

An Assessment of Maritime Transport Facilities along the Fako Coastal Belt of Cameroon

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Abstract:- Support facilities and connective function of any transport mode are pivotal for the efficient functional and transactional operations without which it becomes stunted and cause delays or malfunction. This is very crucial when it concerns the maritime transport sector. Along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon, maritime transport infrastructure is weak, less performant and even absent in some cases. Seaports, are poorly linked to each other with no railway lines which has adversely affected the efficient operation of maritime transport activities and port operations along this coastline. In fact, the infrastructure and facilities are still the remnants of the colonial masters. It is against this gloomy background event that this study sets out to diagnose and evaluate maritime transport infrastructure and facilities along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. The study used a purely qualitative approach and data were gotten from secondary and primary sources. Secondary data were sourced from soft and hard copies of published and unpublished documents, relevant decrees and charters patterning to maritime transport infrastructure and facilities. Primary data were obtained basically from the three port sites (Tiko, Limbe and Idenau). The rationale for the choice of these port sites was to appreciate port infrastructure and facilities use for transactional and operational functioning of the ports. Techniques of data collection included; semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant and on-the-spot observations and Focus Group discussions where photographs were netted. The data was processed and analysed using the *in vivo* data coding system in the study. Results obtained revealed that maritime transport facilities and infrastructure such as storage facilities and cargo handling equipment are poor and dilapidated thus, limiting the effective functioning of maritime transport services. From observations, it was revealed that port infrastructure along the Fako coast till date are still remnants of colonial the heritage. Responds scores on the appreciation of the ports infrastructure and facilities revealed that 15.3 % and 10.5 % of the respondents perceived the port infrastructure and facilities to be good and very good respectively while 51.5 % and 22.7 % had a negative perception of bad and very bad respectively. Furthermore, ports were observed to function in isolation with a poor road network linking the port. The observed implications were the inability of heavy duty trucks to enter or exit the ports with cargo. The poor state of these infrastructures is "sharply versed to the SDG 9 of "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovations". This study recommends an improvement

in maritime transport infrastructure and support facilities in these auxiliary ports. This will increase the capacity and efficient functioning of the ports and also to help decongest the Douala mother port. More so, constructing a railway line linking these ports to the economic capital and beyond and a good road network will increase the connective function of this transport mode and an improved supply chain along the Fako coast and to the rest of the country and other land lock countries like Chad and Central African Republic

Keywords:- Maritime transport, transport infrastructure, facilities, Fako coast, seaports.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) continue to hit hard on a sustainable and an adequate port infrastructure which is a pre-condition for efficient intermodal and logistics transport services. Onwuegbuchunam, (2019) underscored that multinational companies involved in global manufacturing and services place high premium on efficient logistics and supply chain in which seaports are just a link in the supply chain. Concretely, maritime transport is responsible for handling cargo across seas and oceans. Consequently, it connects world-widely dispersed transportation linkages (Eon-Song, 2010). In Africa, the inadequacy of maritime transport infrastructure including information has been a major factor in the lack of diversification and economic competitiveness. Webster and Boahen (1980) underscored that maritime transport and ports offers a boundless field of enterprise to merchants and an extensive market to manufacturers.

During the colonial days, for the Europeans to import their trade articles and export raw materials from the west coast of Africa, maritime transport was a *sine qua non* why they extended a number of seaports in the west coast of Africa. Today, most of these seaports still depend on the remnants of the infrastructure of the colonial masters with little or no improvement on them despite increasing trade environment and globalization. Maritime transport is undeniably important in the economic growth of maritimations as it transforms local markets to national, regional and international focus (Lingshan et al., 2018). This therefore, means that, this mode of transport must be hitch free from functional and transactional operations which largely depend on its infrastructure and facilities. These infrastructure and facilities act as a support system to this transport mode. In Cameroon for example, the main port which is the Douala seaport is congested to the brim while secondary ports such as those under the Port Authority of

Limbe (PAL) (Limbe, Tiko and Idenau) suffer from poor and dilapidated infrastructure and related port facilities (Munge, 2019). The state of these secondary ports is simply a misplaced priority that can still be revitalized to decongest the principal Douala seaport.

Maritime transport infrastructure and facilities such as ports/anchorage sites, repairs of ships, harbours, shipyards, warehousing, freight forwarding services and other related logistics or support services are a prerequisite for maritime transport to be effective and efficient in all its operations (Bamidele, 2014 and Onwuegbuchunam, 2019)). Land infrastructure designated for the reception of personnel or cargo transported by the sea and that which serves as an authorized port of entrance into or departure from country/place of departure to the point/country of arrival represents one of the most important maritime transport facilities (owoputi et al., 2018). In fact, ports are the mouths through which countries or continents speak to others or to the rest of the world. Ports being the main gateways of maritime transport system are also perceived as business systems which operate within a highly competitive market and thus, require a maximum development in its infrastructure and various facilities to make it more efficient in its operations.

For ports to survive at the level of competition there is need for constant improvement in infrastructure, modern equipment, port employees, technical knowledge, customs procedures amongst others (Munge, 2019). Cuillinane et al., (2011) noted that international trade and industrial distribution have caused a great impact on the development of logistic facilities as they are the main strategic contributor to achieving competitiveness and attractiveness of ports. Modern port infrastructure and facilities are capable to catalyze economic growth and development and also to boost port efficiency. According to UNCTAD (2013), countries can increase their wealth through the provision of some port development related services and infrastructure. Increasing globalisation and exchange of goods and services has ignited the provision of modern and sophisticated port facilities and infrastructure which all maritime States most follow suite.

Eon-Seong, (2010) underscored that intermodality is a process of operating a door-to-door warehouse-to-warehouse service for the shipper involving two or more forms of transport with merchandise being conveyed in the

same unitised form for transit. For goods to be effectively delivered, shippers normally arrange two or more modes of transport for their goods to be efficiently delivered at the destination. This gives the strength of an integrated transport system for effective operation. This explains why it is usually asserted that “*a maritime industry without a well-coordinated railway or road system is like a ship in a desert*” this ascertain further affirms the interdependence that exists between ports, railways and road system to connect cargo (import and export) to and from maritime transport gateways (Ezenwaji, 2012). Therefore, a reasonable development of the maritime industry requires a simultaneous development of a well-coordinated road and railway system. The maritime transport mode does not operate in isolation without the full integration of other transport modes or systems. A well-integrated transport systems keeps life and economic activities going without which everything becomes stunted and deficient especially manufacturing and distribution (Bamidele, 2013). This discourse clarifies the relevance of integrated transport systems and the need to revitalised or improve port facilities.

II. THE STUDY AREA

Sited at the Gulf of Guinea with a coastline of 4000 km and 28 nautical mile (nm) of territorial waters, Cameroon is advantageously positioned to benefit maximally from maritime activities especially seaborne trade and other related maritime activities (Gregoire et al., 2018). The study considered the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon which spreads across five Sub-divisions as of 2022, which are Limbe I, Limbe II, Limbe III, Tiko and Idenau Sub-divisions. This coastline is bounded to the west and north by Meme Division and to the east by the Littoral Region and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean (figure 1). The coastal belt lies between longitude 9°0'0" and 9°20'0" east of the Greenwich Meridian and between latitude 4°0'0" and 4°10'0" north of the Equator. The delimited zone for this study regroups a total population of 466, 412 inhabitants and a land surface of 2093 km² as of 2021 (BUCREP, 2010 and NIC, 2021). The Fako coast stretches from Kangué in the Douala VI Sub-division to Tiko through Limbe, Batoke, Bakingili to Sanje in the north western part Idenau where it finally shares boundaries with Bamuso in the Ndian Division of the South West Region of Cameroon.

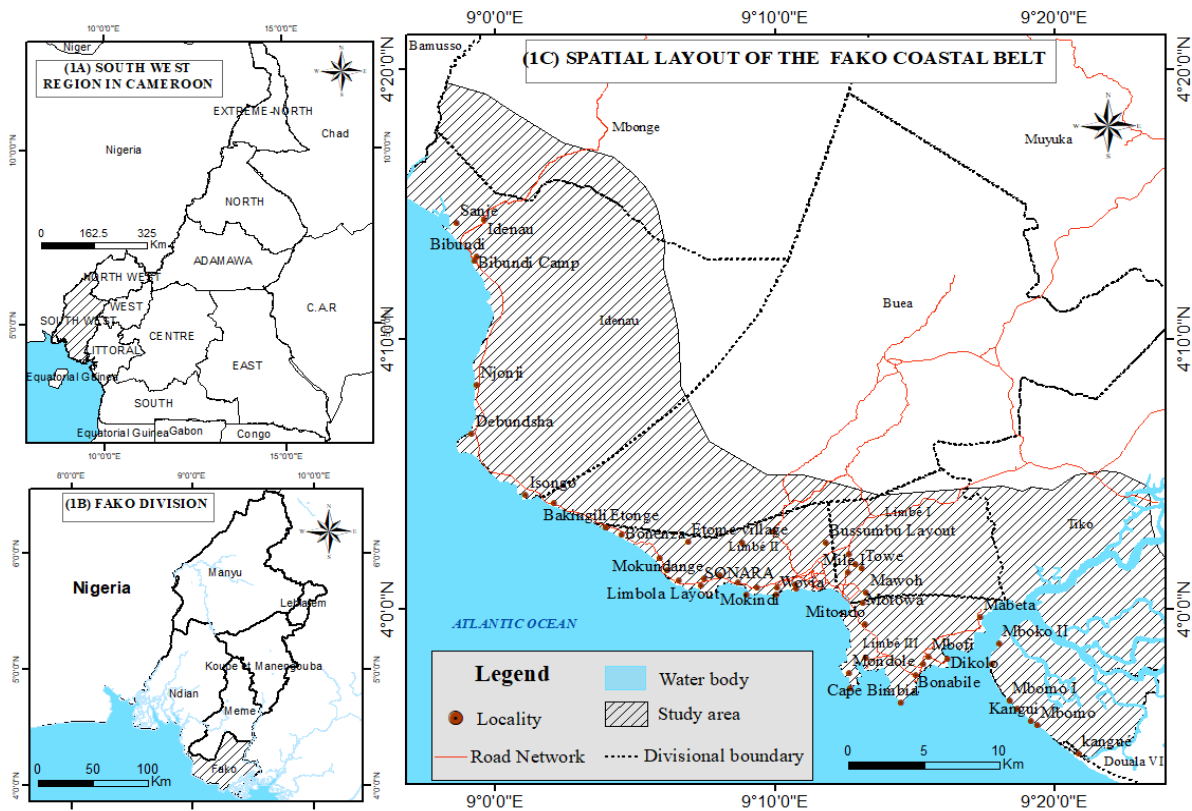


Fig. 1: The location of the study area

Source: National Institute of Cartography (NIC), 2021

III. METHOD AND TOOLS

For better insights into the past and current issues of misplaced priorities offered by maritime transport in most sub-Saharan African countries vis-à-vis infrastructure and facilities, a scoping study was conducted in the three ports found along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon; Limbe, Tiko and Idenau. The study was largely based on qualitative data sourcing. The data was gleaned through review of literature related to maritime transport infrastructure, facilities and logistics. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were granted to some port authorities, port workers and port users for insights and appreciation of transport infrastructure and port facilities at the various port sites along the Fako coastline. Primary qualitative data for the study were collected at the different port yards along the Fako coastal belt. The intention of the inquiries was to investigate and assess maritime transport infrastructure and appreciate how these infrastructure implicates the functioning of the maritime transport operations.

- Field observations made up an important aspect of the research at the different port sites. These observations were both participants and on-the-spot with some port authorities and key informants. Most often, observations took an anthropological method where the researcher got involved in some operational and transactional activities of the ports.
- FGDs were conducted with port authorities, workers and at least a custom officer in each. The maximum numbers of participants were 9 while the minimum were 7.

Participants were presented a guide to appreciate the ports infrastructure and facilities. These FGDs had a mix sex and participants occupying different functions at the port site. Oral histories generated by FGD participants and other informants were directly compared with the write-up and observations to identify gaps in data set between maritime transport and infrastructure along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon.

Qualitative data was processed using *in vivo* data coding approach whereby categories of responses were identified, classified and then recorded on a prepared sheet as per research objective. The themes were drawn from the different categories of codes identified such as port infrastructure and facilities (storage facilities, cargo handling equipment) and intermodality or designated land infrastructure) of maritime transport which is an approach commonly used in qualitative data analysis (Strauss, 1987; Gilbert, 1998 and Cope, 2003). Testimonies gathered from interviews, FGDs, oral histories and key informants were transcribed using Microsoft Word and interpreted to derived meaning using *in vivo* codes and an analytic coding framework; port reception facilities, maritime transport intermodality, storage facilities (warehousing) etc. This also contributed to the emerging of new themes that were all embedded and discussed in the finding of this research. Using content analysis (Adam et al, 2015) identified themes were extrapolated and cross-validated for misplaced infrastructural maritime transport priorities along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. Other aspects that guided the study were responses of respondents concerning transport

infrastructure and facilities. The data processing phase paved the way for presentation of the result, discussions and then, conclusion.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon, maritime transport is limited only to Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries where a great deal of cross-border trade and other related activities are being operated. This mode of transport requires a wide range of infrastructure and facilities for its full operation without which it will become too costly to be operated. These infrastructure and facilities cuts-across warehousing, cargo handling equipment, berthing facilities, vessels and other related logistics. Most importantly the interconnectedness of the ports to a well-coordinated railway and road transport is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of this transport mode. It therefore means that the efficiency or the inefficiency of maritime transport depends highly on the support infrastructure and facilities and its intermodality system.

V. PORT RECEPTION FACILITIES

According to the African Maritime Transport Charter, chapter 9, article 29 of 2010, it is underscored that all African countries must take necessary steps such that port reception facilities comply with the needs of ships and effective port operations. They shall ensure the efficient use of such facilities, making sure that this does not lead to unjustified delays to ships and malfunctioning of these infrastructures. These points out the relevance of such infrastructures on port operations which must be optimum to boost production and distributions as concerns international trade.

A. Cargo handling equipment in the ports

Cargo handling equipment in ports represents a very important facility to ease loading and unloading of cargo especially dry bulk. The bulky nature of the cargo requires good handling equipment for unloading and loading cargo from and into vessels respectively. Field investigations revealed that ports along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon are quite limited as concerns cargo handling equipment which ranges from cranes, reach stackers, forklifts, to trucks for transportation. Interviews granted to the manager of PAL in charge of logistics earmarked that cargo handling equipment constitutes one of the greatest challenge faced by the port for its effective operation. Cranes of all sorts which constitutes a major general cargo handling equipment were noticed to be grossly absent in these ports. In fact, loading and unloading of cargo were basically by human labour which is time costly and strenuous. The port personnel in charge of Marketing underpinned during interviews that the

absence of such infrastructure and facilities have increased cost and inefficiency given that the ports handles several tones of goods which may take a series of days unloading them especially in vessels which do not have in-built cranes. It was observed that cargo handling in the port was labour intensive which causes unnecessary delays in ports.

This situation is made worst because the Douala port is highly congested and handles over 95 per cent of international trade cargo in the country which has pushed some freight forwarders to substitute the port to either Tiko or Limbe. It is important to underscore that the Douala port being the principal port in Cameroon is also the main gateway to land lock countries in the CEMAC sub-region. Yet, is highly congested reason why goods spend days or weeks in the ports before being cleared. This is an eloquent testimony that there is need to improve on port infrastructure and other logistics facilities not only decongest the Douala port but to improve in the efficiency of these ports. Field observations also noticed that vehicles exit cargo from the Tiko or Limbe port directly to Chad and Central African Republic. Hitherto, cargo handling facilities such as; mobile cranes, mobile vehicles among others were not only poor but absent in these seaports. Key informants explained to the study that such facilities used to be there but in the cause of time have gradually disappeared which has made both transactional and functional operations of the ports a nightmare.

B. Port reception and storage facilities

In the port of Limbe and Tiko, port jetties were observed to be poor and deplorable with stagnant poles of water all over the surfaces. Cargo was observed placed on these poles of water on the jetties which can be detrimental to the cargo (Plate 1). The port of Idenau is not exception as parallel conditions were portrayed. Interviews with port authorities in Tiko and Limbe and the FGDs held in the port of Limbe revealed that there are inadequacies of infrastructure in these ports which needs urgent attention given the busy nature of the ports in handling a myriad of cargo and services which contributes to the development of our dear country. In Tiko port, most of the infrastructures has been abandoned and left unmaintained. It seems this port still depend on what was implanted during the colonial days with little or no maintenance despite the busy nature of the port and the changing business environment with the ports handling more goods than ever. According to the manager in charge marketing in the port, there has been a steady increase in the cargo handled by the port but the authorities seems not to prioritise the ports infrastructures. The logistic manager in the PAL, lamented that till date, seaports under the PAL still operate with remnants of the colonial left over infrastructure despite an increased demand for maritime transport activities which is a whole sector on its own.



Photo 1: Goods at the Limbe port placed at the jetty on poles of water

Source; Authors 10:00pm 18th July 2021



Photo 2: A dilapidated jetty at the Tiko seaport

Source: Authors 10:00pm 17th July 2021

• **Plate 2: Scenes on the state of jetties at the port of Limbe and Tiko**

Purportedly, inadequacies or absence of such facilities will render ports operations difficult and overcharged with cargo especially in busy ports like that of Limbe, Tiko and Idenau along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. Apart from the ports reception facilities, the ports storage facilities are the most constraining factor for many ports around the world.

The competing pressure for land use and competition from other regional and international ports forces port planners to make best use of available land (Chen et al., 2013). As such, the optimization of cargo storage in ports available yards is crucial to its operations and commercial

viability. On-the-spot observations in the various ports along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon reveals a poor and limited cargo storage facilities which cannot contain the cargo handled by the port on a daily bases. Interviews with some port users (importers and exporters) in the port of Limbe revealed that at times cargo are piled up at port yards because of insufficient space coupled with the lengthy administrative protocol to clear the goods. This places the cargo at the risk of spoilage especially the perishables. This particularity was observed in the port of Tiko where the lone warehouse was filled with tones of goods still to be cleared. This can be translated to high cost of cargo handling and spoilage of some perishables (Plate 2).



Photo 3: Goods piled up at the port yard at the Limbe port

Source; Tufoin K.D, 11th/08/2021, 5:24 pm



Photo 4: Cargo at the jetty covered from rain

Source; Tufoin K.D, 11th/08/2021, 5:26 pm

• **Plate 2: Challenges of insufficient storage facilities, Limbe port**

It was also observed that at times, when the warehouses are full to capacity, goods are just kept and covered at the port yard till clearance. A trader contacted at the Tiko port during interviews lamented that the insufficient storage facilities in the ports of Tiko, Limbe and Idenau is causing lots of setbacks in the operation of the ports and the maritime transport system in general.

VI. AN INTERMODAL MARITIME TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE FAKO COAST OF CAMEROON

A reasonable development of the maritime industry requires a simultaneous development of other transport modes which are not alternative but rather interdependent (Bamidele, 2014). Maritime transport also functions as a system which mean that sub-component parts must be linked up together to enable it to function properly. These sub-components or systems cannot function alone, they therefore depend on one another to exist and co-exist. Should one sub-system fails, the entire system is affected (Figure 2). It is pretty difficult for a country or a community to claim to enjoy transport and transportation if all the modes of transport are not interconnected together. Confronting this discourse with field investigations along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon painted an adverse image as the ports were not connected with a good road network nor with railway linking the ports together. It seems the maritime transport sector here has been isolated from other modes of transports such as rail and roads. In this condition, it becomes very difficult for the transport system as whole to function properly.

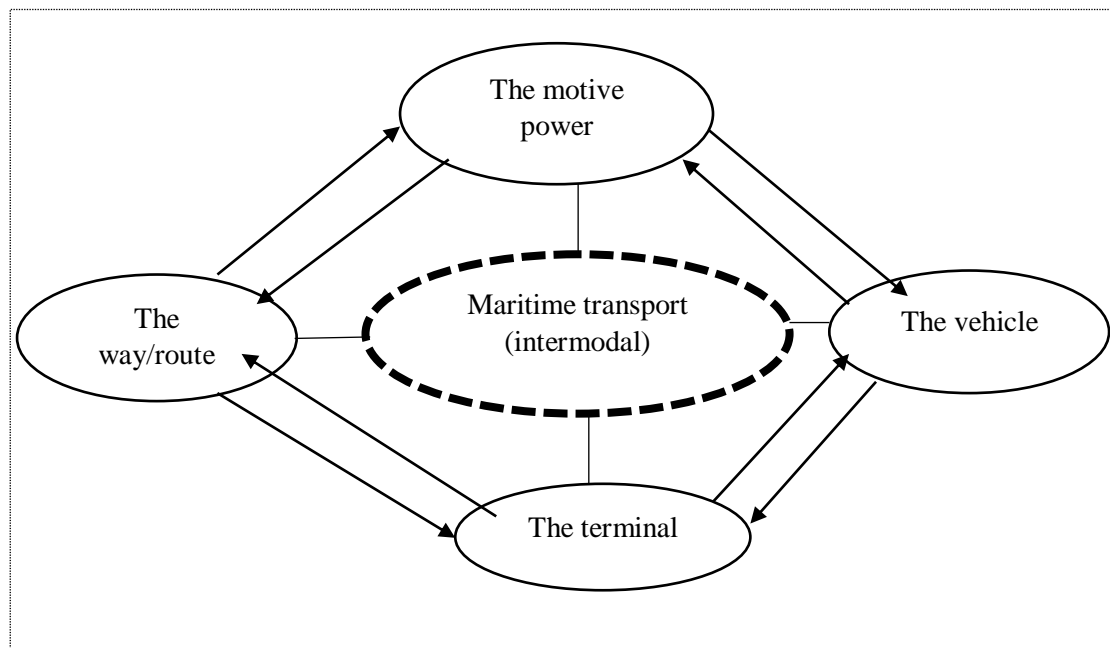


Fig. 2: Intermodal maritime transport system

Source: Adopted and modified from (Bamidele, 2013)

Legend

- The Vehicle - Cars, Ships, Aircrafts, Wagon.
- The Motive Power - Engines/Locomotives,
- The Way - Roads, Sea routes, Airlines/Air Ways, Rail Tracks.
- The Terminals - Garage, Car Parks, Sea Ports, Air Ports, Train Stations.

It is important to note that roads, railway lines and ports deliver economic and social benefits by connecting firms to international and regional markets and by enabling individuals to reach various destinations and thereby speeding up a greater portion of economic activities and social life in general. When infrastructure is broken or congested it no longer performs its connective functions and a greater part of the economy suffers (Bamidele, 2013). This is so because essential transactions and movements are delayed or disrupted, transport cost rises, individuals may lose time in unremunerated commuting, and firms must fight harder to compete. To bring the connective power of infrastructure back to its optimal level, new infrastructure must be built and old infrastructure enlarged or ameliorated.

It is clear that transport infrastructure is not cheap to build. Huge investments are required to build highways, railway lines and ports and must be carefully planned. This discourse brings to light the importance of transport infrastructure and dysfunctions that may occur in its absence. This study surveyed transport infrastructure in the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon linked to the various ports found in this area. It was discovered that the transport infrastructure/network connecting these port towns were very weak with only a single lane tarred road running from Tiko via Limbe I, II, III to Debunsha and finally to Idenau (Figure 3). The roads leading to ports very poor and dilapidated despite the substantial volumes of goods handled by trucks inn and exits of these ports daily.

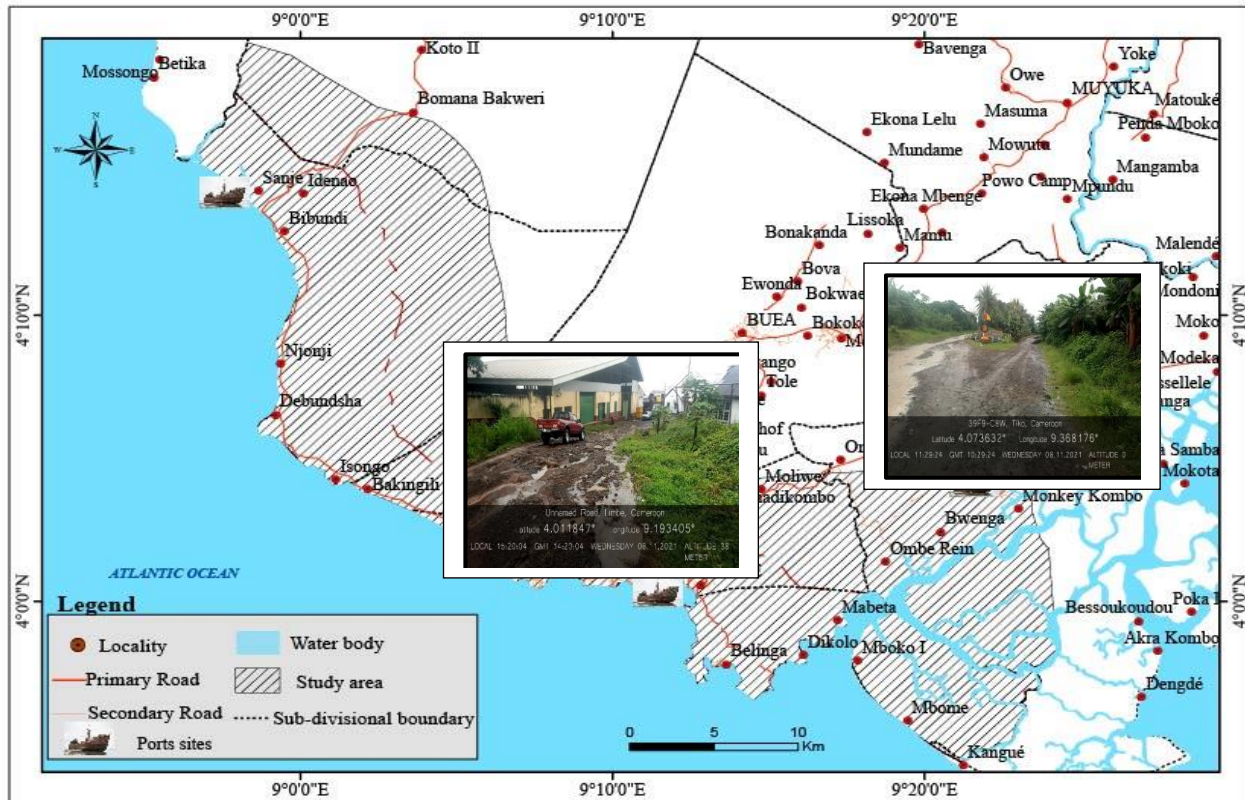


Fig. 2: Road network and ports in the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon

Source: NIC, 2021 and field surveys 2021

As illustrated by figure 3 the transport system connecting the various ports are very poor. In fact sea ports here seem to function in isolation from other modes of transport such as roads and railway lines. From the port of Tiko to that of Limbe and Idenau, they are connected with a poor road network linking the ports. All these ports have only single entrance and exit characterised by poor earth roads which are not even paved. In the port of Limbe and Idenau, the situation is even worse as the roads are characterised by poles of water on the road linking the ports during rainy seasons the roads are almost not passable. It was observed that trucks face difficulties accessing the ports especially during the rainy seasons. Interviews conducted with a truck driver working in the Limbe port revealed that the nature of roads linking the ports are very poor and represents a major obstacle for trucks to enter and exit the ports. In the port of Idenau, the situation is not different as

the state of the road is in a very deplorable condition. Considering the fact that many ports and other heavy duty vehicles ply these ports on daily basis either to export or to exit cargo from the ports makes it a prerequisite for the roads to be well maintained and paved. Concerning railway connectivity, they provide significant internal and external links to some countries and constitute trade corridors connecting land locked countries with the ports of other countries. Investigating the railway connectivity in the ports of the Fako coastal belt revealed that none of the ports has a railway linking other areas nor out of the area to other regions or countries. Yet, goods in bulky quantities leaves these ports to countries such as Chad, Central African Republic which are all land lock countries. The state have made unfulfilling promises to link these areas with a railway line and constructing a deep sea port in Limbe but all these promises remain nightmares (Table 1)

No.	Section	Major Intermediate points	Function
1	Edea-Lolabe (Kribi Deep Sea Port)	Koukoue, Mbebe, Fifinda, Londji	Branch line
2	Mballam-Mbalmayo-Lolabe (Kribi Deep SeaPort)	Djoim, Sangmalima, Mbalmayo, Kribi	Branch line
3	Douala-Limbe	Tiko	Industrial/ branch line
4	Ngoundere-Douala	Ngoundere, Bertoua, Obala, Yaounde, Mbalmayo	Main line

Table 1: A projected railway development plan in Cameroon

Source: The National Railway Master Plan Cameroon (MINEPAT) reported by JICA survey team, 2017

Table 1 as highlighted in number 3 shows that a railway line is intended to be constructed from Douala linking Limbe with an intermediate line to Tiko. This line will represent the industrial branch line. If this project is executed, it will go a long way to enhance or complement maritime transport activities practiced in this part of the country. Without realising nor commencing this project, the government further puts Limbe and Idenau railway project on development agenda as reported in the front page of the *The Guardian Post Newspaper* 27th July 2021. Integrating maritime transport to other modes of transport will greatly speed up economic growth and development which depends largely on the transport sector.

The State continue to give promises and projections with very little being realised or nothing being realised. For instance, the presidential decree No. 2020/250 of 5th May 2020 was signed recognising the PAL aimed at constructing a deep seaport in Limbe but till date, work is yet to commence. This decree is still a dream to come true as evidences to construct this port are still blurred. The expected Limbe seaport will be a hub for maritime transport

as well as the first modern industrial zone for free exchange in West and Central Africa. It was thus important to take a general appraisal of maritime transport infrastructure in the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. In view of the state of maritime transport infrastructure in the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon, respondent opinions on the state of the maritime transport infrastructure and facilities along the Fako coastal belt revealed that 15.3 % of the respondents were of the view that port facilities were good while 10.5% affirmed that the facilities were very good. The response score further shows that the facilities were bad and very bad (51.5% and 22.7%) respectively. As already portrayed in the above analysis, and illustrated by photos, it clear that maritime transport infrastructure and related facilities along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon are not optimal thus, limiting the maximal operation of the both transactional and operational activities at the port environments. Investment in transport infrastructure in general can ignite a wide range of related activities which will culminate into economic growth and development.

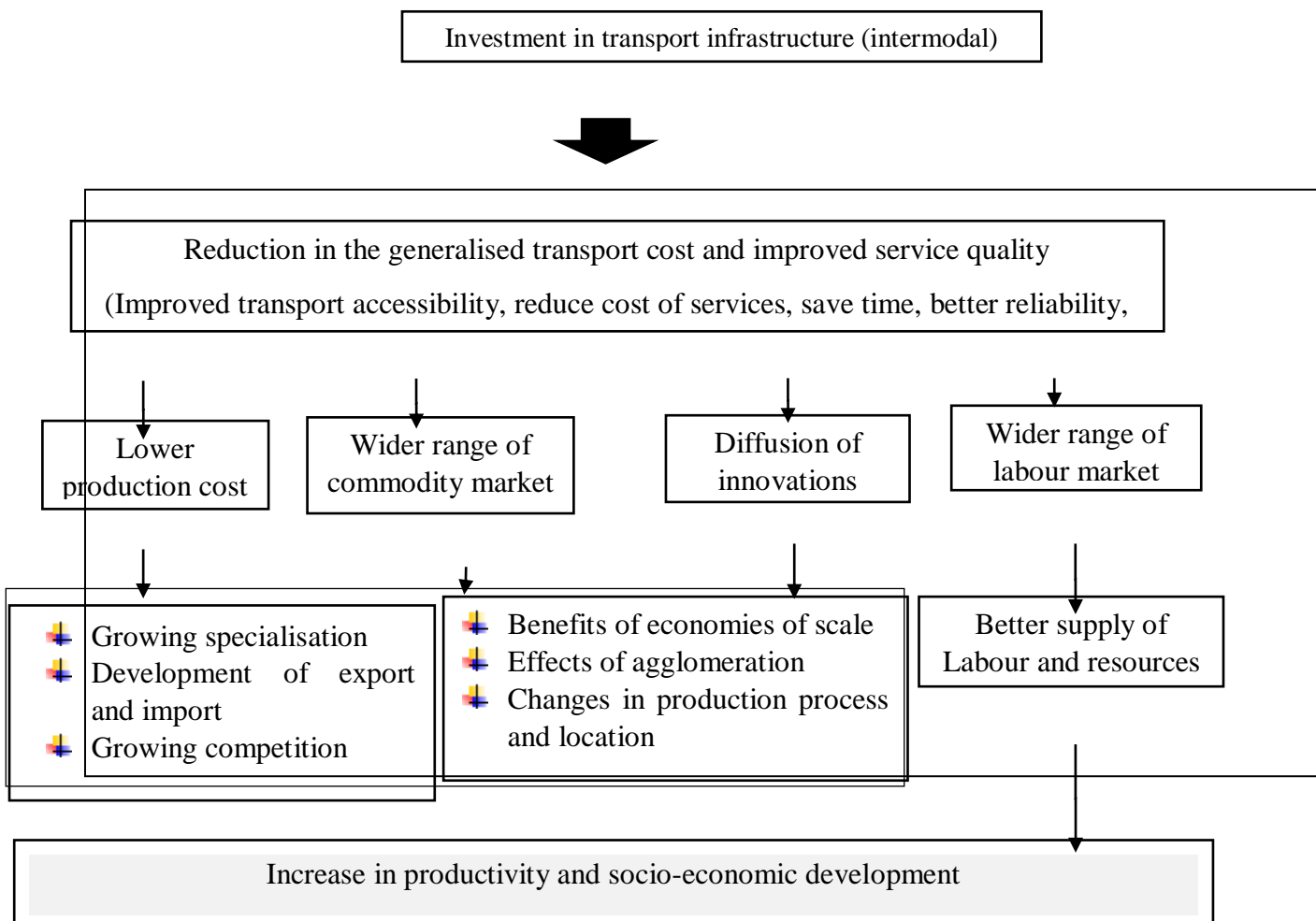


Fig. 4: A model of transport infrastructure to stimulate socio-economic development

Source: Adapted and modified from Godius and Debora (2018) p. 21.

From figure 4 shows that an investment in transport infrastructure will reduce transport cost, serve time and accessibility thereby making transport services more reliable. This is translated low production cost, a variety of commodities, spatial diffusion of innovations thus, stimulating competition via improved (exports and imports) all geared towards to better supply chains and socio-economic development. Investments in transport infrastructure have a long horizon. The model described here is designed to facilitate transactions from/to ports to ease production and distribution and of course external trade. In other words, the model is a tool that transport planners can use to examine the affordability of different objectives. It is therefore a prerequisite that transport systems should be integrated especially maritime transport which converges the rest of the transport modes and the related infrastructure and facilities regularly improved and maintained.

VII. DISCUSSIONS

When transport infrastructure is weak and dilapidated, the transport system becomes inefficient and the transport mode no longer perform its connective functions, and thus, the economy is bound suffer (Bamidele, 2011a). There is no doubt that this situation can disrupt or caused unnecessary delays. This is very crucial especially when it concerns the maritime transport sector which requires a wide range of infrastructure and facilities for its effective operation. The inadequacies of support infrastructure and facilities can be translated into increase transport costs, delays in cargo handling especially in ports and firms have to fight harder to compete (Godius and Debora, 2018). To bring the connective power of transport infrastructure back to its optimum, new infrastructure must be built and old infrastructure enlarged or improved upon.

By improving in such infrastructure especially port facilities, it will make port operations very efficient and effective. This mean that long delays will be eliminated, and cargo handled efficiently. Surely, this will be translated to economic growth and development. Infrastructure be it for maritime, land or rail transport is not however cheap. The huge investments required to build highways, railways, and ports must be carefully planned, not only because of their great cost, but also because, once built, the infrastructure can survive for decades before dilapidating. Investments in transport infrastructure have a long horizon. In the case of the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon hosting three secondary port, it is a prerequisite that such infrastructure and facilities especially those directly linked to maritime transport be optimized for proper functioning of maritime transport in this area especially for the fact that the port of Douala is highly congested as earlier stressed. Ojuku et al, (2014) opined that if the ports of Limbe and Tiko can be improved upon and connected with a railway line, it will go a long way to ensure the effective functioning of the maritime transport along the Fako coast and the Douala inclusive.

Depending so much on human labour to handle port operations can be inefficient and time costly as it is the case in the various ports along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. It is therefore important to improve on the ports facilities (cargo handling equipment, storage facilities and other support system facilities) especially given the rapid changing trade environment which has increased volumes of goods handled at the ports. Studies conducted by the UNCTAD(2013) reveals a continuous increase in the demand of maritime transport services, yet the state of port infrastructure and support facilities in developing countries continue to stand as a stumbling block to equates the increasing demands. As earlier pinpointed in the findings, the various ports along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon do not operate optimally largely because of poor transport infrastructure and support facilities. Thus, improving such infrastructure will help to make transportation here more efficient and reliable which forms the bases of economic growth and development. This falls vividly in line with Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG9) which states “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation”

Constructing a well-coordinated road and a rail way network linking Tiko, Limbe right up to Idenau and beyond can play positively to enhance the supply chain of cargo being transported into or from the various ports along this coastline. As earlier noted, ports as main maritime transport gateways or infrastructure does not function in isolation but most integrate roads and railways for its proper functioning, else, they will be *likeships in a desert*. Bamidele, (2011b) working on integrated transport system underscored that integrating transport systems and management will ensure that the entire state is connected and tight together in a cobweb of transport systems capable of supporting political and socio-economic dreams of the population. It is therefore, imperative to compliment the maritime transport with a good rail and road network which along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon is problematic at the moment. In so doing, it will go a long way to help reduce even the traffic jam regularly witnessed at Banaberi-Douala a main gateway to Tiko, Limbe and Idenau used by heavy duty trucks with cargo from/to ports to other regions or countries.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study had as main objective to assess maritime transport infrastructure and facilities along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon. Using basically qualitative data collected from the ports of Limbe, Tiko and Idenau all along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon, the data was processed and analysed and the findings reveals that improving or optimising transport infrastructure and related support facilities can be translated into efficiency and effectiveness in a transport system especially in the case of maritime transport. Along the Fako coastal belt of Cameroon, seaports lacks necessary infrastructure and support facilities. More so, the connective function of transport is weak and strains logistic chain especially as concerns the maritime transport sector. It is therefore important that an ascend be placed on improving these infrastructure, constructing new ones, and integrating transportation systems to functions as a single

unit with one complementing the other which is an ideal situation for maritime transport to operate effectively and efficiently. The African Union, (2010) underscored that sustainable development, economic transformation and growth to be effective, it is fundamental to integrate transportation systems and improve or revitalised support facilities like in the case of seaports which will stimulate development and growth. In this light, it is time for the State of Cameroon to begin fulfilling the long awaited promises of the construction of a railway linking Tiko-Limbe and Idenau. Most importantly, it is time to begin the construction of the Limbe Deep seaport promised decades ago. This will help to create jobs, instigate both industrial and related activities which are bases of economic growth and development which all developing nations are yawning for. Bearing in mind of the high cost of such projects, development stakeholders such as; World Bank (WB), African Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and others can be solicited for funding or partnership in the realisation of the project. This falls in line the country's Emergency Plan 2035, changing patterns of international trade, increase globalisation, increase technology and innovation which we most move parallel with these developments.

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