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Attorney General/Minister of Justice for the resolution of all legal encumbrances on the Mambilla project. The Committee never met after its inaugural meeting early 2011 (FMR Report, 2012).

Issues of Territorial Dispute in the area -UNO State of Cameroon

The inhabitants of the former United Nation Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration of which

Sardauna LGA in Taraba State happens to be part of, have been agitating for self determination and independence by invoking the United Nations Resolution 1608(XV) of 21/04/1961 on the future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration (Globaltimes, 2015).

Technical work with regard to the rectification and regularization of the functional situation of the UNO State of Cameroons has been ongoing as reported by the Chairman of the steering committee on the rectification and regularization of ex-British Cameroon's statehood, Professor Martin Chia Ateh (Globaltimes, 2015). The Chairman alleged that both Nigerian and Cameroonian governments have agreed to take practical actions to withdraw from the ex-British northern and southern Cameroon "along the International dividing line" in January 2005 (Globaltimes, 2015). The chairman had earlier written the UN Secretary General requesting for the declaration of independence of the UNO State of Cameroon on 13/12/2014 and repeated on 14/12/2014 and 09/01/2015 by the United Nations. With this agitation for state sovereignty over the area, the second question that arises is, what is the fate of the Mambilla HEP project if the agitation actualizes?

Challenges Facing the Mambilla HEP Project

Notwithstanding the thought provoking questions begging for answers, some of the challenges facing the project include;

- i. Lack of political will - observers have noted that the trouble with Mambilla HEP project is not that there is no fund to execute it over these years, but that there are so much conflicting interest between the Presidency, Ministry of power and the contracting forms.
- ii. Corruption and embezzlement - The Mambilla HEP project has been characterized by so much corruption. This has been observed to be one of the characteristics of large dams. Allegations of corruption have tainted many large dam projects in the past but have seldom resulted in prosecution in court. So many people have come to see the Mambilla HEP project as a financial sinkhole.
- iii. Capital intensive nature of the project – the Mambilla HEP project is a capital intensive project. This large capital requirement has contributed to the delay of the project for over 30 years.
- iv. Constant rise in the cost of the project – the cost of the Mambilla HEP project has risen from \$1.46 billion in 1982 to \$3.2billion in 2011. The project is estimated to cost \$5 billion at present (Punch Newspaper, 2014 and Onwuemenyi, 2015).
- v. Difficult Terrain – lack of accessibility has been advanced by many contracting firms as reasons for non-completion of their contract in the area (Tashikalmah, 2008; Adeleke and Oresajo, 2007; FMP Report, 2012).

Conclusion

This study has examined the politics and controversies surrounding the Mambilla hydroelectric power project. The study findings indicates that the project have been stalled for over 30 years. This has resulted in the review of the initial design plan and increase in the capacity of the project from 2600MW to 3050MW. When completed, the project will be the largest of its kind in the country and continent of Africa. The project has been constrained over these years by conflicting political interest, bureaucratic bottleneck, huge capital involvement, difficult terrain and corruption among others. Work on the project has been stalled by litigation instituted by some of the contracting firms. With decline in fuel prices at the global market and its attendant impact on the economy of the country and the change in administration, it is feared that the project may not be completed in the near future. The study raised some questions begging for answers that are capable of affecting the future of the project.

Reference

- Adebayo, A.A. and Yusuf, B.M. (2013). Ameliorating Power Supply Problem in Nigeria Through Small Hydropower. *Journal of Research and Development*. Vol. 5, No. 1 pp. 56 – 60.
- Adeleke, K. and Oresajo, B. (2007). Situational Analysis of the Mambilla Hydro-electric Power Project in Taraba State. *Community Conservation and Development Initiatives*, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Africa Energy Intelligence (AEI)(2013). "Wide Appeal to Boost Power." *Africa Energy Intelligence*. 2005-06-01. Accessed: 2013-06-07 10:08:40 -0400.
- http://global.factiva.com/aa/?ref=AEIN000020050712e1610009i&pp=1&fcpl=en&nacp=S&sa_from=
- Al Amin, M.A. (2013). Hydropower Resources as Target of Terrorism: Case Study of Selected Water Bodies In Northern Nigeria. *International Journal Of Engineering And Science*, Vol.2(11) Pp. 52-61.
- Daily Trust of Monday 16th December, 2014, titled "Intrigues delay Nigeria's biggest hydro project", with the rider "Mambila Dam Project on Drawing Board for 31 years".
- Global Times (2015). United Nations Declaration on Independence of UNO State of Cameroon. *Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 5, No.2, April 2015. Pp. 19-20.
- Federal Ministry of Power (FMP)(2012). 2011 Annual Report of the Federal Ministry of Power. Federal Secretariat Phase I, Annex III 4th and 5th Floors, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Haider, Waqar (2009). Senior Energy specialist, World Bank Nigeria. Interview with Nathaniel Lowbeer-Lewis, July 2, 2009.
- Igali, G. (2013). Re: Intrigues delay Nigerian biggest hydro project. *DailyTrust Online News*, Wednesday, 25 December 2013.
- Jimoh, O.D. (ND). Operation of hydro power systems in Nigeria. www.unilorin.edu.ng/nachrede/operat.....
- Lenshie, N.E. and Gambo, J.Y. (2014). The United Nations Plebiscites in the Northern Cameroons: Post-colonial Issues and Challenges in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 4, No. 19. Pp. 156-170.
- Manohar, K. and Adeyanju, A.A. (2009). "Hydro Power Energy Resources in Nigeria". *Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*. Vol. 4, No. 1. Pp. 68-73.

- Nurudeen M. A. (2013). Mambilla Hydro Contract not Awarded – Ministry. DailyTrust Online News, Tuesday, 24 December 2013. <http://dailytrust.info/index.php/news/12952-mambilla-hydro-contract-not-awarded-ministry>
- Okpanefe, P.E. and Owolabi, S. (2002). Small hydro power in Nigeria 2001 TCDC Training Workshop on SHP. SHP News, Spring 2002.
- Okurounmu, F. (2008). The grand looting of power sector funds under Obasanjo. Tribune online news, March 20th, 2008. www.nigerianmuse.com/20080326101324.....
- Oruonye, E. D. and Abbas B. (2011). The Geography of Taraba State, Nigeria. LAP Publishing Company, Germany.
- Onwuemenyi, O. (2015). Mambilla hydro project hits security, logistical snag. Sweet Crude Reports, 18 February 2015. <http://www.sweetcrudereports.com/2015/02/18/mambilla-hydro-project-hits-security-logistical-snag/>
- Power Privatization Document (PPD) (ND). www.nachred.org.ng/workshops/DETERM.....
- Punch Newspaper online: Mambilla power project as financial sinkhole December 29, 2014. <http://www.punchng.com/editorials/mambilla-power-project-as-financial-sinkhole/>
- Sambo, A.S., Iloeje, O.C., Ojoso, J.O., Olayande, J.S. and Yusuf, A.O. (2006). Nigeria's Experience on the Application of IAEA's Energy Model (MAED & WASP) for National Energy Planning. National Energy Commission. available at: http://www.energy.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view &gid=4.pdf.
- Sambo, A. S. (2008). "Matching Electricity supply with Demand in Nigeria" IAEE Energy Forum (4): 32-36
- Tashikalmah Hallah (2009). "Nigeria: Mambilla Power Project-Contractor Pockets N400m, Absconds". Daily Trust Newspapers, 12 March 2008.
- Terkula, I. (2014). 32 Years After, No Power at Mambilla Hydro-power Project. DailyTrust online news, Sunday, 12th January, 2014. www.dailytrust.com.ng/sunday/index.....
- ThisDayLive online Newspaper: FG Approves \$1.72 bn Counterpart Funding for Hydro Dams 04 Jun 2013 <http://dailytrust.info/index.php/news/12952-mambilla-hydro-contract-not-awarded-ministry>
- ThisDayLive online Newspaper: FG, China to Discuss \$3.2bn Mambilla Contract Imbroglia 05 May 2014
- Tukur, A.L., Adebayo, A.A. and Galtima, A. (Eds.) (2005). The Land and People of the Mambilla Plateau. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Limited.
- Vetiva Equity Research (2009). Meeting the Power Target – Executive Summary. Vetiva Capital Management Limited, Victoria Island, Lagos.
- Zarma, I. H. (2006). Hydro Power Resources in Nigeria: Being a country position paper presented at the 2nd Hydro Power for Today Conference International Centre on Small Hydro Power (IC-SHP), Hangzhou, China.