

Impact of East-West Road Dualisation on the Socio-Economic Activities of the People along the Road Corridor in Delta State, South-South Nigeria¹

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Abstract

The dualization of the East-West Road in Delta State, Nigeria, has had significant socio-economic impacts on the communities along its corridor. This study investigates how the road dualization has influenced local businesses, land values, employment opportunities, and livelihood patterns in the affected areas. A combination of household surveys, interviews, and secondary data analysis was used to assess changes before and after the road project. Results revealed increased commercial activities, higher land prices, and shifts in livelihood patterns. However, the project has also led to the displacement of some communities and widened socio-economic inequalities. The findings highlight the need for inclusive development policies that ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of infrastructure projects.

Keywords: Socio-economic impact, Road dualization, Livelihood changes, Infrastructure development, Delta State

1. Introduction

Infrastructure projects like road dualization play a critical role in the socio-economic development of regions, particularly in developing countries. The East-West Road in Delta State, Nigeria, is a vital project designed to improve transportation and stimulate economic growth across the Niger Delta region (Onolememen, 2020). However, while such projects bring economic benefits, they also often lead to profound social changes. The dualization of the East-West Road has influenced local businesses, employment, land use, and overall livelihood patterns along the road corridor (Amadi et al., 2021). This study aims to evaluate these socio-economic impacts, focusing on both

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the positive and negative outcomes for communities. Understanding these changes is essential for developing strategies that maximize the benefits of infrastructure projects while minimizing adverse effects such as displacement and income inequality (Gibbs et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review

Socio-Economic Benefits of Road Development: Roads are crucial drivers of economic development, providing access to markets, jobs, and services. Studies have shown that road construction can lead to increased commercial activities, higher property values, and improved access to social services (Lindsey et al., 2020; Munasinghe, 2020). Amadi et al. (2021) observed that road development in rural areas of Nigeria significantly boosted local economies by facilitating trade and investment. However, the benefits of road development are not always evenly distributed, as wealthier individuals often benefit more from rising land prices and new business opportunities.

Livelihood Changes Due to Infrastructure Projects: Infrastructure development can lead to shifts in livelihood patterns, particularly in rural areas where agriculture is the primary source of income. As road construction increases access to urban centers, many people transition from agriculture to non-agricultural employment, such as trade and services (Zagha & Nwagozie, 2020). In a study on road development in East Africa, Okon et al. (2020) found that the expansion of road networks led to a decline in agricultural activity and a rise in informal businesses along the road corridors. However, the transition from agriculture to other sectors is not always smooth, and those unable to adapt may face economic hardships.

Impacts on Land Values and Housing: Road dualization often leads to an increase in land values, as improved access makes areas more attractive for residential and commercial development (Gibbs et al., 2020). This phenomenon has been observed in several road projects across Africa, where land prices near major roads have risen sharply, sometimes leading to the displacement of low-income households (Smith & Hernandez, 2021). As land values increase, housing costs also rise, making it difficult for marginalized groups to afford decent housing near urban centers.

Income Inequality and Displacement: While infrastructure projects can generate economic growth, they can also exacerbate socio-economic inequalities. Wealthier individuals often benefit disproportionately from road projects, while poorer communities may be displaced or marginalized (Taub, 2021). In Delta State, for example, the East-West Road dualization has displaced some rural communities, leading to a loss of farmland and livelihoods (Nwagu & Jaja, 2020). Furthermore, the influx of people seeking opportunities along the road corridor has strained local resources, increasing competition for jobs and services.

Inclusive Development Strategies: To mitigate the negative impacts of road construction on marginalized communities, several studies have called for more inclusive development policies (Udo, 2021). These strategies include providing compensation for displaced communities,

promoting local business development, and ensuring that the benefits of infrastructure projects are equitably distributed (WHO, 2020). Inclusive policies are essential for ensuring that infrastructure projects do not deepen existing socio-economic inequalities.

3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative household surveys with qualitative interviews. Surveys were conducted with 300 households across five communities along the East-West Road corridor to assess changes in employment, income, land ownership, and business activities. In addition, in-depth interviews were held with local business owners, community leaders, and government officials to gain insights into the broader socio-economic impacts of the road dualization. Secondary data on land prices and economic activities were also analyzed. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including chi-square tests to examine relationships between road development and socio-economic variables.

Table 1: Changes in Land Values Pre- and Post-Dualization

Community	Pre-Dualization Land Value (₦/sq. m)	Post-Dualization Land Value (₦/sq. m)	% Increase
Community A	500	1200	+140%
Community B	400	1000	+150%
Community C	450	1100	+144%
Community D	350	900	+157%
Community E	600	1400	+133%

Table 2: Employment Sector Distribution Pre- and Post-Dualization

Employment Sector	Pre-Dualization (%)	Post-Dualization (%)	% Change
Agriculture	60	40	-33%
Trade/Commerce	15	30	+100%
Services (e.g., retail)	10	20	+100%
Construction/Artisans	5	5	0%
Unemployment/Informal Jobs	10	5	-50%

4. Results

The results indicated that the dualization of the East-West Road has significantly transformed the socio-economic landscape of the region. Table 1 shows that land values in areas adjacent to the road increased by an average of 40%, making landownership more expensive. Local businesses have experienced growth, particularly in the retail and service sectors, as the road has increased access to larger markets. Table 2 show that 33% of respondents reported a shift from agricultural employment to trade and services. However, 20% of households reported being negatively impacted by the displacement caused by rising land prices and the need for housing. The East-West Road dualization led to a 33% decline in agricultural employment, while trade and services sectors grew by 100% each. Unemployment decreased by 50%, and land values increased by over 140%. These changes reflect a shift toward non-agricultural livelihoods, improving economic opportunities but reducing traditional farming activities..

5. Conclusion

The dualization of the East-West Road has had both positive and negative socio-economic impacts on the communities along its corridor. While the project has spurred economic activities, improved transportation, and increased land values, it has also led to the displacement of some rural communities and widened income inequality. These findings underscore the need for policies that promote inclusive development to ensure that the benefits of road infrastructure projects are distributed equitably across different socio-economic groups.

6. Recommendations

1. Develop and implement compensation schemes for displaced communities, ensuring that those who lose land or livelihoods are adequately compensated.
2. Promote inclusive economic growth by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) along the road corridor.
3. Strengthen land-use planning and regulation to prevent speculative increases in land prices that disproportionately affect low-income households.
4. Foster public-private partnerships to create job opportunities for local residents and reduce unemployment in areas affected by road construction.
5. Encourage the provision of affordable housing for marginalized groups displaced by the dualization project.

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